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POE PER SE

by

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of Virginia Commonwealth University

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this thesis is to write and perform a script to satisfy the Master of Fine Arts in Theatre thesis requirements. A secondary purpose is to explore my acting problems using this script.

There are four elements involved in this production of Poe per se which make it interesting and suitable as a thesis: the actor, the subject, the format, and the audience. I will discuss the problems posed by each and the methods of attack I will pursue to those problems. I will then describe the evolution of the script from research through performance. My conclusion will be an assessment of the success of the script in solving my acting problems.

The actor is myself, Rob Storrs. As a person I have acquired mannerisms in the use of my body, habits that reflect the ways I think and feel. While it is helpful for every person to think and feel as an individual, it is not helpful for an actor to allow these personal habits to limit his self-expression. An actor needs to be open to change, not locked into mannerisms that apply

only to one character. The means whereby habits may be inhibited and a neutral focus of an actor's energy may be found is the relaxation of tension in the body and the mind, allowing choices to be made as to the direction the actor wishes to send out his energies.

As a person, I tend to operate on an intellectual level and usually ignore the knowledge sensed on the emotional level. As an actor, this imbalance may be noted in my physical habits: staccato delivery, in both vocal (rattling Shakespearean catalogues without meaning) and physical (mimetic isolations while performing so-called natural actions) rhythm patterns. The ideas produced by the intellect are sharp, clean and clear, but come in rapid-fire manner. My body, responding only to the input of the intellect, will perform rigid, machine-like actions rapidly, which work well in certain types of comedy, where mechanism is required, but become irritating and shallow in other forms that require more depth of character. I must find a way to integrate my emotional and intellectual levels to perform more developed actions as moving sculpture, not cartoons. A tension is created in the effort to isolate the intellectual level from the emotional, and this tension is shown in the awkward physicality of an action. It also reduces the

ability to make performance decisions by offering no clear-cut action to perform, and often paralyzes my ability to feel, to move, to think.

My attack of this problem of stacatto delivery will be to eliminate the tension that drains my energy in diverse directions by inhibiting personal mannerisms, finding a neutral focus for my energies, and making actor choices based on the character. Developing the script will make actor choices clear-cut, focus my energies, aid in mannerism inhibition, and hence eliminate tension and stacatto delivery.

The subject is Edgar Allan Poe. I have always been fascinated by him even as a child when my mother would read his horror stories to me at bedtime. I found many resemblances to Poe in myself as the research progressed. We have somewhat similar facial features; we both are landscape gardeners; we both care for a multitude of animals: a cat, a dog, a goldfish; we both have religious upbringings here in Richmond, his with John Allan at the Monumental Church, and mine with my parents at St. James Episcopal Church; and we both went to English-styled schools: he to Dr. Bransby's, I to Dr. Chamberlain's, now St. Christopher's.

Poe is still claimed as one of Richmond's own.

Many primary source materials are available within the city's environs, including rare editions of his work, handwriting samples, photographs, personal effects, as well as extant buildings and locales where he worked, lived, prayed, played -- many of which he fictionalized in his stories and poems. There also seems to be a built-in Poe audience here in Richmond that has been growing for over 100 years. Further inquiry revealed that Poe scholarship and professional theatricality have never been joined in a marriage agreeable to both sides. The factually accurate portrayals, faithful to what is believed by Poe lovers to be his true character, tended toward exercises in academic virtuosity, creating cliques that perform Poe only for themselves. On the other hand, the theatrical accounts of Poe's life seem to feed on myth rather than fact, and fantasize a sensational Poe cartoon to attract the general public's attention, rather than illucidating his reality, a world sufficiently fantastic for any audience's palate. There was a need to create a historically factual character that could sustain a general audience's attention for more than an hour. There were two courses of pursuit: the academic scholarship of collecting the available facts about the man and the work, and the artistic craft

of arranging the facts in a playwright's structure.

The format of this script is the one-man show. It is an exercise in self-start energy, the ability to invest inanimate or invisible objects with a life of their own by means of the lone actor responding to them as if they were real. The one-man show is an ideal device to bring Poe to life by the nature of the subject; he felt that he was alone in the world and that his struggle was to make contact with something outside himself -- an audience. My attack will be to fill the gaps between the thematic climaxes so that in no moment on stage will the character of Mr. Poe die.

The last element of the production is the audience. They must come to believe that Poe's ideas exist and have something to say to them today. My attack will be to invite the audience to compare Poe's habits and fears with their own, laying bare the conflict between the analytic and the mystic that raged within Poe. This was the cause of his loneliness and best displays his need for an audience. I will challenge the theatre audience to imagine the existence of a more rational, more feeling creature, a man more willing to follow his imagination down every dark hall and more skilled at bringing the nether side of consciousness to light. If they can

admit that there is more in this universe than mere surface, then perhaps they too will be better equipped to follow Poe's path to his imagining of the universe.

CHAPTER II

THE SCRIPT

The scripting process began with the research. I wanted my audience to walk away from this play with more than a torn ticket stub. The ideas should speak as directly to the audience as the actions performed. I was looking for stageable material, yet the script should be more than an episodic string of stories, a parade of Poeana. An idea-germ must grow with each scene.

I did not go first to the critics; the prejudice of a century was probably more than I could overcome. I wanted to listen to my own sensations when confronted with the works directly. I was looking for a perspective on the man and his work. I set about reading his poetry, short stories, magazine articles, and philosophical tracts in as many editions as I could find. Many of his works, including a first edition of Eureka!, I found at the Richmond Poe Museum. Others I found through the State, public, and university libraries. Old bookstores and attics contributed to my resources. I then advanced to the biographers and critics both contemporary and modern, and the interpreters, such as Baudelaire and Mallarme in

poetry, Andreyev in dramatic literature, and Doré, Dulac, Manet in the visual arts. I even found a modern libretto to a Poe opera. His work and the commentaries are voluminous.

I developed a chronology of his life and compared it with the development of his ideas, discovering something telling about his character. His wife Virginia died in 1847, which is the same year he wrote Eureka!, his metaphysical tract defining God in quasi-mathematical terms, postulating God's (and Poe's) purpose in the universe. He then toured from Boston to Charleston on the lecture circuit, trying to spread his understanding of the universe culled from years of bitter, dismal experience. He died in 1849. The fact that he spoke formally from the podium as well as "at his ease" from a Richmond barstool showed Poe's range of expression, his ability to adapt to the occasion, and his desire to be understood. He was a man whose vision was not common, and of possible value if properly perceived by society. He postulated the relationship of energy to matter, matter to mind, and imagination of the mind to energy of the cosmos -- a closed universe in his view, a unified field theory 100 years before Einstein "proved" such a thing existed. Poe's life problem was that he could not find the proper

language, wave length, voice to communicate his ideas to his audience -- he always sensed he was alone. The last two years of his life he found that voice, his function in the universe. I discovered that Poe was a "media specialist." He did not retreat in the self-satisfaction of having vision, nor did he choose to avoid frustration by demanding an audience's understanding, as with the Transcendentalists and "Lake Country" poets. He marched right into the masses and actively pursued an audience response. Previous to the last two years he had published poetry, edited magazines and newspapers, and wrote short stories filled with gothic horror to appeal to the masses, yet disseminate his cosmic vision. Now he spoke directly to a real and present audience. He offered himself on the lecture stage, exposing his inner conflicts as well as his metaphysical ideas to a live audience. This man who triumphed over his wretchedness in his last two years was the Poe I wanted to show.

Working Script One

My first scenario attempt was completed July 14, 1980. I let my imagination run wild, assuming an unlimited budget, resources, and potential. The setting is composed of mountains of "garbage," throw away objects from Poe's

life such as a cask of Amontillado, a purloined letter, a jester's cap, etc., mounting to a peak upstage behind which a projection screen is hung. There are several spaces defined midst the garbage, one of which is a parlor in which dummy manikins are posed as if at a party. The scene opens with Poe standing atop the "garbage" mountain with Edmund Dulac's "Alone" projected on the screen.

Script One

Poe per se

Prelude

"Alone" with lighting a la Dulac
 "Israfel" verses 1-5 with Chopin, thunderstorm,
 Symbolist painting projected

Part I

I:1 Poe enters with suitcase; cross to lectern
 I:2 Formal lecture on Eureka!, dutifully performed; polite audience response
 I:3 Poe picks up suitcase; cross to hotel room; night, after lecture; exercises by shadow-boxing, reads publisher's contract terms, finishes "Muddy" Clemm letter, enclosing lecture money; falls asleep
 I:4 Israfel appears; Poe's dreams disturbing
 I:5 Dream ends; Poe wakes, writes furiously before vision passes; lights fade

Part II

II:1 Poe enters with suitcase; cross to lectern
 II:2 Formal lecture on "Poetic Principle" ("moth

- for star" speech)
- II:3 Speech interrupted by bored patrons, wanting something sensational; Poe uses notes from last night's dream vision, turning it into tale ("Tell-tale Heart," "Black Cat," "Maelstrom"), covering agony of disclosure with performance veneer; polite audience response
- II:4 Poe picks up suitcase; cross to party parlor; applause blends to party sounds; manikins posed as party people; Poe accepts drink while answering questions from manikins on the lecture, balloon hoax, mesmerism, poets (Browning, Shelley), family (John Allan, Virginia's death); woman asks for "personal" editorial advice on her poetry offering Poe money, which he accepts despite his pride; takes another drink, knocking over a potted plant, losing control and manners; comment between manikins overheard by Poe, who delivers "water" speech Part 1
- II:5 Poe recites poem at hostess manikin's request ("El Dorado" or "To Helen" set to music)
- II:6 Israfel enters; Poe meets Elmira Royster (soon-to-be-Shelton); Poe mimes waltz with slide of Elmire; Poe learns of her marriage plans
- II:7 Poe picks up suitcase; cross to hotel room; tries to write, but nothing comes; dozes, but awakened by shadow on his face and page; sees dream raven; Poe uses his early dream poetry to describe his anguish at perceiving this parallel dream world of beauty, but is trapped in this earthly exterior world; dream ends
- II:8 Poe writes furiously; recites "The Raven;" drops pen when finished; fade to black

Part III

- III:1 Poe enters with suitcase; cross to lectern; asks for water, offered alcohol, illuminated on pedestal, or in manikin hand; Poe declines with "water" speech Part 2
- III:2 Poe dedicates "The Raven" to E.B. Browning; begins poem, but interrupted; begins "Philosophy of Composition" speech, but interrupted; "water" speech Part 3, but takes drink
- III:3 Poe tells humorous story to appease audience ("Hop-frog,") polite applause
- III:4 Poe picks up suitcase; light change; "Dream-land" while wandering streets to graveyard
- III:5 "Garbage Collector" newspaper scene; picks ideas for stories from newspapers ("Maelstrom," "Rue Morgue," "Marie Roget"); reads Mr. Shelton's obituary; hopes for marriage, money, and editorship
- III:6 Bar sign illuminates with music; Israfel enters; "Israfel" verses 6-8; discovers Poe's divine purpose
- III:7 Poe wades through garbage to bar; builds through bar-banter to "Heart Divine" speech of Eureka!
- III:8 Manikin hands Poe letter from Elmira, accepting marriage proposal; shadow passes over Poe's face; Poe sees raven; pushes away drink at bar, races off-stage, letter and suitcase in hand
- III:9 Image of raven overshadows slide of letter to Dr. Snodgrass, then slide of Poe's obituary, or "Ludwig Article"
- III:10 Maelstrom shapes, pictures, sounds, voices (Baudelaire "romanticizing" Poe in "Tomb of E.A. Poe;" Griswold slander; sensational press and literati)
- III:11 Apotheosis of Poe: "Poe per se" speech delivered in surrealistic etherized, heavenly lecture hall -- Poe has become Israfel

The first script produced many good ideas, but was technically too sophisticated to be accomplished within the thesis time-frame, requiring slide projections, manikins, several other actors, and a sculpturally unweildly "garbage-dump" setting, with four discrete areas amongst the "garbage" to depict realistic locales. The multiplicity of things, ideas, and people showed the need for simplicity. It forced a decision to be made eliminating other supporting actors (such as Poe's step-father, his women, and his publishers). In the process of developing Script One, I discovered that I wanted the play to be about Poe's inner conflict and his struggle to communicate with his audience. Too many other live characters on stage would make it a play about actual relationships, rather than the way Poe perceived those relationships in his mind. Script One did give me a valuable framework from which to work because it identified four locales/facets of Poe's life: the lecture hall, the Victorian parlor, the touring circuit hotel room, and the Richmond bar.

Working Script Two

I continued to look for some convention that would allow for abrupt character changes, changes in locale, and

yet would be actable within the thesis framework. I experimented with some extremely theatrical conventions that were known to me. Script Two was completed July 31, 1980. In it I decided to organize the Poe internal journey with the Japanese Noh conventions, using live music/percussion, masks, ritualized gestures, and recognized character types.

