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THE FEMALE FIGURE IN EDGAR ALLAN POE

by

LEO DABBS

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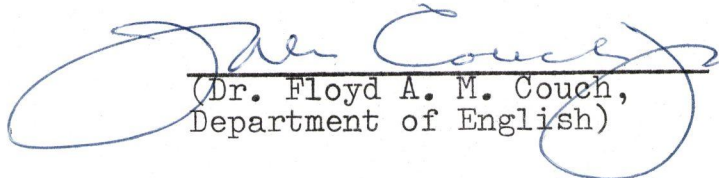
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THE UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY  
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The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies for acceptance, a thesis entitled "The Female Figure in Edgar Allan Poe," submitted by Leo Dabbs in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.



(Supervisor, Dr. Inder Nath  
Kher, Department of English)



(Dr. Floyd A. M. Couch,  
Department of English)



(Dr. Peter C. Craigie,  
Religious Studies)

August 14, 1975  
(date)

## ABSTRACT

This thesis concentrates on Edgar Allan Poe's fictive women. The female figure is approached as a symbol of the intuitive glimpse, which endows the perceiver with a sense of unity with his inner self and with the divine being.

Chapter One, "Introduction," describes Poe's concept of the death of a beautiful woman, and his cosmology as presented in "Eureka." Jung's theory of the human psyche is also described. Finally, the similarity between Poe's female figure and the Jungian anima is explained. It is argued that the application of the functions of the anima to Poe's female figure facilitates an interpretation of Poe's works. This approach is employed throughout this study.

In Chapter Two, "The Daughters of Perception," the following poems are examined: "To the River \_\_\_\_," "Hymn," "To Helen," "To M. L. S \_\_\_\_," "To F \_\_\_\_," "To \_\_\_\_," "For Annie," and "Al Aaraaf." The female figure in these poems does not die. The interaction between the speaker and the female figure is reviewed to discover how she broadens the speaker's perceptions.

In Chapter Three, "The Bridge of Sighs," the following poems are examined: "Tamerlane," "Ulalume--A Ballad," "To One in Paradise," "To Helen (Whitman)," "The Raven," "Lenore," and "Annabel Lee." These poems dramatize the death of the female figure and are interpreted to ascertain how her death affects the psyche of the narrator.

In Chapter Four, "A Crisis of Identity," a select number of tales embodying the death of the female figure are examined: "The Oval Portrait," "The Fall of the House of Usher," "The Assignment," "Morella," "Ligeia," and "Eleonora." The female figure is approached as a symbol of the unconscious, who eventually leads the narrator to confront imaginatively his own destiny.

Chapter Five, "Conclusion," offers a summary of the major propositions noted in the previous chapters. This chapter also contains suggestions concerning a wider application of Jungian thought so that a more comprehensive view of Poe's works may be achieved.

This thesis is mainly concerned with the female figure in Poe's works. No attempt has been made here to psycho-analyze the man. Therefore, biographical information is kept to a minimum.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to express my gratitude to the late Carl Gustav Jung for his brilliant and thorough study of the human psyche. His tireless efforts have assisted me in analysing the female figure in the works of Edgar Allan Poe. I also wish to thank my supervisor, Dr. Inder Nath Kher, for his sustained advice, encouragement, and guidance in the preparation of this thesis. He has helped to make my task a pleasure.

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

There are two aspects which go hand in hand in Poe's idea of beauty: melancholy and the death of a beautiful woman. Poe explains in "The Philosophy of Composition": "when it most closely allies itself to Beauty: the death, then, of a beautiful woman is, unquestionably, the most poetical topic in the world."<sup>1</sup> The words "poetical topic" are crucial in our understanding of the close relation between the poet's vision of beauty and that which is portrayed in his poems. The word poetical, for Poe, has a specific meaning, reiterated in many of his prose works: the poetic "principle itself is, strictly and simply, the Human Aspiration for Supernal Beauty, the manifestation of the Principle is always found in an elevating excitement of the Soul."<sup>2</sup> The melancholy borne because of the death of a beautiful woman elevates the individual's soul to a vision of beauty. A poem is the outward manifestation, or poetic effect, of what is within the poet himself: "He recognizes the ambrosia which nourishes his soul."<sup>3</sup> Thus, the poem should reveal to the reader the poetic effect perceived by the poet.

Because of the above-stated position, Poe's poetry is being read with the intention of comprehending, if only partially, the soul-elevating moment Poe himself experiences.<sup>4</sup> I say partially because Poe's poetry and tales are not easy to interpret; they are often quite vague and elusive.

Geoffrey Rans aptly recognizes the problem or difficulty of interpretation when he says that Poe's "meanings are deeply embedded in the works and he rarely explains; the reader must guess, reach through the poem."<sup>5</sup> The particular concern of this study is to examine in what manner Poe's female figure is related to his own internal vision of the "ambrosia which nourishes his soul." However, before an examination of the female figure can commence, an understanding of Poe's theory of the soul which recognizes beauty is in order.

In "Eureka" Poe proposes that the universe is an irradiation of matter, irradiation being the product of the volition of God. Once irradiation is terminated a reaction begins whereby the "law of return would be precisely the converse of the law of departure."<sup>6</sup> Return that is to unity or oneness with God. There are two agents in the universe which control the return to unity: (1) attraction or the body, and (2) repulsion or the spiritual principle.<sup>7</sup> Consciousness and thought are synonyms for spirituality.<sup>8</sup> Functionally, for Poe, consciousness is bipartite: "conscious, first, of a proper identity; conscious, secondly and by faint indeterminate glimpses, of an identity with the Divine Being of whom we speak--of an identity with God."<sup>9</sup> The former is somewhat similar, if not identical, to Jung's description of rational consciousness, as is the latter to irrational unconsciousness. One is experienced in the light of day to day social interaction; the other, as Poe says, through intuitive or unconscious glimpses only: "We walk about, amid the destinies



of our world-existence, encompassed by dim but ever present Memories of a Destiny more vast--very distant in the bygone time, and infinitely awful."<sup>10</sup> In Poe's creative work, the female figure dominates these two broad dimensions of consciousness.

Almost one half of Poe's poems have something to do with women. Floyd Stovall rightly believes that "for Poe they were a continual inspiration, and they always reflect in varying degrees his own personality."<sup>11</sup> This idea adheres to Poe's concept of poetic effect. A female portrayed in a poem must contain the essential intuitive glimpse of the beauty perceived by Poe. Since there is a striking similarity between Poe's and Jung's idea of bipartite consciousness, an examination of Poe's female figure employing Jung's psychological approach may help clarify the poetic tendency of Poe's female figure. It is known that a man is structured biologically with both male and female elements. However, Poe's female figure has the tendency to operate more on a metaphoric or symbolic level, rather than biologically, as already inferred in Poe's concept of the poetic effect. When applied to Poe's female figure, Jung's concept of the anima adds a dimension of understanding to the given poetic effect.

Before outlining the function of the anima a discussion of another similarity between Poe and Jung is necessary. At the end of "Eureka" Poe describes man and his relation to God: the Divine Being is the cosmos and man is an individuation of the cosmic being:<sup>12</sup> "each soul is, in part, its own God--

its own Creator."<sup>13</sup> Poe is explaining his imaginative or intuitive vision of the universe; in other words, a myth of the universe conceptualized in the form of a cosmic being. A myth closely associated with Jung's approach to the psyche: "Cosmic man--the gigantic, all-embracing figure that personifies and contains the entire universe--is a common representation of the Self in myths and dreams."<sup>14</sup> Poe believes that the truest knowledge comes from intuition, which is but a glimpse of beauty. Symmetry, consistency, or truth, are some other words which Poe uses as synonyms for beauty. Like death, beauty is perceived as a unity or oneness; hence, perception of beauty is a perception of the Divine Being. Consequently, a glimpse of beauty implies oneness within, a momentary unity of past, present, and future, or Self-awareness.