Script Two

Poe per se

Part I

The Lecture

(The lectern is a trunk with a water glass)

I:1 Subject: morality and literature
 I:2 Story appended due to audience disinterest
 I:3 Encore of "The Raven" with dedication
 I:4 Close trunk; wheel it to parlor party

Part II

The Parlor

(The party guests are dummies or chairs or mimed)

Questions answered on:

II:1 The lecture just completed
 II:2 Topical subjects: balloon hoax, Russia
 rumor, mesmerism, Richmond society
 II:3 Poets: E.B. Browning, Shelley

- II:4 Family, relations: John Allan, Virginia,
Helen Whitman, Russell Lowell, Burton
- II:5 Woman requests Poe to give her "personal"
editorial advice on her poetry, offer-
ing money; Poe accepts
- OPTION:
- II:6 Drinks alcohol, knocks over plant, hears
comments; "water" speech as he repots
plant
- II:7 Poe reads woman's wretched poem with
comments from "Poetic Principle;" Poe
invited to recite his own poetry ("El
Dorado" or "To Helen" sung)
- II:8 Poe closes trunk; wheels it to hotel room

Part III

The Nightmare

- III:1 Poe asleep on open trunk; percussion
transition: WAKI, ratchet
- III:2 WAKI, dressed in black, half-mask on
stick ("person-at-side") identifies
himself as Poe's conscious persona,
making a journey through Poe's dream-land
- III:3 WAKI introduces CHARACTER ONE as he
changes costume and make-up; mask comes
down as WAKI becomes CHARACTER ONE:
John Allan; Allan defends himself to
audience, expressing opinions about
Poe, attacking him directly as never
amounting to anything; percussion
transition: TSURE, gong
- III:4 TSURE ("shadow companion") appears with
dark stick mask, identifying himself
as Poe's unconscious persona; speaks
in poetry, dark dreams, "The Lake"
- III:5 Tape of piano and Virginia's singing
voice; TSURE becomes CHARACTER TWO:
Virginia Clemm, as if receiving visitors
in her sick bed; Poe home life compared
with career; percussion transition:
WAKI, ratchet

- III:6 WAKI introduces CHARACTER THREE:
Helen Whitman who defends Poe's search
for Beauty through poetry, not marriage;
she must remain alone, and so must Poe
- III:7 TSURE introduces CHARACTER FOUR: Rufus
Griswold who starts rumors, spreading
misinformation; he delivers a moraliz-
ing epitaph for Poe
- III:8 WAKI vs. TSURE: prose/poetry, conscious/
unconscious
- III:9 Poe speaks through the struggle without
masks: "you may think me mad" speech;
transition to bar scene

Part IV

- IV:1 Eureka! in the Richmond Bar
"Heart Divine" speech
- IV:2 "Poe per se" speech

Script Two reduced the set to a mere trunk and chair, much in keeping with a single actor production, as well as allowing the audience's imagination to fill in the gaps omitted from a realistic set. It created a no-man's land between the naturalistic set and the psychological terrain of Poe's mind. The idea of using the theatricality of the Noh drama with its masks and live sound effects seemed a possible convention for showing the psychological depths to Poe's character, having nightmare scenes where black and white masks wage inner battles for his soul, and realistic scenes using the actor's face. This created the dual consciousness with which Poe dealt and which had intrigued the French Symbolists. It was a good use of

only one actor who takes on many characters, masks. The decision to eliminate the Noh masks was made because the oriental style was not one that influenced Poe, though some transition device was still deemed necessary.

Working Script Three

I turned to Poe's own stories to find this transition device, one that would clearly separate individual scenes, yet still allow them to cohere into an overall idea-germ. "The Masque of the Red Death" seemed to be the answer, for the "seven rooms" in that story could be defined by seven colored lighting areas, marking a progression across the stage. [See Figure 1.] Within these rooms various stories could be related with "The Red Death" told between rooms, culminating in the gross massacre by the Red Death, triumphant at last. Here is where I began to flesh out the material previously stated only as ideas in outline form. What follows is the script completed on March 2, 1981, with stage directions marked and speakable words included.

Script Three

Poe per se

Red Death

I:1 [The stage is dark. A white pool of light appears near Entrance 3, revealing Poe's head and torso. He is dressed in a black coat, white dress shirt and tie, light vest and trousers. He is facing down stage.]

The "Red Death" had long devastated the country. But the Prince Propsero was happy and dauntless. When his dominions were half depopulated he summoned to his presence a thousand hale and light-hearted friends from among the knights and dames of his court, and with these retired to the deep seclusion of one of his fortified abbeys. With ample provisions stored up and with all means of coming and going sealed shut, the courtiers felt secure in their defiance of the bloody contagion. And while the pestilence raged most furiously abroad, the Prince Prospero entertained his guests at a masked ball of the most unusual magnificance. There were seven rooms in all, so irregularly disposed that the vision embraced no more than one at a time. The first chamber was blue -- and vividly blue were its windows. There were no other means of light made available save through those windows.

[BLUE Spot]

The second chamber was purple in its ornaments and tapestries, and here panes were purple.

[PURPLE Spot]

The third was green throughout.

[GREEN Spot]

The fourth was furnished with orange.

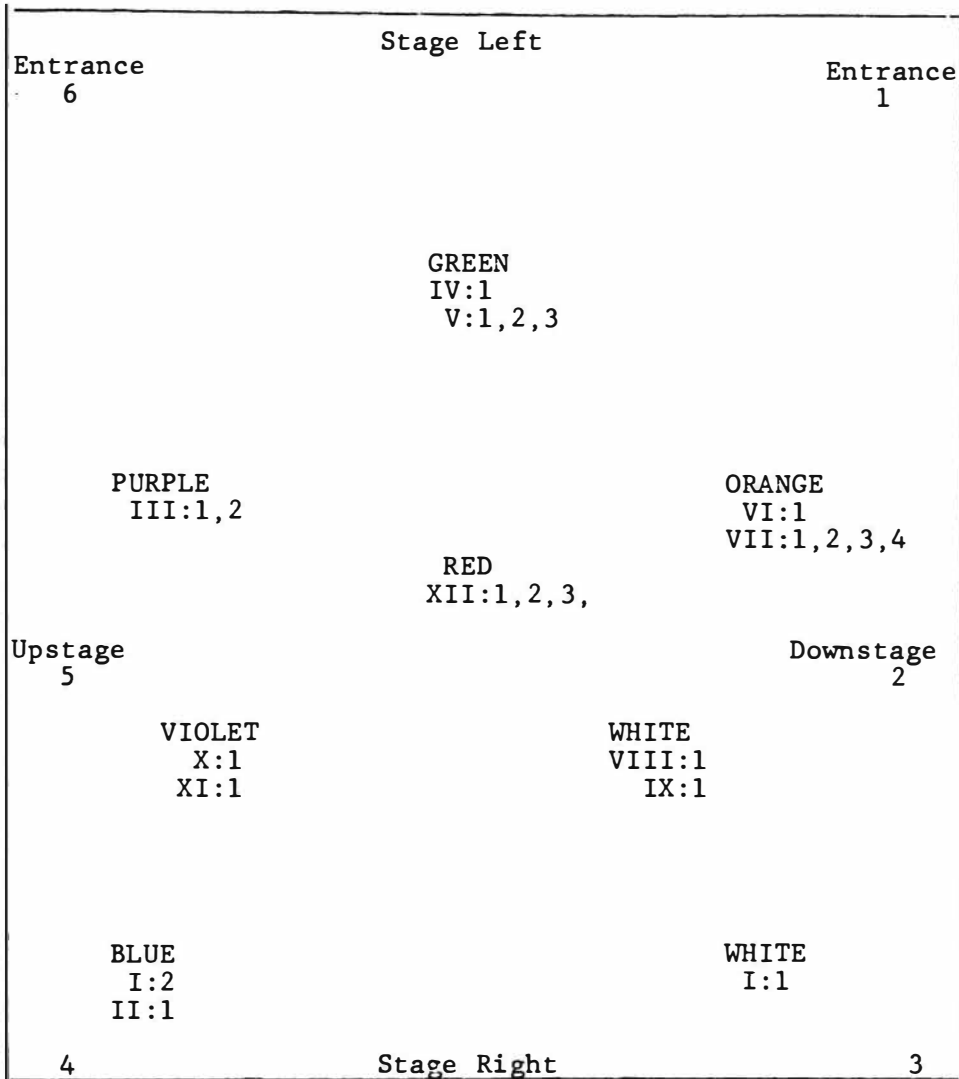


FIGURE 1

Lighting design for proscenium staging of Script Three

[ORANGE Spot]

and the fifth with white --

[WHITE spot]

the sixth with violet

[VIOLET Spot]

The seventh apartment was closely shrouded in black velvet tapestries that hung all over the ceiling and down the walls. But in this room only, the panes were scarlet -- a deep blood color.

[RED Spot]

It was in this apartment that there stood a gigantic clock of ebony. Its pendulum swung to and fro with a dull, heavy, monotonous clang; and when the minute hand made the circuit of the face, and the hour was to be stricken, there came from the brazen lungs of the clock a sound which caused a brief suspension in pleasure of the whole gay company. The musicians in the orchestra were constrained to pause, and thus the waltzers perforce ceased their evolutions. But when the echoes had fully ceased, a light laughter at once pervaded the assembly. Even so, the atmosphere of the seventh room produced so ghastly an effect that few of the company were bold enough to set foot within its precincts at all.

I:2

[BLACK out. Poe strikes a match and lights a candle to reveal only his face. He speaks while pulling a trunk on castors behind him on top of which has been placed his chair. As he progresses, the BLUE SPOT comes up, and it is to the center of this area that he crosses. Once there, he turns the trunk on its end, and places the chair behind it as if at a podium.]

I can create the most mysterious, beautiful, and sometimes perverse figures at my will: sometimes a wealthy merchant with a cigar; sometimes an angel with heart-strings for a lyre; sometimes a cat or bird or ape with razor; sometimes a self-blinded drunkard, my life within my hand; and at times I perceive myself as a solitary figure without a shirt to dress my soul. I imagine myself a poet, a critic, a lecturer. I am a character of my own creation.

II:1 [Lights fade to BLACK. WHITE light up full, including house lights, so that the entire audience is illuminated as well as the stage. Poe is behind the podium in front of his chair.]

Thank you. It is always a pleasure while traveling from city to town to be received with the customary graciousness and warmth by the good people of . . .

[Poe checks his notes.]

. . . Norfolk, Virginia. Tonight I would like to address you from my metaphysical work, Eureka!

In the Original Unity of the First Thing lies the Secondary Cause of All Things, with the Germ of their Inevitable Annihilation.
Let us content ourselves to-night, with supposing to have been created, or made out of Nothing, by dint of God's Volition -- at some point of Space which we will take as the center.

[House lights begin to fade to BLACK, leaving just the stage lights. A ripple of vocal discomfort is heard through the crowd.]

Take MATTER to the absolute extreme of Simplicity. Reason flies at once to

Imparticularity --
 to a particle --
 to one particle --
 a particle of one kind --
 of one character --
 of one nature --
 of one size --
 of one form --
 a particle positively a particle at all
 points --
 a particle absolutely unique and indiv-
 dual.
 The Original Unity.

[House lights are at BLACK. Stage lights
 begin to fade until only Poe's face is
 illuminated. Sometime during the
 remainder of this speech, the light on
 Poe's face is snatched away, cutting
 him off in mid-sentence and/or word,
 leaving him in BLACK.]

The ultimate purpose of the created
 Particle: the constitution of the
 Universe from it, the Particle, effected
 by forcing the original and therefore
 normally One into the abnormal condition
 of Many . . . A diffusion from Unity,
 by means of the introduction of a
 repulsive force by God's Volition,
 involves a tendency to return into
 Unity -- a Uni-tendency ineradic-
 able until satisfied. This Uni-ten-
dency will be recognized as the
 principle of Newtonian Gravity; the
 repulsive force will be understood now
 as heat, now as magnetism, now as
electricity.

III:1 [The stage is BLACK. Poe strikes a
 match and lights the candle to reveal
 only his face. He speaks while travers-
 ing with trunk and chair to center of
 PURPLE area.]

From childhood's hour I have not been
 As others were -- I have not seen

As other saw -- I could not bring
 My passions from a common spring --
 From the same source I have not taken
 My sorrow -- I could not awaken
 My heart to joy at the same tone --
 All all I loved -- and loved alone
 Then -- in my childhood, in the dawn
 Of a most stormy life -- was drawn
 From every depth of good and ill
 The mystery which binds me still --
 From the torrent, or the fountain --
 From the red cliff of the mountain --
 From the sun that round me rolled
 In its autumn tint of gold --
 From the lightning in the sky
 As it pass'd me flying by --
 From the thunder and the storm --
 And the cloud that took the form
 When the rest of Heaven was blue
 Of a demon in my view.

III:2 [The chair is placed on the floor and the trunk laid flat to suggest a sofa and chair in a parlor. Poe blows out the candle.]

[This section will utilize a voice tape over which party noises and specific questions and comments directed at Poe will be heard. Poe will indicate who is speaking on the tape by locating the voices either on the sofa or in the chair or by raising his voice to suggest his questioner is across the room (outside the circle of light for PURPLE area). There will be five parts to this section: Discussion of Shelley, Browning, Longfellow, Byron and the Transcendentalists; Creation of myths: Russia Trip, balloon hoax, etc.; Poe is attacked as a drunkard; "water" speech; The hostess tries to save grace by asking Poe to recite a poem, perhaps "The Raven";

A woman asks Poe to criticize her latest "masterpiece;" he accepts; she passes him the paper containing the poem, in which he finds a generous donation, which he places into an envelope, keeping only one bill back for himself, pockets the envelope; Poe begins to read her poem aloud -- it is atrocious!; he cringes as he compliments her.]