The only plausible way in which the Jungian anima and Poe's female figure should be discussed is by way of a direct analysis of Poe's works. This will be the subject matter of later chapters. However, a brief resume of the function of the anima may be provided here for the sake of clarification of the relationship between Poe's female figure and Jung's anima. The anima is the archetypal figure which turns up behind the shadow in the male unconscious.<sup>15</sup> The shadow is personified as the same sex as the perceiver and represents the unconscious.<sup>16</sup> Acting as an antagonist to ego-consciousness the shadow enables the perceiver to recognize his unconscious drives. The anima also acts as a guide to

the unconscious, but is less antagonistic because it is personified as the opposite sex. The anima 'is as a rule shaped by the mother,' which may be a creative or destructive form or symbol determined by the mother's influence.<sup>17</sup>

James A. Harrison's description of Poe's mother exhibits the expressionistic features of Poe's fictional women:

No one can look at the portrait of Elizabeth Arnold (for such was her maiden name) without seeing in it foreshadowings of those ethereal Eleonoras and Ligeias that haunted the poet's dreams with their delicate impalpabilities, their Indian-summer-like vagueness: the childlike figure, the great, wide open, mysterious eyes, the abundant curling hair confined in the quaint bonnet of a hundred years ago and shadowing the brow in raven masses, the high waist and attenuated arms clasped in an Empire robe of faint, flowered design, the tiny but rounded neck and shoulders, the head proudly erect. It is the face of an elf, a sprite, an Undine who was to be the mother of the most elfish, the most unearthly of poets, whose luminous dark-gray eyes had a glint of the supernatural in them and reflected, as he says in one of his earliest poems, "the wilder'd" nature of man.<sup>18</sup>

There need be no explanation of Harrison's description and its obvious affinity to Poe's female figure. The beauty and melancholy inherent in the death of a beautiful woman may have its origin in Mrs. Poe's lingering disease and subsequent death.

An anima may be positive or negative. The destructive anima, the French femme fatale for example, may lead a man to suicide or completely destroy his process of individuation. Accordingly, the positive anima helps a man fulfill his process of individuation, "by integrating more of his unconscious personality and bringing it into his real life."<sup>19</sup> In

other words, "the anima takes on the role of guide, or mediator, to the world within and to the Self."<sup>20</sup> Poe's female figure, or anima, is predominantly positive.

There are four stages in the development of the anima figure: (1) symbolized by the figure Eve, purely instinctual and biological relations, (2) symbolized by Faust's Helen, romantic and aesthetic level, however, still characterized by sexual elements, (3) symbolized by the Virgin Mary, who raises love (eros) to the heights of spiritual devotion, and (4) symbolized by Sapienta, wisdom transcending even the most holy and most pure.<sup>21</sup> Whichever anima figure is revealed to the perceiver she will help him to determine the stage of development his process of individuation has achieved. In Poe's writings the anima acts on all four levels, though more noticeably on the third and fourth levels. One must be aware of the anima as a guide to the unconscious because a "positive function occurs when a man takes seriously the feelings, moods, expectations, and fantasies sent by his anima and when he fixes them in some form--for example, in writing, painting, sculpture, musical composition, or dancing."<sup>22</sup> Hence, the perceiver must interact with, or work out, the relationship to his anima on an ego-conscious level.

An oversimplification of the elements which comprise the Jungian concept of the psyche may clarify their function within the process of individuation. The psyche is comprised of three major elements: the ego, the unconscious (shadow and anima), and the Self. The ego is the outer expression of the

inner self and it functions as the rational element which orders day to day life. The shadow is the symbol of the unconscious and is the intermediate element between the ego and the Self, whose function is to transmit messages, somewhat like radio waves, to the ego. The anima functions as outlined in the two previous paragraphs. Lastly, the Self is the controlling function of an individual's total being. Each element of the psyche has its particular function to fulfill and the happiness of an individual depends upon the correct adherence to each psychic element and its particular function.

When analysing Poe's female figure as a symbol of the unconscious one must keep in mind that for him intuitive glimpses are essential to existence, but they are not the whole of existence. It would be incorrect to approach his female figure as the only contributing factor to his genius. There is one motif in "Eureka" that permits the inclusion of man's rational intellect in the creative process. Balance is the key word: balance between the imagination and reason. The imagination gives Poe the opportunity to discover beauty; reason enables him to give poetic form to an intuitive discovery. This concept is also given credence in "The Philosophy of Composition." If one looks closely, reads between the lines, it will be discovered that intuition is the guiding and reason the regulating factor. The intuition supplies the vision and reason provides the structure. They constitute a polarity; each must perform its particular

function to create a poem--an expression of their paradoxical oneness; like repulsion and attraction they counterpoise one another.

Another important element of the process of individuation is the hurt or the wound. One can never escape the fact that human contacts play a vital role in developing a child's ego. However, once a child reaches school age "painful shocks" occur which conflict with previous ego development.<sup>23</sup> It is at this point one must recognize that, "the actual process of individuation--the conscious coming-to-terms with one's own inner center (psychic nucleus) or Self--generally begins with a wounding of the personality and the suffering that accompanies it."<sup>24</sup> When confrontation with the ego occurs one must look inward toward the Self for guidance and not project the onus on others. Consequently, approaching the unconscious for the first time means the acceptance of bitter truths about oneself in order for psychic growth.

Referring back to the statement concerning the death of Mrs. Poe and, more to the point, the anguish, melancholy, and eventual sublimity of the death of a beautiful woman, the wound may be viewed as an explicit doctrine of Poe's poetic effect. The wound affects the psyche in an unbelievable comprehensive sweep of awareness, demonstrated in these two sentences in "Berenice":

But as, in ethics, evil is a consequence of good, so, in fact, out of joy is sorrow born. Either the memory of past bliss is the anguish of to-day, or the agonies which are have their origin in the ecstasies which might have been.<sup>25</sup>

The wound may also be viewed as an existential angst discovered in an intense scrutiny of the here-and-now of temporal existence. Inder Nath Kher's statement about Dickinson's awareness of pain and suffering is also applicable to Poe: "A creative apprehension of the mystery of pain and suffering leads toward the road of identity. Suffering brings spiritual awareness--the deeper the suffering, the richer the awareness of being."<sup>26</sup> There are not many characters in literature who suffer more deeply than Poe's pallid and sunken faced Roderick Usher. John F. Lynen recognizes the affinity of annihilation and beauty in Poe's art: "The paradox of Poe's aesthetic has as its inevitable consequence this paradoxical technique, by which Supernal Beauty and negation are revealed as two sides of the same coin."<sup>27</sup> Poe's death of a beautiful woman may be perceived as the wound experienced at the annihilation of the anima, fulfilling the last step toward recognition of the Self in the process of individuation. A similar annihilation of the self takes place in the final unity with the Divine Being in Poe's cosmogonic vision. In both cases a transformation from ego self to inner Self is achieved.

In many of Poe's short stories dealing with women an isolated area is the crucial locale of the story. Whether it be an isolated room in a remote turret of a building, as it is in "The Oval Portrait," or a storage room in the cellar, as it is in "The Fall of the House of Usher," the implication is always one of loneliness and apprehension. This phenomenon is also present in the poetry. In "Ulalume" it is presented

as "the misty mid region of Weir," in "Annabel Lee" as "her sepulchre there by the sea," and in "The Raven" as a chamber. Poe is always taking us on a journey into some strange and dark place. These dark places represent the mind, a state of mind, and a symbol of the unconscious, like the cellar: "The cellar, one can say, is the basement of the dreamer's psyche;" also referred to as, "a well-known symbol of the unconscious with its unknown possibilities."<sup>28</sup>

Poe's concepts of beauty and the female figure are interrelated. The female figure becomes a symbol of intuitive beauty discovered prior to the composition of a poem, where she first exists for the reader. She is a worded representation, a symbol, of Poe's perception of beauty. She is the agent of poetic effect, discussed at length by Poe:

And thus when by Poetry--or when by Music, the most entrancing of the Poetic moods--we find ourselves melted into tears--we weep then--not as the Abbate Gravina supposes--through excess of pleasure, but through a certain, petulant, impatient sorrow at our inability to grasp now, wholly, here on earth, at once and for ever, those divine and rapturous joys, of which through the poem, or through the music, we attain but brief and indeterminate glimpses.<sup>29</sup>

That she is a symbol of perception is no more graphically demonstrated than what he does in "To Helen (Whitman)," where nothing remains except her eyes. Moreover, the reader must attempt to follow Poe's own dictum, only through the poem may one perceive the beauty beyond. In this manner the female figure becomes a guide to an untravelled realm of beauty not perceived through rational channels. She is a



guide to those sweet and infrequent moments of absolute joy, symmetry, unity, consciousness, spirituality, or as Poe names it in "The Poetic Principle": "an immortal instinct, deep within the spirit of man."<sup>30</sup>

In the process of the discussion of Poe's female figure one has to examine Poe's creative mind from within, although one is obliged to examine the rational aspects of his characters in order to understand their intuitive, unconscious, or irrational tendencies. In the process a light is viewed from both ends of the spectrum. Poe's creative "inner reality" has been, and still is, a focus of Poe critics. Eric W. Carlson's The Recognition of Edgar Allan Poe: Selected Criticism Since 1829, contains many important essays on Poe's writings; many writers and critics find Poe's inner reality to be of great importance.<sup>31</sup>

Analyzing Poe's work from within therefore serves two important functions: (1) discovering what is said on the literal level, and (2) through the literal level what is being said of the world within. Concerning the inner and outer levels of reality in an imaginative work Jung has this to say in the essay "Psychology and Literature":

Any reaction to stimulus may be causally explained; but the creative act, which is the absolute antithesis of mere reaction, will for ever elude the human understanding. It can only be described in its manifestations; it can be obscurely sensed, but never wholly grasped. Psychology and the study of art will always have to turn to one another for help, and the one will not invalidate the other. It is an important principle of psychology that psychic events are derivable. It is a principle in the study of art that a psychic product is

something in and for itself--whether the work of art or the artist himself is in question. Both principles are valid in spite of their relativity.<sup>32</sup>

A psychological approach will more than likely force upon a work of art a specified method. Still, as explained above, art in itself breaks or destroys the method whenever and wherever the creative act is beyond the rational concepts of cause and effect. We will do well to remember that in Poe's work we are confronted with acausal intuitive glimpses and with unlimited possibilities of Poe's poetic vision. Northrop Frye recognizes the particularity of such a situation in these words:

Patterns of imagery . . . or fragments of significance, are oracular in origin, and derive from the epiphanic moment, the flash of instantaneous comprehension with no direct reference to time, the importance of which is indicated by Cassirer in Myth and Language [sic].<sup>33</sup>

Two major concepts of Cassirer's theory are the recognition of spiritual reality, and that words create the reality they name, both of which may be applied to Poe's poetry. There is a direct relation between the object, beauty for example, and the name, Ulalume for example, they are essentially one.

Cassirer explains the power of the word in this manner:

The Word has to be conceived in the mythic mode, as a substantive being and power, before it can be comprehended as an ideal instrument, an organon of the mind, and as a fundamental function in the construction and development of spiritual reality.<sup>34</sup>

Words have an inherent spiritual power which enable man to transcend and order the chaotic world of phenomenal reality. In Poe's words, it is repulsion counterpoising attraction which comprises the universe.

For Poe the objective of a poem is to maintain a symmetry which will demonstrate the proper poetic effect perceived in an intuitive glimpse. Such glimpses are not a product of ego-consciousness; they emanate from a second level of consciousness similar to the Jungian unconscious. Imagination and reason, like Poe's repulsion and attraction, are counterpoising agents. Poe's description of the Divine Being in "Eureka" fits the mythical mode of the Self. Consequently, Poe's structure of the psyche is tripartite with the controlling agent being the Divine Being or Self. It is only through infrequent glimpses that beauty, in its supreme unity, can be perceived. And the most sublime of all poetic effects is the death of a beautiful woman. In her death a state of melancholy occurs which wounds the psyche of the perceiver. She is also a symbol of perception, giving one a glimpse of supreme beauty. Through perception one achieves an awareness of indeterminate joy which cannot be explained wholly in rationalistic terms. Hence, the female figure helps the reader to see through the word and perceive the beautiful unity of oneness with the Divine Being. Furthermore, man is in part his own God and creator, because all beings are separate individuations of the Divine Being. Lastly, Poe's female figure is a bridge between the phenomenal existence of the poem itself and the spiritual reality which the poem portrays.

There are several stages, though not necessarily chronological, in Poe's perception of the above-stated concept of

the female figure. The stages have been outlined in the development of the anima figure. The female figure can be viewed as a biological counterpart for a man, or as a creative inspiration for the writer, or as a link between man and God, or man and Self. In the chapters that follow I will elaborate upon these notions by way of exegesis or close study of Poe's poetry. Poe's tales will also be studied but will not receive as thorough an examination as the poems. There is no critical work at this time that examines Poe's female figure in and for itself. Constant reference is made to Poe's worship of the women he knew and his fictional women are generally dealt with as contributing to his creative genius. This study is an unassuming beginning of what may prove to be a significant key to Poe's perception of beauty.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> The Complete Works of Edgar Allan Poe, ed. James A. Harrison (1902; rpt. New York: AMS, 1965), XIV, 201.

<sup>2</sup> "The Poetic Principle," XIV, 290.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Patrick F. Quinn, The French Face of Edgar Poe (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1957). Quinn's comment on Poe's ontological imagination states a similar understanding of Poe's poetic intention. "Poe well knew that the everyday world would call his visions fantastic, and so for most of his readers they seem to be. But so deep was Poe's apprehension of them they took on for him the character of profound truths, grasped by the intuition rather than the intelligence, 'upon the verge of the great secret.' To read Poe properly we should realize that the experience which his stories uniquely offer us is that of participating in the life of a great ontological imagination. It is an experience of exploration and discovery that is offered us, a voyage of the mind" (p. 274).

<sup>5</sup> Edgar Allan Poe (London: Oliver and Boyd, 1965), p. 41. In the last two sentences of his analysis of Poe, Rans has this to say about Poe's submerged meanings, "Poe's meanings will for most people always remain submerged, worrying them vaguely behind the immediate impact of terror--and this was Poe's intention. He made his effects, and he won that victory of art that makes the reader submit" (p. 110).

<sup>6</sup> "Eureka," XVI, 232.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., pp. 213-14.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., pp. 305-306.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., p. 314.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., pp. 311-12.

<sup>11</sup> Floyd Stovall, "The Women of Poe's Poems and Tales," University of Texas Studies in English, 5 (1925), 197.

<sup>12</sup> "Eureka," XVI, 314.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., p. 313.

<sup>14</sup> M.-L. von Franz, "The Process of Individuation," Man and His Symbols, ed. Carl Gustav Jung (1964; rpt. New York: Dell, 1972), p. 213.