IV:1

[BLACK Out. Poe strikes a match and lights the candle. Again Poe traverses with luggage, while speaking, to the center of GREEN area, where he disposes the trunk and chair to indicate a hotel room.]

It was a gay and magnificent revel. The tastes of Prince Prospero were peculiar. He had a fine eye for colors and effects. He disregarded the decora of mere fashion. There are some who would have thought him mad. His followers felt he was not. It was necessary to hear and see and touch him to be sure that he was not.

It was his own guiding taste which had given character to the masqueraders. Be sure the embellishments to the rooms were grotesque. There were arabesque figures with unsuited limbs and appointments. There were delirious fancies such as the madman fashions. There were much of the beautiful, much of the wanton, much of the bizarre, something of the terrible, and not a little of that which might have excited disgust. To and fro in the seven chambers there stalked, in fact, a multitude of dreams. And these -- the dreams -- writhed in and about, taking hue from the rooms, and causing the wild music of the orchestra to seem as the echo of their steps. And, anon, there strikes the ebony clock which stands in the hall of velvet.

[SOUND: clock striking]

And then, for a moment, all is still and
all is silent save the voice of the clock.

[Pause]

The dreams are stiff-frozen as they stand.
But the echoes of the chime die away --
they have endured but an instant -- and a
light, half-subdued laughter floats after
them as they depart. And now again the
music swells, and the dreams live, and
writhe to and fro more merrily than ever,
taking hue from the many-tinted windows.
But to the last of the seven chambers
there are none of the maskers who venture.

V:1 [Poe sits in the chair and is discovered
by the GREEN spot rummaging through old
letters in the trunk. He finds one and
begins to read selected sentences aloud].

To my step-father
Mr. John Allan
of Allan and Ellis Tobacconists

My dear

[Pause]

sir:

After my treatment on yesterday and
what passed between us this morning.
. . to find some place in this wide
world, where I will be treated -- not
as you have treated me.

Did I, when an infant, solicit your
charity. . . promises of adoption and
liberal education. . . I will leave the
decision of that question to those who
know how far liberal educations can be
obtained in eight months at the
University of Virginia.

I will boldly say that it was wholly and
entirely your own mistaken parsimony

that caused all the difficulties in which I was involved while at Charlottesville. . .

After nearly two years conduct with which no fault could be found -- in the army as a common soldier -- I earned, myself a Cadet's warrant to West Point which you could have obtained at any time for asking.

I came home the night after the burial. If my step-mother had not died while I was away there would have been nothing for me to regret.

I have heard you say (when you little thought I was listening and therefore must have said it in earnest) that you had no affection for me. . .

I have no more to say -- except that my future life (which thank God will not endure long) must be passed in indigence and sickness. I have no energy left, nor health.

V:2 [Poe places the letter on the trunk, lifts his eyes, as if conjuring the next scene from a secret fantasy.]

True! -- nervous -- very, very dreadfully nervous I had been and am; but why will you say that I am mad? The disease had sharpened my senses -- not destroyed -- not dulled them. Above all was the sense of hearing acute. I heard all things in the heavens and in the earth. I heard many things in hell. How, then am I mad? . . . It is impossible to say how first the idea entered my brain; but once conceived, it haunted me night and day. I loved the old man. I think it was his eye! One of his eyes resembled that of a vulture -- a pale, blue eye, with a film over it. Whenever it fell upon me my blood ran cold; and so by degrees -- very gradually -- I made up my mind to take the life of the old man, and thus rid myself of the eye forever. . .

I waited a long time, very patiently. . .

I opened his door -- you cannot imagine how stealthily, stealithly -- until at length, a single dim ray, like the thread of a spider, shot from the crevice and fell full upon the vulture eye. . .

[SOUND: tick of muffled pocket watch]

And there came to my ears a low, dull, quick sound, such as a watch makes when enveloped in cotton. It was the beating of the old man's heart, a sound I knew well. It increased my fury, as the beating of the drum stimulates the soldier into courage. . .With a loud yell I leaped into the room. He shrieked once -- only once. . .

[SOUND out: Poe attacks coat as if it were John Allan.]

But ere long, I felt myself getting pale and I fancied a ringing in my ears.

[SOUND: clock tick.]

The ringing became more distinct, until, at length, I found that the noise was not within my ears. . .Oh, God, what could I do? The police are listening. I foamed -- I raved -- I swore! I felt that I must scream or die. . .It was a low, dull, quick sound as a watch makes when enveloped in cotton. Louder -- louder -- louder -- louder!
I admit the deed!!! Stop the beating of his hideous heart!

V:3 [Poe returns to his chair, laughing, and finishes the letter.]

I feel little hope that you will pay any regard to this letter, but still I cannot refrain from making one more attempt to interest you in my behalf. Without friends, without any means, consequently of obtaining

employment, I am perishing. And yet I am not idle -- nor addicted to any vice -- nor have I committed any offense against society which would render me deserving of so hard a fate. For God's sake pity me. . .

VI:1 [Poe folds letter and replaces it in the trunk. He rises, picks up his coat, and puts it on, straightening his tie. He begins speaking as if writing a letter, while he packs up his luggage and crosses to center of ORANGE area.]

My dear, dear Muddy,
 I have been so ill since Virginia's death -- have had the cholera, or spasms quite as bad, and can now hardly hold the pen. I am excessively slothful and wonderfully industrious -- by fits. I seem to have just awakened from some horrible dream in which all was confusion, and suffering -- relieved only by the constant sense of your kindness. I really believe that I have been mad -- but indeed I have abundant reason to be so. For the first time during two months I find myself entirely myself -- dreadfully sick and depressed, but still myself.

I have no desire to live since I have done Eureka!. I could accomplish nothing more.

VII:1 [ORANGE Spot come up]

Everybody says that if I lecture again and put the tickets at 50 cents I will clear \$100. I never was received with so much enthusiasm. The papers have done nothing but praise me before the lecture and since.

It seems I have a great deal to do; and I have made up my mind not to die till it is done.

VII:2

[Poe blows out the candle. The lights come up full, including the house lights, so that the entire audience is illuminated as well as the stage. Poe is behind the podium/trunk, in front of his chair.]

Thank you. It is always a pleasure while lecturing from city to town to be received with the customary graciousness and warmth by the good people here. . .

[Poe checks his notes.]

at the Exchange Hotel in Richmond, Virginia. Tonight I would like to address you from my metaphysical tract, Eureka!.

In the Original Unity of the First Thing lies the Secondary Cause of All Things, with the Germ of their Inevitable Annihilation.

Attraction and Repulsion are undeniably the sole properties by which Matter is manifested to Mind, . . . Attraction and Repulsion are Matter.

[House lights begin to fade to BLACK, leaving just the ORANGE spot. A ripple of vocal discomfort is heard through the crowd.]

The repulsion capacity is limited, unless we are to conceive that the appetite for Unity among atoms is doomed to be satisfied never; unless we are to conceive that what had a beginning is to have an end.

[House lights are out. ORANGE spot begins to fade till just the face of Poe is lit, threatening to snatch its light away once again.]

Only where things differ, is electricity apparent. . . Difference is their character -- their essentiality -- just as no-difference was the essentiality of their course. The attempt to bring together any two differences will result in a development of electricity.

VII:3 No -- wait!!!

I'll give you -- something.

[ORANGE spot comes up full once again. Poe places his chair in front of the podium, sits.]

I'll give you --

Once upon a midnight dreary, while I
pondered, weak and weary,
Over many a quaint and curious volume
of forgotten lore --
While I nodded, nearly napping,
suddenly --. . .

VII:4 [ORANGE spot fades down again to just the light on Poe's face.]

No?

Well, what do you want?

Oh. I see. Something witty and gay,
humorous and amusing, something of the
grotesque and arabesque.

There is no just ground for the charge
brought against me by certain ignoramuses,
otherwise known as transcendentalists --
that I have never written a moral tale or,
in more precise words, a tale with a moral.
They are not the critics predestined to
bring me out, and develop my morals; --
that is the secret. By way of staying
execution -- by way of mitigating the accu-
sations against me -- I offer the sad tale
appended.

De mortuis nil nisi bonum is an excellent
injunction -- even if the dead in question
be nothing but dead small beer. It is
not my design, therefore, to vituperate --
uh, to speak ill of my deceased friend,
Toby Dammit.

[ORANGE spot come back up full.]

But the fact is that his precosity in vice -- uh, that he was a naughty boy. At five months of age he used to get into such passions that he was unable to articulate.

[House lights begin to brighten throughout this next paragraph till they are up full.]

At six months I caught him gnawing a pack of cards. At seven months, he was in the constant habit of catching and kissing the female babies. At eight months, he peremptorily refused to put his signature to the temperance pledge. Thus he went on increasing in iniquity, month after month, until, at the close of his first year, he not only insisted upon wearing moustaches, but had contracted a propensity for cursing and swearing, and for backing his assertions by bets.

They were simple, if not altogether innocent expletives -- imaginative phrases to round off a sentence. When he said, "I'll bet you so and so," nobody ever thought of taking him up; but still I could not help thinking it my duty to put him down. The habit was an immoral one, and so I told him. It was a vulgar one -- this I begged him to believe. It was discountenanced by society -- here I said nothing but the truth. It was forbidden by act of Congress -- here I had not the slightest intention of telling a lie. I remonstrated -- but to no purpose. I demonstrated -- in vain. I entreated -- he smiled. I implored -- he laughed. I preached -- he sneered. I threatened -- he swore. I kicked him -- he called the police. I pulled his nose -- he blew it, and offered to bet the Devil his head that I would not venture to try that experiment again. For once I would have taken him up upon his threatening wager, and would have won for the Arch-Enemy Mr.

Dammit's head, which was small and thus his loss would have been small too.

But on this particular day, we strolled on together, our route taking us in the direction of a river. There was a bridge and we resolved to cross it. It was roofed over with few windows and was thus uncomfortably dark. Toby was excessively lively and it was not impossible that he was affected with the transcendentals. I am not well enough versed, however, in the diagnosis of this disease to speak with decision upon the point.

Our progress across the bridge was impeded by a turn-stile of some height. Through this I made my way quietly, pushing it around as usual. But this turn would not serve Mr. Dammit. He insisted upon leaping the turnstile, and said he could cut a pigeon-wing over it in the air. Seeing my disbelief, he straightaway offered to bet the Devil his head that he could.

I heard, close at my elbow, a slight cough, which sounded very much like the ejaculation "ahem!" I turned to see in a nook of the bridge the figure of a little lame old gentleman. His hands were clasped pensively together over his stomach, and his two eyes were carefully rolled up into the top of his head. I perceived that he wore a black silk apron over his neat, clean clothes; and this was a thing that I thought very odd. He uttered a second "ahem!"

Remarks of this laconic nature are nearly unanswerable, so I turned to Mr. Dammit for assistance. I felt particularly puzzled, and when a man is particularly puzzled he must knit his brows and look savage, or he is pretty sure to look like a fool.

"Dammit," observed I -- although this sounded very much like an oath -- "Dammit,"

I suggested -- "the gentleman says 'ahem!'"

"You don't say?" gasped he at length. "Are you quite sure he said that? Well, here goes then -- ahem!"

At this the little gentleman seemed pleased -- God only knows why. "I am quite sure you will win the bet, Dammit," he said, "but we are obliged to have the trial you know, for the sake of mere form."

"Ahem!" replied my friend, taking off his coat with a deep sigh. Not another word more did I ever know him to say.

"Aha!" thought I -- "this is quite a remarkable silence on the part of Toby Dammit."

The old gentleman now took Toby by the arm a few paces back from the turn-stile. "Wait here, till I take my place by the stile, so that I may see whether you go over it handsomely, and transcendently, and don't omit any flourishes of the pigeon-wing. A mere form, you know."

After a moment of profound reflection, the old gentleman finally gave the word. I saw my poor friend set off in a strong gallop, and spring grandly from the floor of the bridge, cutting the most awful flourishes with his legs as he went up and over the top of the stile; and of course I thought it an unusually singular thing that he did not continue to go over. Down came Mr. Dammit on the flat of his back on the same side of the stile from which he had started. At the same instant I saw the old gentleman limping off at the top of his speed, having caught something in his apron that fell from the darkness of the arch just over the turn-stile.

I hurried up to Toby and found that he had received what might be termed a serious injury. The truth is, he had been deprived

of his head, which after a close search I could not find anywhere. About five feet just above the top of the turn-stile, there extended a great iron bar that served to strengthen the arch covering the bridge. With the edge of this brace it appeared evident that the neck of my unfortunate friend had come precisely in contact.

I bedewed the grave of Toby Dammit with my tears, worked a bar sinister on his family coat of arms, and for the general expenses of his funeral sent in my very moderate bill to the transcendentalists. The scoundrels refused to pay it, so I had Mr. Dammit dug up at once, and sold him for dog's meat.

VIII:1 [Poe stands, takes a bow. BLACK out. Poe lights the candle and crosses with luggage to the WHITE area.]

In Heaven a spirit doth dwell
 "Whose heart-strings are a lute;"
 None sing so wildly well
 As the angel Israfael,
 And the giddy stars (so legends tell)
 Ceasing their hymns, attend the spell
 Of his voice, all mute.