- 15 Ibid., p. 186.
- 16 Ibid., p. 174.
- 17 Ibid., p. 186.
- 18 James A. Harrison, ed. The Complete Works of Edgar Allan Poe (1902; rpt. New York: AMS, 1965), I, 5.
- 19 Franz, p. 191.
- 20 Ibid., p. 193.
- 21 Ibid., p. 195.
- 22 Ibid.
- 23 Ibid., p. 168.
- 24 Ibid., p. 169.
- 25 Poe, "Berenice," II, 16.
- 26 The Landscape of Absence: Emily Dickinson's Poetry (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1974), p. 233.
- 27 The Design of the Present (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1969), p. 211.
- 28 Franz, p. 176.
- 29 "The Poetic Principle," XIV, 274.
- 30 Ibid., p. 273.
- 31 (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1966). Among those who find Poe's inner reality to be of great importance are Dostoevski, Paul Valery, Constance M. Rourke, and Richard Wilbur.
- 32 The Creative Process: A Symposium, ed. Brewster Ghiselin (1952; rpt. New York: New American Library, 1967), p. 209.
- 33 Fables of Identity: Studies in Poetic Mythology (New York: Harcourt, 1963), p. 15.
- 34 Language and Myth, trans. Susanne K. Langer (New York: Dover, 1946), p. 62.

## CHAPTER 2

### THE DAUGHTERS OF PERCEPTION

Reading through Poe's poetry I cannot discover a poem which deals primarily with the female figure as merely a biological counterpart of man. The biographical females to whom Poe addressed some of his poems may suggest physical relationships between the speaker and the female. Such inferences have been studied by many critics, but they are not essential to our understanding of Poe's poetry in and for itself; they may be interesting for biographical criticism, but they are not so in this particular literary study.<sup>1</sup> Not all of the females in Poe's poetry die. According to Poe's own theory a female who remains alive in a poem would not be considered as the sublimest of the poetic effect. When the female does not die the speaker incurs no explicit psychic wound or melancholy. However, an interaction between the speaker and the female does occur, usually administering a rebirth of spirit in the speaker. It is the rebirth of spirit which must be the bliss experienced in an intuitive glimpse. Though the female does not die, she has a tendency to take the speaker beyond the rational order of perception. Entire new vistas open to him, as in "To Helen;" or, she is the transcendent guide to peace or oneness within, as in "To F\_\_\_\_." Like the anima, she becomes the guide of the speaker's vision, or a creative inspiration for the writer. It is not easy to distinguish which level of development the

anima represents within a poem because the levels may vary or intermingle. Nevertheless, an effort is being made in this chapter to distinguish which level a female may be portraying, despite the fluidity of movement inherent in the creative process.

Poe's "To the River \_\_\_\_"<sup>2</sup> is a fairly straightforward poem because it makes explicit the inner and outer realities of the speaker. The first stanza is a conceit revealing the speaker's fascination with Alberto's daughter. In stanza one the river is described as more than ordinary:

Fair river! in thy bright, clear flow  
 Of crystal, wandering water,  
 Thou art an emblem of the glow  
     Of beauty--the unhidden heart--  
     The playful mazziness of art  
 In old Alberto's daughter.

Poe uses the adjective "fair" to modify the river, but not until the end of the stanza does one feel the full impact of this word. It may mean fair as in: a fair day, or fair in the sense of a fair face as in: Alberto's daughter's fair face. The river is bright, clear flowing, wandering, has a crystalline appearance, and most important of all, represents or is emblematic of beauty. All of which elevates the river to a position of unearthliness; it becomes so simply by a process of naming. The word "crystal" is interesting because it gives the water the added appearance of solidarity though it maintains its natural fluidity.

The last two lines of the stanza continue the conceit by uniting the river and Alberto's daughter. The "mazziness



of art" is analogous to the over-all description of the river in the first four lines. The fair face of the river is equivalent to the fair face of Alberto's daughter. And the phrase "unhidden heart" looks back to the river and forward to Alberto's daughter, identifying them as identical phenomena, which exist on the surface of reality, the reality we all normally perceive as being rationally constructed. Furthermore, the "playful" aspect of Alberto's daughter suggests the joyous, but somewhat deceptive, nature of outer reality. There is something within the word playful, considered in context, which suggests a necessity to go beyond the surface of "unhidden" beauty.

In the second stanza the action of Alberto's daughter creates a situation that enables the speaker to perceive his own inner reality or the unconscious. She now functions as an anima, a guide to the unconscious. Lines seven through ten describe how she takes the speaker beyond surface reality:

But when within thy wave she looks--  
Which glistens then, and trembles--  
Why, then, the prettiest of brooks  
Her worshipper resembles.

She has only to look through the river to make it glisten and tremble, because she embodies the transcendent power to go beyond the surface of the river, which symbolizes the flux of life. The same reaction occurs when she looks at the speaker, for he, like the river, trembles at her gaze. Thus, her action reveals that the speaker resembles the

outer reality of the river, as well as contains its inner reality: "For in his heart, as in thy stream, / Her image deeply lies" (ll. 11-12). She becomes integral to his inner being, subsuming the I-thou distinction of stanza one.<sup>3</sup> She is a symbol of the unconscious permanently lodged within his deepest Self. Still, she maintains a capability to act on her own: "His heart which trembles at the beam / Of her soul-searching eyes" (ll. 13-14). She exists outside of the speaker because, like the anima, she must be personified as an existent being to be understood.<sup>4</sup> Lastly, the speaker as worshipper of her "soul-searching eyes" indicates that their relationship is one of spiritual devotion, where the female figure becomes the symbol of perception, enabling the speaker to transcend the flux of attraction and to discover his unconscious, spiritual reality, or what Poe calls repulsion.

"Hymn" (P. 60) is an obvious example of the third level of the anima: love (eros) raised to the height of spiritual devotion, symbolized by the Virgin Mary:

At morn--at noon--at twilight dim--  
 Maria! thou hast heard my hymn!  
 In joy and wo--in good and ill--  
 Mother of God, be with me still!  
 When the Hours flew brightly by,  
 And not a cloud obscured the sky,  
 My soul, lest it should truant be,  
 Thy grace did guide to thine and thee;  
 Now, when storms of Fate o'ercast  
 Darkly my Present and my Past  
 Let my Future radiant shine  
 With sweet hopes of thee and thine!

There are two distinct moods within this poem. One is when all is going well for the speaker and the hours fly brightly

by (l. 5). At this time he prays to the mother of God thanking her for making life beautiful. At such a time not praying would make the speaker a truant. The antithesis of this mood is when nothing is going well; present and past appear obscure, and the only hope lies in the future, which can occur through the intercession of Virgin Mary or the anima (ll. 9-12). The speaker recognizes the fact that the anima has the potential to remove this anguish. With the assistance of the anima perception is at its highest, where no clouds obscure one's vision (l. 6). One almost senses an undercurrent of despair in the speaker's voice that the anima may not return a blessing for the hymn until some unforeseen future date: "be with me still!" (l. 4). What is important is that the speaker does recognize the total restorative power of his anima and the necessity to integrate her into his daily life.

"To Helen" (P. 47) is an example of Poe's use of the female figure to symbolize more than mere mortal woman. Actually, Poe dispenses with any hint of Helen as a mortal woman by immediately referring to her beauty as being, "Like those Nicéan barks of yore" (l. 2). And what follows in the remainder of the poem is Poe's continual reference to the symbolic power of Helen's beauty to represent a unique and individual transcendental experience. Helen's beauty has the power to create in the speaker's mind the image of

a perfumed sea,  
The weary, way-worn wanderer bore  
To his own native shore.

(ll. 3-5)

This is no ordinary sea that smells of natural marine life. This is chaos transformed into beauty. Helen's sea is one of imaginative creation where perfumed odors comfort the wanderer. Helen symbolizes the positive anima, who enables the speaker to recognize his inner being, or the unconscious.<sup>5</sup>

Stanza one tells us of the power of Helen's beauty to bring wanderers back to their native shore. This native shore symbolizes the unconscious of the speaker. And in stanza two a more explicit description of the speaker's journey is revealed in classical images; Helen becomes the embodiment of antiquity:

On desperate seas long wont to roam,  
 Thy hyacinth hair, thy classic face,  
 Thy Naiad airs have brought me home  
 To the glory that was Greece,  
 And the grandeur that was Rome.  
 (ll. 6-10)

Helen is transformed into a Naiad of classical times. She now represents the Golden Age of repose, balance and beauty which enables the speaker to transcend time and place.<sup>6</sup>

Furthermore, an examination of the images and symbols in stanza two reveals a distinct progression of consciousness. Line six mentions "desperate seas" which, because of the word desperate, is a symbol of chaos. Chaos is transcended because of Helen's "hyacinth hair," "classic face," and "Naiad airs," all three are the disembodied essence of a particular attribute of the female. Because of this, the speaker is able to transcend his immediate surroundings, or ego-consciousness, and, therefore, envision the essence,

"glory" and "grandeur," of the past civilizations of Greece and Rome. Moreover, Helen's power to transport the speaker to antiquity symbolizes the anima's power to open up the speaker's unconscious.

In stanza three Helen's beauty achieves an even more imaginative transcendence, or awareness of the unconscious:

Lo! in yon brilliant window-niche  
How statue-like I see thee stand,  
The agate lamp within thy hand!  
Ah, Psyche, from the regions which  
Are Holy-Land!

Up to stanza three the speaker was describing Helen's beauty in terms of the past tense, or antiquity. Now, however, the speaker describes her beauty in terms of the present tense as an immediate visitation. Consequently, the speaker is now describing a present contemplation; hence, the unconscious is now able to reveal its inner knowledge to the conscious. Helen's beauty now takes on the imaginative form of a statue with an agate lamp in hand, a symbol of knowledge. And, finally, she is transposed into the archetype of the speaker's wisdom, his inner Self, his psyche, or the Holy-Land.

There is a continual growth of the speaker's imaginative vision as Daniel Hoffman notes: "From girl to Naiad to statue--to Psyche! The further we get from life, the closer to ideality: from life to antiquity, from antiquity to myth, from myth to art, from art to Intellectual Beauty, the ethereal spirit revealed at last."<sup>7</sup> Helen becomes integral to the personality of the speaker who evokes her. She eventually becomes the female figure symbolizing intellectual

beauty. She becomes like Shelley's persona in "Hymn to Intellectual Beauty" who, "gives grace and truth to life's unquiet dream."<sup>8</sup> Helen's beauty transports the speaker to the transcendent realm of imaginary vision. Halliburton puts it this way: "the peculiar way in which the lady's presence, built up line by line throughout the poem, is suddenly turned into a kind of transparency, a medium through which we glimpse that even remote and higher sphere which is Holy-Land."<sup>9</sup> The medium or transparency that Halliburton speaks of is a symbol of the power of the speaker's anima to bring the unconscious to consciousness. The psyche is an archetypal symbol for man's power to transcend his outer self and to come to realize his inner Self. Once there is a union of the anima with the conscious ego the recognition of the inner Self is accomplished and, consequently, Holy-Land is a symbol of the unity of the total Self, like Poe's unity in the Divine Being.

Poe's "To M. L. S\_\_\_" (P. 102) contains similar adoration of intellectual beauty. However, the situation is different. In "To Helen" the speaker wove an ever-expanding web of classical symbols to attain transcendence. In "To M. L. S\_\_\_" the speaker is pleading with the female figure to bestow a transcendent vision upon him. The speaker's tone of praise in the opening line, "of all who hail thy presence as the morning," is continued until line thirteen. Hence, the female figure in "To M. L. S\_\_\_" begins with the power Helen does not attain until the conclusion of "To Helen." Furthermore, the

female in "To M. L. S\_\_\_\_" is like the sun, whose light and darkness are the essence of all who worship her:

Of all who hail thy presence as the morning--  
Of all to whom thine absence is the night--  
The blotting utterly from out high heaven  
The sacred sun.

(ll. 1-4)

She also represents truth, virtue, and humanity (l. 7).

Therefore, she is analogous to Psyche in "To Helen." However, the speaker of "To M. L. S\_\_\_\_" now worships his transcendent state of perception to the point of idolatry. The speaker's worship borders on servitude, as Halliburton says, "the speaker, a helpless sufferer, expresses his gratitude to the guardian figure."<sup>10</sup> Or, in Jungian terms, the angel symbolizes the speaker's positive anima. The reason for the speaker's gratitude toward the angel is his desire to perceive the Holy-Land of "To Helen."

Lines thirteen to eighteen are a request by the speaker:

Of all who owe thee most--whose gratitude  
Nearest resembles worship--oh, remember  
The truest--the most fervently devoted,  
And think that these weak lines are written by him--  
By him who, as he pens them, thrills to think  
His spirit is communing with an angel's.

The speaker's imperatives, remember and think, serve as reminders to his angel that he worships her fervently, as one would the third type of anima. The speaker desires his angel to reciprocate his worship by serving as his anima so that he can experience a transcendence of his ego-conscious existence. Halliburton points out that the service which the speaker wishes his angel to render is of a circular form for the repayment of his worship of her, in order to experience

realities he once knew.<sup>11</sup> The speaker writes his adoration to his angel so that she remembers his need for transcendental experience. And, even while only writing to his angel the speaker, "thrills to think / His spirit is communing with an angel's" (ll. 17-18). Granted, thrill is not as ecstatic a mood as the speaker of "To Helen" eventually experiences, but it is enough to sustain the creation of a poem of adoration, which satisfies the speaker for the moment.

The two poems just examined refer to supernal intelligence and beauty. Poe attempts to capture a moment of eternity in which he can revel in intellectual beauty. In "Ode on a Grecian Urn" Keats recognizes that he can only experience the transcendental state of beauty momentarily. Keats is satisfied with a moment and he thought all men should be:

When old age shall this generation waste,  
 Thou shalt remain, in midst of other woe  
 Than ours, a friend to man, to whom thou say'st,  
 "Beauty is truth, truth beauty,--that is all  
 Ye know on earth, and all ye need to know."<sup>12</sup>

A moment's insight into beauty, or oneness within, is also what Poe desires. Poe's beauty, like Keats', is imbibed with Platonic overtones. Poe's beauty exists somewhere beyond the experience of attraction and is perceived in the absolute unity of the Divine Being, or the Self, through the intuitive glimpse. The essence of "To Helen" and "To M. L. S\_\_\_\_" is Poe's desire to recreate the beauty he discovered in just such an intuitive glimpse. According to T. S. Eliot, Poe "appears to yield himself completely to the idea of the moment."<sup>13</sup> Like Keats, a moment of beauty is enough for Poe in these two poems.



In "To F\_\_\_\_" (P. 61) one sees the female figure as a peaceful abode beyond the chaos and flux of daily life. The first stanza establishes the relation of the female to the speaker:

Beloved! amid the earnest woes  
 That crowd around my earthly path--  
 (Drear path, alas! where grows  
 Not even one lonely rose)--  
 My soul at least a solace hath  
 In dreams of thee, and therein knows  
 An Eden of bland repose.

She is the soul-mate of the speaker and the only good and beautiful thing in his life, a beloved paradise. Her appearance in dreams is like the anima bringing the other half, the unconscious, of the speaker's life to the surface; thereby, completing or rounding off his total being. It is in the realm of the dream-Eden that the speaker may sit back in "bland repose" and enjoy life in its totality. And the paradisiacal state of Eden is the speaker's perception of his own inner Self, where life is lived to its fullest through the momentary release of ego-consciousness.

The second stanza is an elaboration on the tendency of the female figure to become a place where the speaker can escape into:

And thus thy memory is to me.  
 Like some enchanted far-off isle  
 In some tumultuous sea--  
 Some ocean throbbing far and free  
 With storms--but where meanwhile  
 Serenest skies continually  
 Just o'er that one bright island smile.