And they say (the starry choir)
 And the other listening things)
 That Israfaeli's fire
 Is owing to that lyre
 By which he sits and sings --
 The trembling living wire
 Of those unusual strings.

Therefore, thou art not wrong,
 Israfael, who despisest
 An unimpassioned song;
 To thee the laurels belong,
 Best bard, because the wisest!
 Merrily live, and long!

Yes, Heaven is thine; but this
 Is a world of sweets and sour;

Our flowers are merely -- flowers,
 And the shadow of thy perfect bliss
 Is the sunshine of ours.

If I could dwell
 Where Israfael
 Hath dwelt, and he were I,
 He might not sing so wildly well
 A mortal melody,
 While a bolder note than this might swell
 From my lyre within the sky.

IX:1 [Poe blows out the candle. During the preceding, he has up-ended the trunk and placed the chair beside it as a stair. He has climbed atop the trunk and is standing, looking upward. As the candle goes out, the WHITE spot comes up. He uses his height above the floor to indicate "the precipice"]

A paradoxical something which we may call the imp of the perverse.

We stand upon the brink of a precipice. We peer into the abyss -- we grow sick and dizzy. Our first impulse is to shrink from the danger. Unaccountably we remain. One thought, although a fearful one, chills the very marrow of our bones with the fierceness of the delight of its horror. It is merely the idea of what would be our sensations during the sweeping precipitancy of a fall from such a height. And this fall -- this rushing annihilation -- for the very reason that it involves that one most ghastly and loathsome image of suffering ever presented to our imagination -- for this very cause do we now the most vividly desire it. And because our reason violently deters us from the brink, therefore do we most impetuously approach it. If there be no friendly arm to check us, or if we fail in a sudden effort to prostrate ourselves backward from the abyss, we plunge, and are destroyed.

X:1 [The VIOLET spot comes up as Poe takes a

vile from his coat pocket. He considers it. During the next speech, he descends the trunk via the chair. packs them both together, and crosses to VIOLET area, where he arranges the the trunk as if it were a grave with the chair as headstone.]

One night, returning home, much intoxicated, from one of my haunts about town, I fancied a cat that avoided my presence. I took from my waistcoat-pocket a penknife, grasped the poor beast by the throat, and deliberately cut one of its eyes from the socket.

Who has not, a hundred times, found himself committing a vile or stupid action, for no other reason than he knows he should not? Have we not a perpetual inclination to violence for its own nature -- to do wrong for wrong's sake only?

In cold blood I slipped a noose about the cat's neck and hung it to the limb of a tree -- hung it with the tears streaming from my eyes, and with the bitterest remorse at my heart -- hung because I felt it had given me no reason for offense -- hung because I knew that in so doing I was committing a sin -- a deadly sin that would so jeopardize my immortal soul as to place it beyond the reach of the infinite mercy of the Most Merciful and Most Terrible God. . . .

XI:1 [The WHITE spot has gone out. Poe kneels by the grave, considering the vile of poison.]

Take this kiss upon the brow!
 And, in parting from you now,
 Thus much let me avow --
 Your are not wrong, who deem
 That my days have been a dream;
 Yet if hope has flown away
 In a night or in a day,
 In a vision, or in none,
 Is it therefore the less gone?
All that we see or seem

Is but a dream within a dream?

[Poe lies down on the grave as the stone carved sepulcher.]

I stand amid the roar
 Of a surf-tormented shore,
 And I hold within my hand
 Grains of the golden sand --
 How few! yet how they creep
 through my fingers to the deep,
 While I weep -- while I weep!
 O God! can I not grasp
 Them with a tighter clasp?
 O God! can I not save
One from the pitiless wave?
 Is all that we may see or seem
 But a dream within a dream?

XII:1 [The VIOLET spot goes out. During the BLACK out, Poe crosses to center of RED area.]

Edgar Allan Poe is a character created of my own imagination. I will create my character so as to always show the mass that their double exists, their nemesis is at hand, that there is a balance to be maintained. I will bring order to the mind and chaos to the moral.

I perceive a law of periodicity: a novel Universe swelling into existence, and then subsiding into nothingness, at every throb of the human Heart Divine. That law operates within us; it is our own.

In the parlor I will wear one mask. In the lecture hall I will wear another. In the graveyard I will wear a third.

XII:2 [The RED spot comes up on Poe's face.]

And in Prince Prospero's seventh room I will wear this mask.

Prince Prospero became aware of the presence of a masked figure that did out-Herod Herod,

going beyond the bounds of even the prince's indefinite decorum. Even with the utterly lost, to whom life and death are equally jests, there are matters of which no jest can be made. The entire company of revelers now saw the tall and gaunt figure, shrouded from head to foot in the habiliments of the grave.

"Who dares," demanded the prince hoarsely -- "who dares insult us with this blasphemous mockery? Seize him and unmask him."

He rushed hurriedly through the six chambers, bearing aloft a drawn dagger. He approached to within three or four feet of the figure, when he turned suddenly and confronted the prince. There was a sharp cry -- and the dagger dropped gleaming upon the sable carpet, followed by the dead body of Prince Prospero. A throng of revelers at once threw themselves into the black apartment. They gasped to find the grave garments and corpse-like mask untenanted by any tangible form.

And now was acknowledged the presence of the Red Death. He had come like a thief in the night. And one by one dropped the revelers in the blood-bedewed halls of their revel. And Darkness and Decay and the Red Death held illimitable dominion over all.

XII:3 [RED spot changes to WHITE spot which ever expands throughout this last speech to include the entire audience.]

Every poem; it is said, should inculcate a moral; and by this moral is the poetical merit of the work to be adjudged. We Americans especially have patronized this happy idea; and we Richmonders, very especially, have developed it in full. We have taken it into our heads that to write a poem simply for the poem's sake, and to acknowledge such to have been our design, would be to confess ourselves radically wanting in the true Poetic dignity and force: -- but the simple fact is, that, would we but permit ourselves to look into

our own souls, we should immediately there discover that under the sun there neither exists nor can exist any work more thoroughly dignified -- more supremely noble than this very poem -- this poem per se -- this poem which is a poem and nothing more -- this poem written solely for the poem's sake.

I am Poe per se.

[BLACK OUT]

"The Masque of the Red Death" with its progression through the seven rooms of varying colors had seemed to offer an episodic structure allowing Poe to journey through his castle/life, finally reaching some conclusion in his final annihilation. Visually impressive, it proved too wordy, though, offering little possibility for action. The overall structure had seemed sound, but the transition from one castle room to the next was too abrupt, raising more questions than providing answers. In this script I did choose to define the lecture hall as the place where Poe's metaphysics are misunderstood and discarded in favor of the humor of "Toby Dammit." This script proffered a relationship between Poe's biographical and artistic lives by allowing the annihilation of the Old Man in "The Tell-tale Heart" to seem to grow out of the hatred he bore John Allan in an actual letter Poe wrote to his step-father. Also the fatal attraction of "The Imp of the Perverse" is

introduced as motivation for exploring the darker side of human consciousness throughout Poe's work. These were good bits and pieces that seemed actable, yet not sufficiently cohesive to satisfy the one-man show format. The idea-germ that I pursued was not consistently at work throughout the play.

Script Four: The Rehearsal Script

The fourth script was completed March 16, 1981, during the rehearsal process. My perspective as a playwright diminished from this point, for I placed myself in the position of subject and object simultaneously. I was still shaping the structure of the play's skeleton while trying to command the play's muscles as an actor -- muscles that had yet to be created. It was a true conflict of the analytic playwright pitted against the intuition of the actor, and it hardly seemed strange that this became Poe's problem in the play. This fourth script was pieced together and torn apart nightly.

The rehearsal process can best be understood by meeting each member of the production company and following their function throughout the rehearsal day.

The main focus of the daily routine was the evening rehearsal. I was there as an actor to perform the scheduled

scenes before the director, Dr. James W. Parker. Dr. Parker reworked those scenes, testing their dramatic strengths as pieces of playwriting, and demanding stronger acting choices.

After a rehearsal, Parker's notes were discussed with Susan Damron, the assistant director, and Randy Belcher, the playwriting consultant. They helped edit the scenes, solving the problems Parker had set for us in the evening rehearsal. We three would then go home to type our ideas for the next night's rehearsal.

The afternoon acting sessions with Patch Clark, acting coach, were designed to solve physical problems, make character choices, and put Parker's notes into action.

Then, before the main rehearsal began again the next evening, Jesse Reter, the stage manager, would collect the newly scripted materials and integrate them into the production script.

What follows contains the most suitable scripted pieces from Script Three and therefore these are not reprinted here, and some new materials which are. The convention of the seven rooms of "The Red Death" are condensed into one: the hotel room, so the lighting plot and transitional spoken material are not advanced into the Fourth Script.

Script Four

The Rehearsal Script

Poe per se

Part I

I:1 "Red Death"

Part II

II:1 Lecture: Eureka!

Part III

III:1 "Alone"

Part IV

IV:1 Parlor

Part V

V:1 "Red Death"

Part VI

VI:1 John Allen letter
VI:2 "Tell-tale Heart"

Part VII

Muddy letter

(At this point I departed from any previously printed material from Script Three, and these words were added).

Part VIII

VIII:1 Lecture: Eureka!
 VIII:2 Elizabeth Barrett Browning, I will not do as
 so many men would and have done, for the in-
 herent chivalry of the critical man renders
 it not only an unpleasant task to him "to
 speak ill of a woman," (and a woman and her
 book are identical), but an almost impossible
 task not to laud her ad nauseum. But I will
 not subject you to such puffery.

Her wild and magnificent genius seems to
 have contented itself with points -- to
 have exulted itself in flashes; but it is
 the profusion -- the unparalled number and
 close propinquity of these points and
 flashes wich render her work one flame, and
 justify us in calling her, unhesitatingly,
 the greatest -- the most glorious of her sex.

And to this most glorious woman I dedicate
 "The Raven."

(I now return to the previous script with just scene
 titles, identified only by their names. Please refer to
 Script Three for scene titles).

VIII:3 "The Raven"
 VIII:4 "Toby Dammit"

Part IX

IX:1 "Israfel"
 IX:2 "The Imp of the Perverse"
 IX:3 "The Black Cat"

(Again I add onto Script Three's material at this
 point, so the next two Parts are printed in their entirety).

Part X

X:1 Analytic: Dupin's Bi-part Soul

There can be no doubt of that, . . .Dupin, this is beyond my comprehension. I do not hesitate to say that I am amazed, and can scarcely credit my senses. How was it possible you should know I was thinking of --?

"Of Chantilly -- why do you pause? You were remarking to yourself that his diminutive figure unfitted him for tragedy."

I dwelt meditatively upon the old philosophy of the Bi-part Soul, and amused myself with the fancy of a double Dupin -- the creative and the resolvent.

Part XI

XI:1 Mystic: Ligeia's poetry

Stop your chains of logic and leave me at once!

Dupin?. . .Dupin, I'm sorry, but your reasoning escapes me, yet you see me more clearly than I do myself. How did you create my inner meditations -- No! It is I who created you! How can that be?!

"The truly imaginative are never otherwise than analytic."

Yes, but that can't be all -- Wait! Who are you?

My name is Ligeia; I am your mystic. You are right; there is more. What we vaguely term the moral of any sentiment is its mystic expression. Dupin can only speak of facts, surfaces. But there is an undercurrent of meaning, one that suggests, rather than states. It is a Naiad voice, a mystic lyre, echoing

from the soul below a far more ethereal note from beyond this surface. It is that ever-green and radiant Paradise which the true poet knows, and knows alone, as the Eden of his dreams."

(Here I return from the new material of Script Four to the final scene of Script Three).

Part XII

XII:1 Poe per se

In Script Four the locales of Script Three were unified, allowing all the places and events to occur within Poe's imagination. The parlor banter now comes as a flashback memory, but all other scenes are triggered by onstage stimuli: a letter, a search for coins, an encounter with a cat, the need to practice his lecture hall repertoire. The blending of Poe's daily life with his fantastic imagination was achieved in a way that might please the Poe scholar and the playwright. "The Red Death" format was reduced to the parlor scenes where Poe defends himself on various subjects in a question/answer session. The imp of the perverse induces Poe to destroy his social and literary detractors in the parlor scene in an outpouring of "The Red Death," art mixing with reality, just as he had "annihilated" John Allan through "The Tell-tale Heart." The character of the criminal investigator Dupin is called in

on the case, but Poe finds only partial answers. The area of the intuitive is left without a voice. I looked to one of Poe's women to supply that voice: Ligeia, the mystic. The idea worked, but the scene did not. Without a strong, clear convention (as with the masked Noh characters), the transitions seemed silly with both characters speaking through Poe as if he were at an Appalachian tent revival speaking in tongues! The "Poe per se" speech provided a sweeping finale, but how could this speech resolve the inner conflict of the analytic and the mystic? Poe needed to defeat the imp, yet still use that power to create beauty. It was Poe's character that needed to be strong and clear to finally drop the masks of Dupin and Ligeia and speak for himself. Why not let him discover this on-stage?

Script Five

The Performance Script

The fifth attempt became the performance script, completed March 29, 1981. Actor's "beats" were added to clarify transitions and allow for rhythm builds. The awareness of an audience became more important, considering how long someone could sit and watch one face, hear one voice with a minimal set to distract.