Thinking about the female figure elevates the speaker beyond the "tumultuous sea" of life, where attraction and repulsion

continuously struggle to maintain a balance between flux and stasis; one is essential to the other in waking life. It is only with the aid of the anima that the speaker can perceive the unity of Self beyond continual struggle. Without straining the analogy too far, this island of repose is like the female figure's song in Wallace Stevens' "The Idea of Order at Key West." The creative potential of the female in "Key West" is similar to that of the female in "To F\_\_\_\_":

It was her voice that made  
The sky acutest at its vanishing.  
She measured to the hour its solitude.  
She was the single artificer of the world  
In which she sang. And when she sang, the sea,  
Whatever self it had, became the self  
That was her song, for she was the maker. Then we,  
As we beheld her striding there alone,  
Knew that there never was a world for her  
Except the one she sang and, singing, made. <sup>14</sup>

The female in "Key West" annihilates phenomenal reality to recreate an imaginative order of her own, which, in actuality, is within the speaker himself. In "To F\_\_\_\_" the female or the anima enables the speaker to create an imaginative place of bland repose, which is out of place and time, into which the speaker, as in "Key West," may pursue his own individual quest for order and identity. The anima enables the speaker to perceive his own created order that makes life more livable.

"To \_\_\_\_\_" (P. 108) is a difficult poem to interpret because Poe ingeniously uses similar arguments to disclose a fine distinction between the poet's inability to create anew and the power of discovery. In the first five lines the speaker denounces the belief that words create new thoughts:

Not long ago, the writer of these lines,  
 In the mad pride of intellectuality,  
 Maintained "the power of words"--denied that ever  
 A thought arose within the human brain  
 Beyond the utterance of the human tongue.

The speaker is voicing a present awareness that in the past he believed that words could create new thoughts. Poe dealt with this idea in footnote two of the "Drake-Halleck" review: "Imagination is, possibly in man, a lesser degree of the creative power in God. What the Deity imagines, is, but was not before. What man imagines, is, but was also. The mind of man cannot imagine what is not."<sup>15</sup> This is what Poe means by discovery through intuitive glimpses. To discover is to know what has always been there unconsciously, and the joy of discovery creates a union of the perceiver with the Self, because such thoughts,

Have stirred from out the abysses of his heart,  
 Unthought-like thoughts that are the souls of thought,  
 Richer, far wilder, far diviner visions  
 Than even the seraph harper, Israfil,  
 (Who has "the sweetest voice of all God's creatures,")  
 Could hope to utter.

(ll. 11-16)

From deep within man's soul comes new thoughts, "out of the abysses of his heart," which are beyond the unearthly beauty described by Poe in the poem "Israfil," which make man god-like through discovery of his original self. This idea is also found in "Eureka" and has been discussed in chapter one of this study.

The power which has made the speaker aware of his past error was the discovery of the sublimity of a certain female. ("To \_\_\_\_" was originally addressed to Mrs. Marie Louise

Shew.)<sup>16</sup> The first mention of the female figure is in lines six through ten:

And now, as if in mockery of that boast,  
Two words--two foreign soft dissyllables--  
Italian tones, made only to be murmured  
By angels dreaming in the moonlit "dew  
That hangs like chains of pearl on Hermon hill."

It is the name of the female which, though only words, carries with it the power to confound the speaker's belief, "pride of intellectuality" (l. 2), in his own ego-conscious creative ability. He is now confronted with his anima figure and discovers that only dreaming angels may call her by name; thereby, realizing for the first time his limits as a rational being. This feeling of inadequacy is eventually overcome when the speaker acknowledges that the sublimity of his new perception comes from the female figure, "The pen falls powerless from my shivering hand. / With thy dear name as text, though bidden by thee" (ll. 17-18). In the past the speaker thought what he wrote was new. Now, however, when confronted with his anima instructing him what to write he is overwhelmed by a terror-like experience which makes writing difficult. Terror that comes from the shock of recognition when the unconscious bids him to confront his own Self for the first time:

I cannot write--I cannot speak or think--  
Alas, I cannot feel; for 'tis not feeling,  
This standing motionless upon the golden  
Threshold of the wide-open gate of dreams.  
(ll. 19-22)

Through the intercession of the anima the speaker perceives the golden realm of "unthought-like thoughts" where earthly.

passion does not exist. This is the fourth level of the anima where wisdom transcends the most holy and most pure. Such a complete dissociation of all things earthly can cause nothing but holy terror. Poe's own words in "The Lake-- To \_\_\_\_" best express the terror experienced by the speaker in "To \_\_\_\_": "Yet that terror was not fright, / But a tremulous delight" (P. 23).

The holy vision into the Self continues until the end of the poem:

Gazing, entranced, adown the gorgeous vista,  
And thrilling as I see, upon the right,  
Upon the left, and all the way along,  
Amid empurpled vapors, far away  
To where the prospect terminates--thee only.  
(ll. 23-27)

The speaker is totally absorbed in his newly discovered vision. He looks right, left, up, and down, and everywhere his gaze falls it falls on empurpled vapors, purple symbolizing the most holy. But this is not the end of his vision; beyond the vapors appears the terminal and ultimate sublimity, "thee only," or the divine love. Thus, the anima becomes the ideal beauty of the speaker's vision. She symbolizes the ultimate reality which exists solely for and in itself, giving to the speaker's soul or Self a rebirth of spiritual wisdom, transcending his "pride of intellectuality," or ego-consciousness.

The female figure in "For Annie" (P. 118-122) releases the speaker from the confrontations of day to day existence. By doing so, he eventually perceives spiritual reality and

his inner Self. The first stanza expresses the speaker's joy of being released from the constant struggle between attraction and repulsion:

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.  
 (ll. 1-6)

Living is equated with a fever, implying an overwhelming sickness which incapacitates, something loathed not loved. The third stanza displays how the speaker has "conquered" living:

And I rest so composedly,  
 Now, in my bed,  
 That any beholder  
 Might fancy me dead--  
 Might start at beholding me,  
 Thinking me dead.

This is not a physical death; it is a conceptualized state of death. Halliburton says that death for the speaker "is something that has already been surpassed."<sup>17</sup> In this death-like state, "The moaning and groaning, / The sighing and sobbing," (ll. 19-20) of ego-conscious existence is surpassed. The speaker retreats into his unconscious, abating his tortuous thirst "Of Passion accurst" (l. 36).

As in "The Haunted Palace," Poe uses physical description of the outer world as emblematic of what occurs in the mind. The thirst for passion is abated because the speaker has drunk from a spring, "That quenches all thirst" (l. 38). And the spring is located,

but a very few  
 Feet under ground--  
 From a cavern not very far  
 Down under ground.

(ll. 41-4)

Here the physical world is used as a symbol of the mind. There is a touch of irony in the fact that the spring, a symbol of the unconscious, is so close to the ego-conscious reality. One almost feels that Poe is giving his reader a gentle nudge to help discover his or her own inner spring. This gentle nudge becomes more evident in the next stanza:

And ah! let it never  
       Be foolishly said  
 That my room it is gloomy  
       And narrow my bed;  
 For man never slept  
       In a different bed--  
 And, to sleep, you must slumber  
       In just such a bed.

(ll. 45-51)

The bed on which the speaker sleeps is universalized as the bed all people use who sleep like the speaker.<sup>18</sup> The word sleep is italicized to announce its unique difference from ordinary sleep. Furthermore, the bed is not narrow and the room is not gloomy. Therefore, the bed must be large, probably limitless, and the room is unclouded, maybe transparent; in such a room the speaker is able to perceive "unthought-like thoughts," all of which occur through the aid of Annie, the anima.