Apart from the daily rehearsal routine, there were two important input sources during the last week. Maury Erickson, acting consultant, viewed a rehearsal and gave notes on what he thought was clear and what needed more definition. This aid was invaluable because he offered a fresh eye to a piece I had been living with for a year. He helped the actor find an active pursuit in making transitions, such as from the John Allan letter to "The Tell-tale Heart." Erickson suggested that Poe was afraid of dreams while asleep, and his imagination while awake. Poe must find activities to fill his mind in order to shut out dreams and imaginings. This gave the actor a strong acting intention to play while performing even the smallest actions. Yet the fascination of the perverse was too great for Poe, drawing him into the dangerous vortices of attraction his mind found even in the most mundane corners of reality.

Lou Szari, the lighting designer, found ways of anchoring the nebulous ideas of the script, the rapid fluctuations of reality that occur in the mind of the character, and the poetry in a realistic, down-to-earth hotel room, using lights to evoke a mood, yet identify a place. Blue moonlight streaming through imaginary windows gave the actor a focus in the audience for the poetry and readings,

defining an interior private world of the hotel (and Poe's mind), and an exterior public world of the street (and Poe's society).

Script Five

The Performance Script

Poe per se

Part I

I:1 "Rue Morgue"
 [Poe enters as if frightened by something pursuing him. He removes scarf and places it over the back of the chair. Crosses to window, parts curtain, looks down to street. Finding nothing, he turns back into room and sees papers scattered on floor. He picks them up and begins sorting through them. He stops at one page and reads aloud.]

"The Murders in the Rue Morgue". . ."We must not judge of the means," said Dupin, "by this shell of an examination. . . I am satisfied with having defeated him in his own castle."

[Poe places the page on the trunk and goes onto the next page.]

I:2 Muddy letter
 I:3 "Alone"
 I:4 Lecture: Eureka! -- Matter
 I:5 "Rue Morgue"

[Poe checks hand gesture once more. He picks up "Rue Morgue" story.]

". . .the meaning of Dupin flitted -- ". . . flitted. . .flitted -- "flitted over my mind.

I seemed to be upon the verge of comprehension, without power to comprehend -- as men, at times, find themselves upon the brink of remembrance, without being able, in the end, to remember."

[In a French accent.]

"I am satisfied with having defeated him in his own castle."

Part II

II:1 Parlor: poets, transcendentalists, "water" speech.

[SOUND: voices A, B, C, and D rise in a babble until A is heard distinctly. Poe identifies each new speaker with a look as he imagines them.]

A: Oh, Mr. Poe! Delighted to have you at my home. I did so enjoy your lecture tonight.

B: Here he is: Iambic Poe! the commanche of literature! the tomahawk critic! Do you need a drink, Mr Poe?

C: What do you think of Shelley's work, Mr. Poe?

Poe: Unfinished rough drafts, wanting yet another rewrite.

C: And Longfellow, Mr. Poe?

Poe: A plagiarist, a didactic poet, and a writer of hexameters.

D: Surely you enjoy Tennyson!

Poe: A school arose -- if that absurd term must still be employed -- a school -- a system of rules -- based upon the Shelley who had none. It was the school of all Lawlessness -- of obscurity, quaintness, and

exaggeration -- the misplaced didacticism of Wordsworth, the even more preposterously anomalous metaphysicianism of Coleridge, and the extremism of poetic inconsistency attained only by Tennyson.

[SOUND: laughter.]

A: Why did you dedicate your "Raven" to Elizabeth Barrett Browning?

Poe: I refused to do as most critical men have done in lauding Miss Browning's work ad nauseum simply because she is a woman. She remarked that, since my review was not all puffery, but rather sharply worded, I had at least read the work before I criticized it, a practice nowadays "honored more in the breach than in the observance."

"The Raven" I offer as a poem, not born of inspiration, as with Miss Browning's work, but rather by design. Every choice -- from the raging storm enveloping the silent bed-chamber, to the sonorous refrain of the non-reasoning bird -- all designed logically to capture the most melancholy of subjects: the death of a beautiful woman, in the most appropriate form for beauty: poetry.

C: Where do you get your ideas for those horrible stories?

Poe: The newspapers.

D: It is true you do the crossword puzzles daily?

Poe: It is good exercise.

B: Isn't it true you were to have an audience with President Tyler, but you appeared for the interview "drunk as a skunk?"

[There is a slight pause, while Poe looks fixedly at voice B.]

C: I read somewhere that you consider the South as tasteless in all matters relating to the making of money.

Poe: It is that degrading spirit of utilitarianism, the American love of gain, which sees in mountains and waterfalls only quarries and manufacturing sites.

B: Does that mean you are a Transcendentalist, Mr. Poe, along with Emerson and Thoreau?

Poe: I see that you are taking notes, and therefore must be a reporter. I will try to give you something quotable.

I hold no sympathies with either Mr. Emerson or Mr. Thoreau. Their passion for the "infinite of the private man," tripping merrily off to their waldensian woodland, is a most illogical, and indeed, cowardly response to the evils of society.

How absurd! Where would they find such pleasant conversation as this, or a good glass of Amontillado, or my current essay in "Godey's Ladies Book!"

B: Speaking of drinking, Mr. Poe, didn't Mr. White fire you from the Southern Literary Messenger for being drunk before breakfast?

[Pause. Poe looks at voice B.]

A: Your moustache so becomes you. Is it recent?

Poe: My step-father never liked it because I modeled it after my childhood idol, Lord Byron.

D: [Gasping] How decadent! England has not produced a good poet since Milton!

Poe: But the fact is that Milton was no poet, but rather a writer of epics. Once having read Paradise Lost, you would be too weary to

derive pleasure from regaining it.

B: May I throw you another question, Mr. Poe?

[Pause]

Did you not upon arriving in Newark, Delaware on a lecture tour, go directly to the Deer Park Hotel and proceed to drink heavily? And did you not, upon leaving the hotel, much intoxicated, land directly in a mud puddle, presenting yourself one hour late to your waiting audience?

Poe: No That is not true.

B: And were you not drunk when you proposed marriage to Mrs. Whitman?

Poe: No!

B: It is reported you were drunk on the day your wife died.

Poe: My dear [Pause] sir, quote me on this. I pledge you, before God, the solemn word of a gentleman, that I am temperate even to rigor. You will never be brought to believe that I could write what I daily write, if I were a drunkard.

But, for a brief period, while in Richmond, and edited the Messenger, I certainly did give way to the temptation held out on all sides by the spirit of Southern conviviality. My sensitive temperament could not stand an excitement which was an everyday matter to my companions.

But now I rise early, eat moderately, drink nothing but water, and take abundant and regular exercise in the open air. I have now only to repeat to you my solemn assurance that my habits are as far removed from intemperance as the day from night. My sole drink is water.

And now you must excuse me.

II:2 "Red Death"

[Poe returns to floor papers, picks one up, and reads.]

"The Red Death"

[Poe steps downstage to view the previous scene.]

It was a gay and magnificent revel. There were grotesque and arabesque figures with unsuited limbs and appointments. There were much of the beautiful, much of the wanton, much of the bizarre, something of the terrible, and not a little of that which might have excited disgust. To and fro there stalked, in fact, a multitude of dreams. And these -- the dreams -- writhed in and about, causing the wild music of the orchestra to seem as the echo of their steps. And then, for a moment, all is still, and all is silent.

[Pause]

The dreams are stiff-frozen as they stand. And now was acknowledged the presence of the Red Death. He had come like a thief in the night. And one by one dropped the revelers in the blood-bedewed halls of their revel. And Darkness and Decay and the Red Death held illimitable dominion over all.

Part III

III:1 John Allan letter
III:2 "Tell-tale Heart"

Part IV

IV:1 Lecture: Eureka! -- Energy
IV:2 "The Raven"
IV:3 "Toby Dammit"

Part V

V:1 Parlor: "The Raven"

[SCOUND: voices A, B, C, D rise in a babble
unitl voice A is distinctly heard.]

A: Oh, Mr. Poe! That was such a lovely
lecture and the story of that poor man
with the awful name -- well, I thought I would
die laughtin. Recite "The Raven," Mr. Poe,
won't you?

Poe: No one seemed to want to hear it earlier.
I'm sure your guests --

D: "Once upon a midnight, dearie, while I
wandered, weak and dreary --"

Poe: I believe the verse goes:
"Once upon a midnight dreary, while I pondered
weak and weary,
Over many a quaint and curious volume of
forgotten lore --
While I nodded, nearly napping, suddenly
there came a tapping,
As of someone lightly rapping, rapping at my
chamber door.
' 'T is some visitor,' I muttered, 'tapping
at my chamber door --
Only this and nothing more.'

Ah, distinctly I remember it was in the
bleak December;
And each separate dying ember wrought its
ghost upon the floor.
Eagerly I wished the morrow;
--vainly I had sought to borrow
From my books surcrease from sorrow --
sorrow for the lost Lenore --
For the rare and radiant maiden whom the
angels name Lenore --
Nameless here for evermore.

Presently my soul grew stronger;
hesitating then no longer,

'Sir,' I said, 'or Madam, truly your forgive-
 I implore;
 But the fact is I was napping, and so gently
 you came rapping,
 And so faintly you came tapping, tapping at
 my chamber door,
 That I scarce was sure I heard you' --
 here I opened wide the door; --
 Darkness there and nothing more.

Back into the chamber turning, all my soul
 within me burning,
 Soom again I heard a tapping somewhat louder
 than before.
 'Surely,' said I, 'sure that is something at
 my window lattice;
 Let me see, then, what thereat is, and this
 mystery explore --
 Let my heart be still a moment and this
 mystery explore; --
 'T is the wind and nothing more!'

Open here I flung the shutter, when, with
 many a flirt and flutter
 In there stepped a stately Raven of the
 saintly days of yore.
 Not the least obeisance made he;
 not a minute stopped or stayed he;
 But, with mien of lord or lady,
 perched above my chamber door --
 Perched upon a bust of Pallas just above
 my chamber door --
 Perched, and sat, and nothing more.

Then this ebony bird beguiling my sad fancy
 into smiling,
 By the grave and stern decorum of the
 countenance it wore,
 'Though thy crest be shorn and shaven, thou,'
 said I, 'art sure no craven,
 Ghastly grim and ancient Raven
 Wandering from the Nightly shore --
 Tell me what thy lordly name is on the
 Night's Plutonian shore!'
 Quote the Raven, 'Nevermore.'

And the Raven, never flitting, still is
 sitting, still is sitting
 On the pallid bust of Pallas just above
 my chamber door;
 And his eyes have all the seeming of a
 demon's that is dreaming,
 And the lamp-light o'er him streaming
 throws his shadow on the floor;
 And my soul from out that shadow that lies
 floating on the floor
 Shall be lifted -- nevermore!"

V:2 Parlor: "The Blue Jay"

D: Oh, Mr. Poe, that is so beautiful. I
 like it especially the way you mix up the
 meters and your use of internal rhyme and
 that eerie refrain -- it's so sonorous!

Poe: You must have read my "Philosophy of
 Composition."

D: I have, over and over. You see, I'm
 something of a poet myself. I often allow
 my Muses to run rampant through me! I
 have a poem here that you have inspired in
 me. Can you help me finish it?

Poe: Well, I don't know how much help --

D; Please?

Poe: Oh, alright. Where is it?

D: Right here.

[POE picks a page up off the floor as if it
 were voice D's.]

Poe: "The Bluejay". . .Charming. "Sweet and
 fragile the flittering warbler tweets from
 branch to branch. Sing your silent song,
 oh nobler breast of blue, for my love is lost
among the crystal seas. . ." Just charming.

Part VI

VI:1 "Black Cat"/"Imp"

[POE laughs at the scene he created. SOUND: cat crying. POE goes to window, parts curtains, looks down at stree.]

It is gone now. It was as black as this long night. I thought I might have a visitor to pass it with me.

[POE closes curtain.]

I first saw the black cat in profile. Its eye was fixed upon some object beyond my view. Then it started at hearing my foot-fall, and turned to look at me full-faced, recoiling from my approach with a hiss and a hunching of its spine, displaying all its hairs at symmetrical perpendiculars to its body. Symmetrical in every way -- save one: it had but one eye! By the irregular cuts and gashes, and by the way nature chose to heal the socket, it seemed as though the eye had been cut out, quite deliberately. What a vengeful spirit must inhabit that black crater that sees only half the day and an eternity of night! What a black soul, indeed, he must be that plotted, and then took so grotesque an action.

Surely I could never do such a thing. But I can imagine a villain so depraved, so deserted, so alone. Oh, my God!; here is a thought far more frightening than the horrible image of that beast! How could I find sympathy with such a fiend? How could I imagine the details of so ghastly a deed? Unless there lurks within my powers one that seeks to harm my soul. Unless it lies within me to wrench from that beast which God has framed this same eye! I am an accomplice in this crime -- I admit the deed!!

[POE opens the curtain once again, as if seeking forgiveness from the cat.]

Stop it!

[Poe closes the curtain abruptly, and crosses to chair.]

I can't be alone tonight.

[POE produces a pencil from his pocket, and begins to write.]