One of Annie's effects on the speaker is explained in the following manner:

My tantalized spirit  
       Here blandly reposes,  
 Forgetting, or never

Regretting, its roses--  
 Its old agitations  
 Of myrtles and roses.

(ll. 53-8)

Ego-conscious reality is forgotten without any regret because the speaker's spirit now exists in a loving state of bland repose:

Bathing in many  
 A dream of the truth  
 And the beauty of Annie.

(ll. 68-70)

Annie enables the speaker to transcend the agitations of ego-conscious reality by putting him, "Deeply to sleep / From the heaven of her breast" (ll. 77-8). And the speaker says that while he slept, "she prayed to the angels / To keep me from harm" (ll. 83-4). At this point in the poem Annie acts like the second type of the anima: romantic and aesthetic, however, still characterized by sexual elements. Nevertheless, this is not the final stage of the anima development in the poem. In the last stanza the beloved Annie becomes the symbol of perception and raises love to the height of spiritual devotion:

But my heart it is brighter  
 Than all of the many  
 Stars in the sky,  
 For it sparkles with Annie--  
 It glows with the light  
 Of the love of my Annie--  
 With the thought of the light  
 Of the eyes of my Annie.

In his sleep of sleeps the speaker transcends ego-conscious reality simply by thinking about Annie's eyes, which are symbols of perception in Poe. And the contrast between the



many stars and his heart emphasizes the speaker's oneness within, where the many stars of the cosmos become subservient to the one loving heart of the speaker. The female figure in this poem enables the speaker to perceive the universe as something "out there" but still something that must first be perceived and known within the Self before it can have any relevancy to the perceiver. Annie is the medium of divine love, the soul of thought.

The last poem to be discussed in this chapter is "Al Aaraaf" (P. 25-40). In order to keep within the limits of this study we will deal mainly with the three female figures in the poem.<sup>19</sup> All three are angels or supposedly bodiless spirits. Through their surroundings and actions they form a hierarchy of perception. Nesace is closest to and in direct communication with God. Ligeia is Nesace's messenger to the seraphs. And Ianthe, a seraph, is the lowest in the hierarchy because her arguments successfully tempt Angelo to remain on the star Al Aaraaf. One must keep in mind that the only male in the poem is Angelo and that Angelo never comes into direct communication with God. He only experiences the "works" of the Divine through the female figure.

Nesace inhabits the wandering star where, "nothing earthly save the ray / (Thrown back from flowers) of Beauty's eye" (I. 1-2) and no "music of the passion-hearted" (I. 7) exist. Furthermore, she never comes into direct contact with man. And when she communicates with God her voice of "song, in odors, goes up to Heaven" (I. 82). When God does appear,

She ceas'd--and buried then her burning cheek  
 Abash'd, amid the lilies there, to seek  
 A shelter from the fervour of His eye;  
 For the stars trembled at the Deity.  
 (I. 118-21)

Though she is the female figure of the highest order in this poem she still trembles with reverence in the presence of the Divine. She also knows that it is only,

In thought that can alone  
 Ascend thy empire and so be  
 A partner of thy throne.  
 (I. 111-13)

She is a poetic embodiment of what Poe was later to call in his prose pieces an intuitive glimpse:

By winged Fantasy,  
 My embassy is given,  
 Till secrecy shall knowledge be  
 In the environs of Heaven.  
 (I. 114-17)

Nesace is the medium through which glimpses of beauty are discovered by man. She transcends time and place in her every action and deed; there is no attraction and repulsion in the realm which she inhabits. She is like the fourth type of the anima.

Another important facet of Nesace's environment is where her wandering star comes to rest:

'Twas a sweet time for Nesace--for there  
 Her world lay lolling on the golden air,  
 Near four bright suns--a temporary rest--  
 An oasis in desert of the blest.  
 (I. 16-19)

Nesace's star is the center of a circle and the four suns are points of radii, forming a mandala--a symbol of wholeness in Jungian psychology. According to Mircea Eliade, the

mandala "represents the Cosmos in miniature" and "its construction is equivalent to a magic re-creation of the world."<sup>20</sup> While at rest Nesace foregoes her responsibility as controller of the star to enjoy the loving warmth of the suns:

But, now, the ruler of an anchor'd realm,  
 She throws aside the sceptre--leaves the helm,  
 And, amid incense and high spiritual hymns,  
 Laves in quadruple light her angel limbs.  
 (I. 26-9)

She is absorbed in the spiritual power that can re-create the world; actually, she represents the nucleus of the spiritual power. The destruction of life on earth in "Al Aaraaf" is Poe's poetic re-creation of what he perceived as a spiritual life for mankind. Nesace's message of supernal love and beauty redeems all, except those who, like Angelo, forsake the divine glimpse.

Though Nesace is the medium for intuitive glimpses she herself is not the immediate deliverer of the glimpses. She orders Ligeia to deliver the sweet harmonious message which awakens the seraphs:

Go! breathe on their slumber,  
 All softly in ear,  
 The musical number  
 They slumber'd to hear.  
 (II. 144-47)

Edward Davidson says that Ligeia is the deity of harmony who has the power to waken the dead.<sup>21</sup> I would agree with this but must carry Ligeia's function a bit further. Ligeia is the agent of Nesace and her function is to wake the seraphs, who in turn visit earth in the form of beauty displayed in the shepherd's vision of part two of the poem, lines one

through thirty-nine. Consequently, Ligeia and the seraphs are extensions of Nesace's power to offer intuitive glimpses to man.

If there is a female figure in Poe's poems who comes close to the description of the purely instinctual and biological action of the first level of the anima it is the seraph Ianthe. Her first words to Angelo are a temptation:

My Angelo! and why of them to be?  
A brighter dwelling-place is here for thee--  
And greener fields than in yon world above,  
And woman's loveliness--and passionate love.  
(II. 227-30)

However, it would not be totally correct to place Ianthe in the first level of the anima figure because Poe does state that the lovers whiled away their time in discussion (II. 261). Therefore, Ianthe is more like the second type of the anima. What is more important is that Angelo listens to her rather than pursue his previous vision of supernal beauty; thereby condemning himself to the passionate star Al Aaraaf: "for Heaven to them no hope imparts / Who hear not for the beating of their hearts" (II. 263-64). Geoffrey Rans aptly sums up Angelo's error: "His sin lies in his preferring the passions of the heart to the superior demands of the soul."<sup>22</sup> If Angelo had heeded Nesace's message he would not have sunken into non-creative oblivion.

I have often read that Poe's poetry lacks a variety of themes and, therefore, is poetry of a secondary nature. If one lumps all of the poems with women into the category usually called "ideal beauty" then Poe's poems will all

appear to be the same. Unless an effort is made to discover how and why a female acts in a particular poem little understanding of Poe's poetic effect will come about. A general comment on the poems discussed in this chapter is that the female figure broadens and enlightens the speaker's perception of himself and the cosmos, by acting as a guide to his inner Self. For example, in "Hymn" the speaker learns to integrate his anima into his daily life, especially because of his moments of despair. The female in "To F\_\_\_\_" becomes a peaceful abode where the speaker may escape his chaotic existence. "To Helen" is the poem of Poe's first ideal love and in it we see the anima's power to raise the speaker's perception to higher and higher levels of awareness. And in "To \_\_\_\_" the female figure gives the speaker the intuitive glimpse which enables him to transcend his past misunderstanding of his own creative ability. Therefore, the female figure is the symbol of the power which motivates. Richard Wilbur says that she is the essence of "moments of successful reverie, as fitful recoveries of imaginative power."<sup>23</sup> This she is. Moreover, an effort should be made to understand what the successful reverie of each poem brings to the perception of the speaker, or to Poe as the case may be.