VI:2 "Annabel Lee"
[Silence]

Well, enough of that! Now what" There is tomorrow's lecture to think about. Eureka!, of course. Perhaps I should plan on some-thing more. They must get their money's worth, by all means! I'll give them. . .
"Annabel Lee"

I was a child and she was a child,
In this kingdom by the sea,
But we loved with a love that was more than
love --
I and my Annabel Lee --

The angels, not half so happy in heaven
Went envying her and me --
Yes! -- that was the reason (as all men know,
In this kingdom by the sea)
That the wind came out of the cloud by night,
Chilling and killing my Annabel Lee.

But our love it was stronger by far than
the love
Of those who were older than we --
Of many far wise than we --
And neither the angels in heaven above,
Nor the demons down under the sea,
Can ever dissever my soul from the soul
Of the beautiful Annabel Lee.

VI:3 "The Bells"

. . .or better still,

Hear the sledges with the bells --
 Silver bells!
 What a world of merriment their melody
 foretells!
 How they tinkle, tinkle, tinkle,
 In the icy air of night!
 Keeping time, time, time,
 In a sort of Runic rhyme,
 To the tintinnabulation that so musically
 wells
 From the bells, bells, bells, bells,
 Bells, bells, bells --
 From the jingling and the tinkling of the
 bells.

Hear the tolling of the bells --
 Iron bells!
 What a world of solemn thought their monody
 compels!
 And the people -- ah, the people --
 They that dwell up in the steeple,
 All alone,
 And who tolling, tolling, tolling,
 In that muffled monotone,
 Feel a glory in so rolling
 On the human heart a stone --

. . .Yes, they will like that.

VL:4 Dupin/"Dream Within a Dream"/"Rue Morgue"/
"For Annie"

[Silence. Picks up newspaper, sits, begins
 to read.]

"Extraordinary murders. . .Mary Cecilia
 Rogers. . ."

[Paper is lowered. Poe stares straight
 ahead. Pause.]

I wonder how Dupin would solve the crime
 of my existence?

[Poe leans back and assumes the character of Dupin.]

"I am no charlatan, but the greatest detective of all time. Most men, in respect to me, Auguste C. Dupin, wear windows in their bosoms. I can only present you with the facts, details of the suspect's behavior. Nothing more. Has there been a crime committed?"

You know there has! The evidence is that I am alone. Sometimes I have these feelings
 . . . --

"I only concern myself with the analytical, and feelings are not involved. What a man shows to the world are the only facts there are, and it is with these details that you must concern yourself.

"You were orphaned at age two. Your step-father withdrew his hopes and money from your aid. Your best poem sold for a mere \$10. And so your trade could not support your ailing child-bride, you died after years of sickness. You crave the society of men and women because it is the one thing you hate most: hypocrisy, yet it is the one thing you cannot have: companionship. You are alone because you were made to be apart, separate. Those are the facts."

Facts, facts! Isn't there anything else? What about the soul, the mystic? Isn't there an undercurrent of meaning, one that suggests rather than states? There is a mystic lyre, echoing from the soul below a far more ether-eal note from beyond this surface. I feel it. It is that evergreen and radiant Paradise which the true poet knows, and knows alone, as the Eden of his dreams.

"That is not for me to say. I can only present you with the facts."

Dupin, you see more clearly than I do myself.

How did you create your logic? No! It is I who created you! How can that be! Are you a dream?

"A dream within a dream."

[Poe goes to podium.]

You are not wrong, who deem
That my days have been as a dream;
Yet if hope has flown away
In a night, or in a day,
In a vision, or in none,
Is it therefore the less gone?
All that we may see or seem
Is but a dream within a dream.

Dupin, I am staisfied with having defeated you in your own castle.

Thank Heaven! the crisis
The danger is past
And the fever called "Living"
Is conquered at last.

In the Original Unity of the First Thing
lies the Secondary Cause of All Things, with
the Germ of their Inevitable Annihilation.

All the dark imps and shining angels that inhabit my brain -- all are components of Edgar Allan Poe; just as you and I are particles that inhabit the brain of God. Is it through God's creation that we exist and find universal purpose, just as it is through my imagination that my characters live and find their moral?

I perceive a law of periodicity: a novel universe swelling into existence, and then subsiding into nothingness at every throb of the human Heart Divine. That law operates within us; it is our own self.

Edgar Allan Poe is a character of my own imagination. It is within that character that my moral lies, if only you had ears to hear the mystic lyre. The simple fact is

this: If only we would permit ourselves to look into our own soul, we would immediately there discover that under the sun there neither exists nor can exist any work more thoroughly dignified -- more supremely noble than this very poem -- this poem per se -- this poem which is a poem and nothing more -- this poem written solely for the poem's sake.

I am Poe per se.

[POE returns to the chair, sits.]

the fever
that maddened my brain --
The fever called "Living"
That burned in my brain
The fever is conquered at last.

I am Poe per se.

The Script in Performance

Further script information as it related to my acting problems was gained by putting the script on stage, in performance. When I performed the script, I felt out of touch with the audience, that very character Poe needed to consummate a relationship. One reason was the fact that rock bands were playing in Shafer Court next to the theatre on April 16 and 17, 1981. The audience attending my dress rehearsals, including my director, could give no response, much less notes, because they could hear nothing but the deafening music. So I came to face my first "real" audience without the benefit of a true dress rehearsal. For external environmental reasons I felt myself in a vacuum, alone. I could only be guided by my intellect, my guess at the

emotional connection necessary with the audience.

One performance note I received from the acting coach was that I anticipated the action. I gave a performance, not simply doing actions. I allowed the audience (the "real" critical strangers watching the performances) to interfere with my playing. They were watching the show through my eyes, when I wanted to see it through theirs! All the actions were filtered, edited, calculated as if I were doing an action and watching the action performed both at the same time.

So, responding to that note, I began to trust the mechanism, the process, the work I had done. I began to act, for myself, and less for the audience. But this alteration did not solve the audience distance problem. I found myself lingering over images, seeing that third color in the "Tell-tale Heart" man's iris, smelling the stagnant air and perfume within Lenore's bedchamber, hearing the bells speak. I began to enjoy myself sensually, emotionally. But my internal clock was working overtime while it lost pace with the slower external one, the one the audience saw only as pauses and gaps in the action. The emotional response to seeing the imagery, allowing my body to indulge in sensual stimuli, served to widen the gap between my internal intellectual, thinking clock and the physical-emotional outer clock -- the very parts of myself that I as an actor

was working to integrate.

CHAPTER III

EVALUATION

The evolution of the script from research through performance posed many problems for the actor; a great deal had to be told in 66 minutes. The subject of Edgar Allan Poe was well chosen and the attack appropriate. The script met the challenge of satisfying the scholar with the definite limits of an historically accurate character, and the playwright with the infinite potential of an interesting, living human being. The format suited the subject because of Poe's loneliness and his need to find an audience, to keep sending energy in search of a response. Any successes with the audience element of production are more difficult to measure. They certainly were exposed to the conflict of the analytic and the mystic which plagued Poe's inner life, and seemed to follow Poe's catharsis in his discovery of his universal purpose on stage. The script offered the audience many unfamiliar sides of Poe's character, and perhaps they came to a better understanding of how Poe imagined his universe. Any gap in the audience's belief in the reality of Mr. Poe's character leads me to the discussion of the fourth element of the production: the actor.

The script demanded instant and powerful energy bursts, exploding many times in opposite directions ("Tell-tale Heart" bursting in upon the John Allan letter; "The Red Death" demolishing the politeness of the parlor party). I found that the physical and emotional swings were not pushed far enough by the actor, and that the energy necessary for such swings was not sustained. Ms. Clark's note about anticipation is to the point. I indicated where madness or fear or violence or passionate need was to take place, as a playwright indicates the pigeon-holes into which scenes could be dropped, but I did not fully portray the unknown regions of insanity necessary to show the effort Poe exerted to maintain an even keel psychologically, his struggle between the analytic and the mystic. Hence the audience could not work through Poe's problems with him on stage. The energy was diffuse without an adequate or specific idea to house it and drive it.

In spite of Dr. Parker and Ms. Clark's efforts to make the thoughts and therefore actions of the character clear, I perceived my personal physical mannerisms slipping in to fill the gaps where my belief in Poe's character left off. The script demanded very precise 180 degree character shifts in order to dramatically juxtapose the scenes, and the need for speed was obvious -- all those words had to be said. These mechanical, technical needs of the script

promoted that "stacatto delivery" which I was trying to avoid. Some of the mechanism worked, and indeed, Poe was verbose if he was anything, but the acting exercise was to vary the speech patterns so the script could work for me, not be an enemy to an understanding of the man. Some progress was made with regard to the physical delivery, especially in "The Bells" and the final "Poe per se" speech. I felt very free physically, allowing the inner ideas to create the outer form. Indeed, both speeches were close to Poe's character breakthrough in the script, and this freedom of the body must have helped convey this idea. If I could have separated myself from Poe's verbal virtuosity (rather like rapier flourishes: pretty to look at, but cut nothing but wind), then I could have found the freedom to discover the emotional reality beyond the words, the dual consciousness developed by the Symbolists, that ambiguous byplay between text and subtext. The development of the script did force actor choices to be made, and did focus my energies on problems that were Poe's, but the choices were neither strong enough, nor engaging enough to command my total belief and hence, the audience's belief in the man and his struggle. Tension allowed the physical and verbal mannerisms of "stacatto delivery" to enter into the performance. My acting problems were properly identified and the attack appropriate, but more energy needed to be spent on

the details of Poe's moment-to-moment needs.

To overcome these vocal and physical problems of "stacatto delivery" I would go further in the discovery of Mr. Poe's physicality, showing a progression of debilitating health, yet a growing spirit throughout the play. This would give the actor physical obstacles against which he could play and overcome. This "sickness" motif would heighten the drama of his struggle, reminding him that his time and energies are limited, yet still he goes on to ask the impossible questions and to imagine the divine answers.

Also there needs to be more scenes where we see Poe at ease as a "normal" human being, not electrified from fear, raving on about the mean step-father, or lecturing to an unseen audience. The audience needs to see more private, "ordinary" moments that provide relief of tension and a yardstick of comparison to the "mad" Poe, as well as showing that Poe cannot escape his imaginings even in the most mundane activities, such as taking off his boots, or washing his face.

A third way of focusing energy within the scene to defeat "stacatto delivery" would be to develop the sound effects tape more fully to underscore the scenes, such as a clock ticking for "Alone," or a heart-beat underneath "Tell-tale Heart." This would give a constant attention and urgency to every moment. The onstage stimuli would draw

the actor into the scene and away from personal mannerisms.

The last recommendation I have is one that could begin with the initial entrance of the character and be carried throughout the play. There is a need for a heightened sense of the hunt, the overwhelming need to find out something tonight. The detective story of Poe's inner life must remain present and motivate everything that happens. This "hunt" energy must drive the play. As it stands Poe is driven by some nebulous force. At some point we need to see him take charge of his life, confronting his pursuers, and take up the chase himself. This kind of energy will give sweep and define the shape of the character in more specific terms than are now present in the script.

APPENDIX

This is the performance script presented in its entirety so the reader can determine the flow from one point to the next without referring to a previous script and without any editorial interruption.

POE PER SE*

*c 1981, Robert Williamson Storrs IV

Poe per se

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- VII. "E.A.P."/Poe per se.

[POE enters as if frightened by something pursuing him. He removes scarf and places it over the back of the chair. Crosses to window, parts curtain, looks down to street. Finding nothing he turns back into room and sees papers scattered on floor. He picks them up and begins sorting through them. He stops at one page and reads aloud:]

"The Murders in the Rue Morgue: 'We must not judge of the means,' said Dupin, 'by this shell of an examination. . . . I am satisfied with having defeated him in his own castle,'"

[He places the page on the trunk and goes onto the next page. He reads:]

"To my mother-in-law, Mrs. Maria Clemm."

[He discards the rest of the pages on the floor, and continues reading.]

MY DEAR, DEAR MUDDY,

I have been so ill since Virginia's death -- have had the cholera, or spasms quite as bad, and can now hardly hold the pen. I am excessively slothful and wonderfully industrious -- by fits.

I seem to have just wakened from some horrible dream, in which all was confusion, and suffering -- relieved only by the constant sense of your kindness. I really believe that I have been mad -- but indeed I have abundant reason to be so. For the first time during two months I find myself entirely myself -- dreadfully sick and depressed, but still myself.

From childhood's hour I have not been
As others were -- I have not seen
As other saw -- I could not bring
My passions from a common spring --
From the same source I have not taken
My sorrow -- I could not awaken
My heart to joy at the same tone --
And all I loved -- I loved alone --
Then -- in my childhood, in the dawn
Of a most stormy life -- was drawn
From every depth of good and ill
The mystery which binds me still --
From the torrent, or the fountain --
From the red cliff of the mountain --

From the sun that round me rolled
 In its autumn tint of gold --
 From the lightning in the sky
 As it passed me flying by --
 From the thunder and the storm --
 And the cloud that took the form
 When the rest of Heaven was blue
 Of a demon in my view.

Thank you. It is always a pleasure while travelling from city to town to be received with the customary graciousness and warmth by the good people of. . .

[he checks his notes]

. . . Norfolk, Virginia. Tonight I would like to address you from my metaphysical work, Eureka!.

In the Original Unity of the First Thing
 lies the Secondary Cause of All Things,
 with the Germ of their Inevitable Annihilation.

Let us content ourselves, tonight,
 with supposing to have been created,
 or made out of Nothing,
 by dint of God's Volition --
 at some point of Space
 which we will take as the center.

Take MATTER to the absolute extreme of Simplicity.
 Reason flies at once to Impartiality --
 to a particle --
 to one particle --
 a particle of one kind --
 of one character --
 of one nature --
 of one size --
 of one form --
 a particle positively a particle at all points --
 a particle absolutely unique and individual.
 The Original Unity.

The ultimate purpose of the created Particle:
 the constitution of the Universe from it,
 the Particle,
 effected by forcing the original
 and therefore normally One
 into the abnormal condition of Many. . .
 A diffusion from Unity, by means of the introduction

of a repulsive force by dint of God's Volition,
involves a tendency to return into Unity --

[He checks hand gesture once more. He picks up "Rue Morgue"
story:]

. . .the meaning of Dupin flitted over my mind. I seemed
to be upon the verge of comprehension, without power to
comprehend as men, at times, find themselves upon the brink
of remembrance, without being able, in the end, to remember.

[In a French accent:]

I am satisfied with having defeated him in his own castle.

[SOUND: voices 1, 2, 3, and 4 rise in a babble until 1 is
heard distinctly. POE identifies each new speaker with a
look as he imagines them and then plays off them.]

1: Oh, Mr. Poe! Delighted to have you at my home. I
so enjoyed your lecture tonight.

2: Here he is: Iambic Poe! the comanche of literature!
the tomahawk critic! Do you need a drink, Mr. Poe?

3: What do you think of Shelley's work, Mr. Poe?

Poe: Unfinished rough drafts, wanting yet another rewrite.

3: And Longfellow, Mr. Poe?

Poe: A plagiarist, a didactic poet, and a writer of hexam-
eters.

4: Surely you enjoy Tennyson!

Poe: A school arose -- if that absurd term must still be
employed -- a school -- a system of rules -- based
upon the Shelly who had none. It was the school of
all Lawlessness -- of obscurity, quaintness, and
exaggeration -- the misplaced didacticism of Words-
worth, the even more preposterously anomalous meta-
physicianism of Coleridge, and the extremism of poetic
inconsistency attained only by Tennyson.

[SOUND: laughter.]

1: Why did you dedicate your "Raven" to Elizabeth Barret
Browning?

Poe: I refused to do as most critical men have done in lauding Miss Browning's work ad nauseum simply because she is a woman. She remarked that, since my review was not all puffery, but rather sharply worded, I had at least read the work before I criticized it; a practice nowadays "honored more in the breach than in the observance."

"The Raven" I offer as a poem, not born of inspiration, as with Miss Browning's work, but rather by design. Every choice -- from the raging storm enveloping the silent bedchamber, to the sonorous refrain of the non-reasoning bird -- all designed logically to capture the most melancholy of subjects: the death of a beautiful woman, in the most appropriate form for beauty: poetry.

3: Where do you get your ideas for those horrible stories?

Poe: The newspapers.

4: Is it true you do the crossword puzzles daily?

Poe: It is good exercise.

2: Isn't it true you were to have an audience with President Tyler, but you appeared for the interview "drunk as a skunk?"

[There is a slight pause, while POE looks fixedly at voice 2.]

3: I read somewhere that you consider the South as tasteless in all matters relating to the making of money.

Poe: It is that degrading spirit of utilitarianism, the American love of gain, which sees in mountains and waterfalls only quarries and manufacturing sites.

2: Does that mean you are a transcendentalist, Mr. Poe, along with Emerson and Thoreau?

Poe: I see that you are taking notes, and therefore must be a reporter. I will try to give you something quotable.

I hold no sympathies with either Mr. Emerson or Mr. Thoreau. Their passion for the "infinite of the private man," tripping merrily off the their waldensian woodland, is a most illogical, and indeed,

cowardly response to the evils of society.

How absurd! Where would they find such pleasant conversation as this, or a good glass of Amontillado, or my current essay in "Godey's Ladies Book"!

2: Speaking of drinking, Mr. Poe, didn't Mr. White fire you from the Southern Literary Messenger for being drunk before breakfast?

[Pause. POE looks at voice 2.]

1: Your moustache so become you. Is it recent?

Poe: My step-father never liked it because I modeled it after my childhood idol, Lord Byron.

4: [gasp] How decadent! England has not produced a good poet since Milton!!

Poe: But the fact is that Milton was no poet, but rather a writer of epics. Once having read Paradise Lost, you would be too weary to derive pleasure from regaining it.

1: May I throw you another question, Mr. Poe?

[Pause]

2: Did you not upon arriving in Newark, Delaware on a lecture tour, go directly to the Deer Park Hotel and proceed to drink heavily? And did you not, upon leaving the Hotel, much intoxicated, land directly in a mud puddle, presenting yourself one hour late to your waiting audience?

Poe: No. That is not true.

2: And were you not drunk when you proposed marriage to Mrs. Whitman?

Poe: No.

2: It is reported you were drunk on the day your wife died.

Poe: My dear [Pause] sir, quote me on this.

I pledge you, before God, the solemn word of a

gentleman, that I am temperate even to rigor. You will never be brought to believe that I could write what I daily write, if I were a drunkard.

But, for a brief period, while in Richmond, and edited the Messenger I certainly did give way to the temptation held out on all sides by the spirit of Southern conviviality. My sensitive temperament could not stand an excitement which was an everyday matter to my companions.

But now I rise early, eat moderately, drink nothing but water, and take abundant and regular exercise in the open air. I have now only to repeat to you my solemn assurance that my habits are as far removed from intemperance as the day from the night. My sole drink is water.

And now you must excuse me.

[POE returns to floor paper, picks one up, and reads:]

The Red Death.

[He steps down to view the previous scene.]

It was a gay and magnificent revel. There were grotesque and arabesque figures with unsuited limbs and appointments. There were much of the beautiful, much of the wanton, much of the bizarre, something of the terrible, and not a little of that which might have excited disgust. To and fro there stalked, in fact, a multitude of dreams. And these -- the dreams -- writhed in and about, causing the wild music of the orchestra to seem as the echo of their steps. And then, for a moment, all is still, and all is silent. [pause] The dreams are stiff-frozen as they stand. And now was acknowledged the presence of the Red Death. He had come like a thief in the night. And one by one dropped the revellers in the blood-bedewed halls of their revel. And Darkness and Decay and the Red Death held illimitable dominion over all.

[POE discards "The Red Death" page to floor, laughing. he comes upon the John Allan letter. He sits, elbows on knees, and reads.]

To my step-father
Mr. John Allan
of Allan and Ellis Tobacconists

My dear [Pause] sir:

Did I, when an infant, solicit your charity. . .
 promises of adoption and liberal education. . .
 I will leave the decision of that question to those
 who know how far liberal educations can be obtained
 in 8 months at the University of Virginia.

I will boldly say that it was wholly and entirely
 your own mistaken parsimony that caused all the difficulties
 in which I was involved while at Charlottesville. . . .

After nearly two years conduct with which no fault
 could be found -- in the army, as a common soldier --
 I earned, myself a Cadet's warrant to West Point
 which you could have obtained at any time for asking. . . .

I came home the night after the burial. If my step-mother
 had not died while I was away there would have been
 nothing for me to regret.

I have heard you say (when you little thought I was
 listening and therefore must have said it in earnest)
 That you had no affection for me. . . .

[POE leans back in his chair, rhapsodizing.]

True! -- nervous -- very, very dreadfully nervous I had
 been and am; but why will you say that I am mad? The
 disease had sharpened my senses -- not destroyed -- not
 dulled them. Above all was the sense of hearing acute.

I heard all things in heaven and in the earth. I heard
 many things in hell. How, then am I mad?

It is impossible to say how first the idea entered my brain;
 but once, conceived, it haunted me night and day. I loved
 the old man. I think it was his eye! One of his eyes
 resembled that of a vulture -- a pale, blue eye, with a
 film over it. Whenever it fell upon me my blood ran cold;
 and so by degrees -- very gradually -- I made up my mind to
 take the life of the old man, and thus rid myself of the
 eye forever.

I waited a long time, very patiently. I opened his door --
 you cannot imagine how stealthily, stealthily -- until at
 length, a single dim ray, like the thread of a spider, shot
 from the crevice and fell full upon the vulture eye.

And there came to my ears a low, dull, quick sound, such as a watch makes when enveloped in cotton. It was the beating of the old man's heart, a sound I knew well. It increased my fury, as the beating of the drum stimulates the soldier into courage. With a loud yell I leaped into the room. He shrieked once -- only once.

But ere long, I felt myself getting pale and I fancied a ringing in my ears.

The ringing became more distinct, until, at length, I found that the noise was not within my ears. Oh, God, what could I do? The police are listening. I foamed -- I raved -- I swore! I felt that I must scream or die. It was a low, dull, quick sound as a watch makes when enveloped in cotton. Louder -- louder -- louder -- louder!

I admit the deed!!! Stop the beating of his tell-tale heart!

[POE laughs wildly.]

I feel little hope that you will pay any regard to this letter, but still I cannot refrain from making one more attempt to interest you in my behalf. I am not idle -- nor addicted to any vice -- not have I committed any offense against society which would render me deserving of so hard a fate. For God's sake pity me.

Everybody says that if I lecture again and put the tickets at fifty cents, I will clear \$100.

[POE moves trunk and begins to practice his speech with renewed vigor.]

I never was received with so much enthusiasm.

Thank you. It is always a pleasure while lecturing from city to town to be received with the customary graciousness and warmth by the good people here. . .

[he checks his notes]

at the Exchange Hotel in Richmond, Virginia. Tonight I would like to address you from my metaphysical tract, Eureka!

In the Original Unity of the First Thing
lies the Secondary Cause of All Things,
with the Germ of their Inevitable Annihilation.

The Universe of particles, or Matter, is created by the repulsive force of God's Volition. Yet the impulse to diffusion involves a tendency to return into Unity.

The Uni-tendency will be recognized as the principle of Newtonian Gravity; the repulsive force will be understood as electricity.

Attraction and Repulsion, or Energy, are undeniably the sole propoerties by which Matter is manifested to Mind. Attraction and Repulsion are Matter.

Only where things differ is electricity apparent. Difference is their character -- their essentiality -- just as no-difference was the essentiality of their inevitable course. The attempt to bring together any two differences will result in a development of electricity.

No -- wait!!!

I'll give you -- something!

I'll give you --

Once upon a midnight dreary, while I pondered, weak and weary,
Over many a quaint and curious volume of forgotten lore --
While I nodded, nearly napping, suddenly. . .

No?

Well, what do you want?

Oh. I see. Something witty and gay, humorous and amusing, something of the grotesque and arabesque.

There is no. . .

There is no just ground for the charge brought against me by certain ignoramuses, otherwise known as transcendentalists -- that I have never written a moral tale or, in more precise words, a tale with a moral. They are not the critics predestined to develop my morals. By way of staying execution, I offer this sad tale.

De mortuis nil nisi bonum is an excellent injunction -- even if the dead in question be nothing but dead small beer. It is not my design, therefore, to vituperate -- uh, to speak ill of my deceased friend, Toby Dammit.

But the fact is that his precocity in vice -- uh, that he was a naughty boy.

At five months of age he used to get into such passions that he was unable to articulate.

At six months of age I caught him gnawing a pack of cards.

At seven months, he was in the constant habit of catching and kissing the female babies.

At eight months, he preremptorily refused to put his signature to the temperance pledge.

Thus he went on increasing in iniquity, month after month, until, at the close of his first year, he not only insisted upon wearing moustaches, but had contracted a propensity for cursing and swearing, and for backing his assertions by bets.

They were simple, if not altogether innocent expletives -- imaginative phrases to round off a sentence.

When he said, "I'll bet you so and so," nobody ever thought of taking him up; but still I could not help thinking it my duty to put him down.

The habit was an immoral one, and so I told him.

It was a vulgar one -- this I begged him to believe.

It was discountenanced by society -- here I said nothing but the truth.

It was forbidden by act of Congress -- here I had not the slightest intention of telling a lie.

I remonstrated -- but to no purpose.

I demonstrated -- in vain.

I entreated -- he smiled.

I implored -- he laughed.

I preached -- he sneered.

I threatened -- he swore.

I kicked him -- he called the police.

I pulled his nose -- he blew it, and offered to bet the Devil his head I would not venture to try that experiment again.

For once I would have taken him up on his threatening wager, and would have won for the Arch-Enemy Mr. Dammit's head, which was small and thus his loss would have been small, too.

But on this particular day, we strolled on together, our route taking us in the direction of a river.

There was a bridge and we resolved to cross it.

It was roofed over with few windows and was thus uncomfort-

ably dark. Toby was excessively lively and it was not impossible that he was affected with the transcendentals

Our progress across the bridge was impeded by a turn-stile of some height. Through this I made my way quietly, pushing it around as usual. But this turn would not serve Mr. Dammit. He insisted upon leaping the turn-stile and said he could cut a pigeon-wing over it in the air. Seeing my disbelief, he straightaway offered to bet the Devil his head that he could.

I heard, close at my elbow, a slight cough, which sounded very much like the ejaculation "ahem!" I turned to see the figure of a little lame old gentleman. His hands were clasped pensively together over his stomach, and his two eyes were carefully rolled up into the top of his head. I perceived that he wore a black silk apron over his neat, clean clothes; and this was a thing that I thought very odd. He uttered a second "ahem!"

I felt particularly puzzled, and when a man is particularly puzzled he must knit his brows and look savage, or else he is pretty sure to look like a fool.

"Dammit," observed I -- although this sounded very much like an oath -- "Dammit," I suggested -- "the gentleman says 'ahem!'"

"You don't say so?" gasped he at length. "Are you quite sure he said that? Well, here goes then -- ahem!"

At this the little gentleman seemed pleased -- God only knows why. "I am quite sure you will win the bet, Dammit," said he, "but we are obliged to have the trial you know, for the sake of mere form."

"Ahem!" replied my friend, taking off his coat with a deep sigh. Not another word more did I ever know him to say.

The old gentleman now took Toby by the arm a few paces back from the turn-stile. "Wait here, till I take my place by the stile, so that I may see whether you go over it handsomely, and transcendently, and don't omit any flourishes of the pigeon-wing. A mere form, you know."

After a moment of profound reflection, the old gentleman finally gave the word. I saw my poor friend set off in a strong gallop, and spring grandly from the floor of the bridge, cutting the most awful flourishes with his legs as

he went up and over the top of the stile; and of course I thought it an unusually singular thing that he did not continue to go over. Down came Mr. Dammit on the flat of his back on the same side of the stile from which he had started. At the same instant I saw the old gentleman limping off at the top of his speed, having caught something in his apron that fell from the darkness of the arch just over the turn-stile.

I hurried up to Toby and found that he had received what might be termed a serious injury. The truth is he had been deprived of his head, which after a close search I could not find anywhere. About five feet just above the top of the turn-stile, there extended a great iron bar that served to strengthen the arch covering the bridge. With the edge of this brace it appeared evident that the neck of my unfortunate friend had come precisely in contact.

I bedewed the grave of Toby Dammit with my tears, worked a bar sinister on his family coat of arms, and for the general expenses of his funeral sent in my very moderate bill to the transcendentalists. The scoundrels refused to pay it. So I had Mr. Dammit dug up at once, and sold him for dogs' meat.

[SOUND: voices 1, 2, 3, and 4 rise in a babble until voice 1 is heard distinctly.]

1: Oh, Mr. Poe! That was such a lovely lecture and the story of that poor man with the awful name -- well, I thought I would die laughing. Recite "The Raven," Mr. Poe, won't you?

Poe: No one seemed to want to hear it earlier. I'm sure your guests --

4: "Once upon a midnight, dearie, while I wandered, weak and dreary. . ."

Poe: I believe the verse goes:
 Once upon a midnight dreary, while I pondered, weak
 and weary,
 Over many a quaint and curious volume of forgotten
 lore --
 While I nodded, nearly napping, suddenly there came
 a tapping,
 As of someone lightly rapping, rapping at my chamber
 door.

" 'T is some visitor," I muttered, "tapping at my
chamber door --
Only this and nothing more."

Ah, distinctly I remember it was in the bleak December;
And each separate dying ember wrought its ghost upon
the floor.

Eagerly I wished the morrow; -- vainly I had sought
to borrow

From my books surcease of sorrow-sorrow for the lost
Lenore --

For the rare and radiant maiden whom the angels name
Lenore --

Nameless here for evermore.

Presently my soul grew stronger; hesitating then no
longer,

"Sir," said I, "or Madam, truly your forgiveness I
implore;

But the fact is I was napping, and so gently you came
rapping,

And so faintly you came tapping, tapping at my
chamber door,

That I scarce was sure I hear you" -- here I opened
wide the door; --

Darkness there and nothing more.

Back into the chamber turning, all my soul within
me burning,

Soon again I heard a tapping somewhat louder than
before.

"Surely," said I, "surely that is something at my
window lattice;

Let me see, then, what thereat is, and this mystery
explore --

Let my heart be still a moment and this mystery ex-
plore; --

Open here I flung the shutter, when, with many a
flirt and flutter

In there stepped a stately Raven of the saintly days
of yore.

Not the least obeisance made he; not a minute stopped
or stayed he;

But, with mien of lord or lady, perched above my
chamber door --

Perched upon a bust of Pallas just above my chamber
door --

Perched, and sat, and nothing more.

Then this ebony bird beguiling my sad fancy into
 smiling,
 By the grave and stern decorum of the countenance it
 wore,
 "Though thy crest be shorn and shaven, thou," said I
 "art sure no craven,
 Ghastly grim and ancient Raven wandering from the
 Nightly shore --
 Tell me what thy lordly name is on the Night's
 Plutonian shore!"
 Quoth the Raven, "Nevermore."

And the Raven, never flitting, still is sitting,
 still is sitting
 On the pallid bust of Pallas just above my chamber
 door;
 And his eyes have all the seeming of a demon's
 that is dreaming,
 And the lamp-light o'er him streaming throws his
 shadow on the floor;
 And my soul from out that shadow that lies
 floating on the floor
 Shall be lifted -- nevermore!

4: Oh: Mr. Poe, that is so beautiful. I like it especially the way you mix up the meters and your use of internal rhyme and that eerie refrain -- it's so sonorous!

Poe: You must have read my "Philosophy of Composition."

4: I have, over and over. You see, I'm something of a poet myself. I often allow my Muses to run rampant through me! I have a poem here that you have inspired in me. Can you help me finish it?

Poe: Well, I don't know how much help. . .

4: Please?

Poe: Oh, alright. Where is it?

4: Right here.

[POE picks a page up off the floor as if it were voice 4's.]

"The Bluejay," . . . Charming. "Sweet and fragile the flitting warbler tweets from branch to branch. Sing your silent song, oh nobler breast of blue, for my love is lost among the crystal seas. . ." Just charming.

[POE laughs at the scene he created. SOUND: cat crying. POE goes to window, parts the curtain, looks down at street.]

It is gone now. It was as black as this long night. I thought I might have a visitor to pass it with me.

[POE closes curtain.]

I first saw the black cat in profile. Its eye was fixed upon some object beyond my view. Then it started at hearing my footfall, and turned to look at me full-faced, recoiling from my approach with a hiss and a hunching of its spine, displaying all its hairs at symmetrical perpendiculars to its body. Symmetrical in every way -- save one: it had but one eye! By the irregular cuts and gashes, and by the way nature chose to heal the socket, it seemed as though the eye had been cut out, quite deliberately. What a vengeful spirit must inhabit that black crater that sees only half the day and an eternity of night! What a black soul, indeed, he must be that plotted, and then took so grotesque an action.

Surely I could never do such a thing. But I can imagine a villain so depraved, so deserted, so alone. Oh, my God!; here is a thought far more frightening than the horrible image of that beast! How could I find sympathy with such a fiend? How could I imagine the details of so ghastly a deed? Unless there lurks within my powers one that seeks to harm my soul. Unless it lies within me to wrench from that beast which God has framed this same eye! I am an accomplice in this crime -- I admit the deed!!

[POE opens the curtain once again, as if seeking forgiveness from the cat.]

Stop it!

[POE closes the curtain abruptly, and crosses to chair.]

I can't be alone tonight.

[POE produces a pencil from his pocket, and begins to write on an envelope.]

One night, returning home, much intoxicated, from one of my haunts about town, I fancied a cat that avoided my presence. I took from my waist-coat pocket a penknife, grasped the poor beast by the throat, and deliberately cut one of its eyes from the socket.

In cold blood I slipped a noose about the cat's neck and hung it to the limb of a tree --
 hung it with tears streaming from my eyes,
 and the bitterest remorse at my heart --
 hung it because I felt it had given me no reason for offense --

Who has not, a hundred times, found himself committing a vile or stupid action, for no other reason than he knows he should not? Have we not a perpetual inclination to violence for its own nature -- to do wrong for wrong's sake only?

We stand upon the brink of a precipice.
 We peer into the abyss -- we grow sick and dizzy.
 Our first impulse is to shrink from the danger.
 Unaccountably we remain.
 One thought, although a fearful one, chills the very marrow of our bones with the fierceness of the delight of its horror.
 It is merely the idea of what would be our sensations during the sweeping precipitancy of a fall from such a height.
 And this fall -- this rushing annihilation --
 for the very reason that its image is so ghastly and loathsome to our imagination --
 for this very cause do we now the most vividly desire it..
 And because our reason violently deters us from the brink,
therefore do we most impetuously approach it.

If there be no friendly arm to check us,
 or if we fail in a sudden effort to prostrate ourselves backward from the abyss,
 we plunge,
 and in so doing I was committing a sin --
 a deadly sin
 that would so jeopardize my immortal soul
 as to place it beyond the reach of the infinite mercy
 of the Most Merciful
 and Most Terrible God.

[Silence.]

Well, enough of that! Now what?

There is tomorrow's lecture to think about. Eureka!, of course. Perhaps I should plan on something more. They must get their money's worth, by all means! I'll give them. . . "Annabel Lee". . .

I was a child and she was a child,
 In this kingdom by the sea,
 But we loved with a love that was more than love --
 I and my Annable Lee --

The angels, not half so happy in heaven,
 Went envying her and me --
 Yes! -- that was the reason (as all men know,
 In this Kingdom by the sea)
 That the wind came out of the cloud by night,
 Chilling and killing my Annabel Lee.

But our love it was stronger by far than the love
 Of those who were older than we --
 Of many far wiser than we --
 And neither the angels in heaven above,
 Nor the demons down under the sea,
 Can ever dissever my soul from the soul
 Of the beautiful Annabel Lee.

. . . or better still,

Hear the sledges with the bells --
 Silver Bells!
 What a world of merriment their melody foretells!
 How they tinkle, tinkle, tinkle,
 In the icy air of night!
 Keeping time, time, time,
 In a sort of Runic rhyme,
 To the tintinnabulation that so musically wells
 From the bells, bells, bells, bells,
 Bells, bells, bells --
 From the jingling and the tinkling of the bells.

Hear the tolling of the bells --
 Iron bells!
 What a world of solemn thought their monody compels!
 And the people -- ah, the people --
 They that dwell up in the steeple,
 All alone,
 And who tolling, tolling, tolling,
 In that muffled monotone,

Feel a glory in so rolling
On the human heart a stone --

Yes, they will like that.

[Silence. Picks up newspaper, sits, begins to read.]

"Extraordinary murders. . .Mary Cecilia Rogers. . ."

[Paper is lowered. POE stares straight ahead. Beat.]

I wonder how Dupin would solve the crime of my existence?

[POE leans back and assumes the character of Dupin.]

"I am no charlatan, but the greatest detective of all time. Most men, in respect to me, Auguste C. Dupin, wear windows in their bosoms. I can only present you with the facts, details of the suspect's behavior. Nothing more. Has there been a crime committed?"

You know there has! The evidence is that I am alone. I have these feelings sometimes. . .

"I only concern myself with the analytical, and feelings are not involved. What a man shows to the world are the only facts there are, and it is with these details that you must concern yourself.

"You were orphaned at age two. Your step-father withdrew his hopes and money from your aid. Your best poem sold for a mere \$10. And, so your trade could not support the needs of your ailing child-bride, who died after years of sickness. You crave the society of men and women because it is the one thing you hate most: hypocrisy, yet it is the one thing you cannot have: companionship. You are alone because you were made to be apart, separate. Those are the facts."

Facts, facts! Isn't there anything else? What about the soul, the mystic? Isn't there an undercurrent of meaning, one that suggests rather than states? There is a mystic lyre, echoing from the soul below a far more ethereal note from beyond this surface. I feel it. It is that evergreen and radiant Paradise which the true poet knows, and knows alone, as the Eden of his dreams.

"That is not for me to say. I can only present you with the facts."

Dupin, you see more clearly than I do myself. How did you create your logic? No! It is I who created you! How can that be! Are you a dream?

"A dream within a dream."

[POE goes to podium.]

You are not wrong, who deem
That my days have been as a dream;
Yet if hope has flown away
In a night, or in a day,
In a vision, or in none,
Is it therefore the less gone?
All that we may see or seem
Is but a dream within a dream.

Dupin, I am satisfied with having defeated you in your own castle.

Thank Heaven! the crisis
The danger is past
And the lingering illness
Is over at last --
And the fever called "Living"
Is conquered at last.

In the Original Unity of the First Thing
lies the Secondary Cause of All Things,
with the Germ of their Inevitable Annihilation.

All the dark imps and shining angels that inhabit my brain
-- all are components of Edgar Allan Poe; just as you and
I are particles that inhabit the brain of God. It is
through God's creation that we exist and find universal
purpose, just as it is through my imagination that my
characters live and find their moral?

I perceive a law of periodicity: a novel universe swelling
into existence, and then subsiding into nothingness at
every throb of the human Heart Divine. That law operates
within us; it is our own.

Edgar Allan Poe is a character of my own imagination. It
is within that character that my moral lies, if only you
had ears to hear the mystic lyre. The simple fact is this:
If only we would permit ourselves to look into our own
soul, we would immediately there discover that under the
sun there neither exists nor can exist any work more thor-

oughly dignified -- more supremely noble than this very poem -- this poem per se -- this poem which is a poem and nothing more -- this poem written solely for the poem's sake.

I am Poe per se.

[POE returns to the chair, sits.]

the fever
that maddened my brain --
The fever called "Living"
That burned in my brain
The fever is conquered at last.

I am Poe per se.

[Curtain.]

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