The presence of the female figure in the poems of this chapter manifests a drive in the speaker toward supernal love and beauty, although she does not beckon toward death in these poems. One can see this demonstrated in "To Helen,"

where the speaker's ultimate vision is Psyche. Poems dealing with the death of the female will be discussed in the following chapter. The death of the female unearths the intensity of love sustained by the bereaved. The speaker must reconcile himself with his existence even without the physical presence of his beloved. When the love for the female is spiritualized and transcends mutability, which occurs through his confrontation with melancholy, the speaker becomes intensely aware of his own identity. As an anima figure the death of the female symbolizes a psychic rebirth in the speaker, a soul-elevating moment in Poe's terms.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> I would like to mention two studies of this nature as examples of the type of analysis which considers Poe's real life relationships with women essential to the understanding of his poetry. The first is: Floyd Stovall, "Introduction," The Poems of Edgar Allan Poe (Charlottesville: The University Press of Virginia, 1965), pp. XV-XXXVII. The second is: Haldeen Braddy, Three dimensional Poe (El Paso: Texas Western Press, 1973). Braddy does make an interesting observation on Poe's artistic quest for women on the last page of her analysis: "Poe had never experienced full or abiding releases from either wine or women; in artistic creativity he at last identified the muse destiny had appointed him: art, pure and abstract, was the woman Edgar Allan Poe desired" (p. 49).

<sup>2</sup> Stovall, Poems, p. 43. Stovall's text is being used as the authoritative text for Poe's poetry in this study. All subsequent references to Poe's poetry will be listed in the text in the following manner: (P. 43) by the title of the poem and by line number wherever necessary for clarification.

<sup>3</sup> Inder Nath Kher, The Landscape of Absence: Emily Dickinson's Poetry (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1974). I quote at length here a passage pertaining to Dickinson's poetry which is also relevant to the I-thou relation in "To the River \_\_\_\_." "A constant pursuit of identity is the source of man's victory over the sense of impermanence. Although the 'other' is proposed as identity, man's search for being does not take place outside himself. The outward forms simply serve as symbolic representations of what is existentially and essentially within man himself. In this sense, the 'I-thou' relationship may be described as a projection of the self. Through this relationship, the created self loses its egocentricity and advances toward the larger self" (p. 260).

<sup>4</sup> Ann Belford Ulanov, The Feminine in Jungian Psychology and in Christian Theology (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1971), p. 40.

<sup>5</sup> M.-L. von Franz, "The Process of Individuation," Man and His Symbols, ed. Carl Gustav Jung (1964; rpt. New York: Dell, 1972), p. 191.

<sup>6</sup> Daniel Hoffman, Poe Poe Poe Poe Poe Poe Poe Poe (New York: Doubleday, 1972), p. 64.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., p. 65.

- 8 English Romantic Writers, ed. David Perkins (New York: Harcourt, 1967), p. 970.
- 9 David Halliburton, Edgar Allan Poe: A Phenomenological View (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1973), p. 156.
- 10 Ibid., p. 161.
- 11 Ibid., p. 162.
- 12 Perkins, ed., p. 1186.
- 13 From Poe to Valery (New York: Harcourt, 1948), p. 19.
- 14 The Palm at the End of the Mind: Selected Poems and a Play by Wallace Stevens, ed. Holly Stevens (1967; rpt. New York: Vintage Books, 1972), p. 98.
- 15 "The Culprit Fay, and Other Poems," The Complete Works of Edgar Allan Poe, ed. James A. Harrison (1902; rpt. New York: AMS, 1965), VIII, 283.
- 16 Stovall, p. 275.
- 17 Halliburton, p. 170.
- 18 Ibid.
- 19 For an account of the historical action in the poem and an interesting interpretation of its poetic message see the following: Floyd Stovall, "An Interpretation of 'Al Aaraaf,'" Edgar Poe the Poet: Essays New and Old on the Man and His Work (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1969), pp. 102-125. And for a reply to the Stovall interpretation see the following: Richard Campbell Pettigrew and Marie Morgan Pettigrew, "A Reply to Floyd Stovall's Interpretation of 'Al Aaraaf,'" American Literature, 8 (Jan. 1937), 439-45.
- 20 Myth and Reality, trans. Willard R. Trask (New York: Harper, 1963), p. 25.
- 21 Poe: A Critical Study (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1957), p. 22.
- 22 Edgar Allan Poe (London: Oliver and Boyd, 1965), pp. 45-6.
- 23 "Introduction," Poe (1959; rpt. New York: Dell, 1971), p. 15.



CHAPTER 3  
THE BRIDGE OF SIGHS

Love and despair are two ingredients in the death of the female figure. Without love there is no deeply felt loss, and without despair one cannot fully comprehend the nothingness of the self Poe visualized in the poems dealing with death. The separation caused by her death creates the sense of suffering in the lover. Without suffering the lover would not be able to integrate his unconscious existence into ego-consciousness. When the female dies the speaker of the poem incurs a psychic wound which forces him to begin a quest to discover his own destiny.<sup>1</sup> Moreover, the death of the female is a re-creation of the myth of creation in "Eureka": "In the Original Unity of the First Thing lies the Secondary Cause of All Things, with the Germ of their Inevitable Annihilation."<sup>2</sup> The speaker must reconcile himself with the beloved's death as a necessary act for his own inevitable return to unity. When the beloved is re-created spiritually as in, "To One in Paradise," a recognition of the man-god within, a symbol for the Self, takes place.

In "Tamerlane" (P. 3-11) there is a conflict between love and ambition. The lover's mood changes when he speaks of one or the other. His young love is spoken of reverently:

O, she was worthy of all love!  
Love--as in infancy was mine--  
!Twas such as angel minds above  
Might envy; her young heart the shrine  
On which my every hope and thought

Were incense--then a goodly gift,  
 For they were childish and upright--  
 Pure--as her young example taught.  
 (ll. 86-93)

Like Annabel Lee this female is the envy of the angels. Tamerlane's young love's heart becomes a shrine where he goes to worship her Eden-like purity, a symbol of other-worldliness. She represents supernal love and does nothing that will lead Tamerlane onto ambition's path: "I saw no Heaven--but in her eyes" (l. 101). Her eyes are the messengers of hope; consequently, her love offers Tamerlane a paradisiacal retreat from strife. She functions like a positive anima, who sees one through unsettling predicaments.<sup>3</sup>

The following lines are a personification of Tamerlane's ambition when he has victory over the city of Samarcand:

Look 'round thee now on Samarcand!--  
 Is she not queen of Earth? her pride  
 Above all cities? in her hand  
 Their destinies? in all beside  
 Of glory which the world hath known  
 Stands she not nobly and alone?  
 Falling--her veriest stepping-stone  
 Shall form the pedestal of a throne--  
 And who her sovereign? Timour--he  
 Whom the astonished people saw  
 Striding o'er empires haughtily  
 A diadem'd outlaw!

(ll. 165-76)

Samarcand is like a queen who enjoys a sense of glory and nobility. Her domain is the earth, the antithesis of Tamerlane's young love. Ambition is like Poe's attraction, and the young love is like repulsion. However, the irony is that Tamerlane is caught between the two. The choice to conquer the earth, he later discovers, was wrong. Ambition

functions like a negative anima by leading Tamerlane to a self-destructive path.<sup>4</sup>

Tamerlane forsakes his ideal love when he does not properly tell her of his ambitious plans:

I spoke to her of power and pride,  
But mystically--in such guise  
That she might deem it nought beside  
The moment's converse.

(ll. 145-48)

By taking such an action Tamerlane denies himself true love, because he desires to become a conqueror first. Had he explained his ambition clearly she might not have consented to his plans--this may be the reason for Tamerlane's deception. Nevertheless, his vision of ideal love is transformed into an obscure vision of

Dim, vanities of dreams by night--  
And dimmer nothings which were real--  
(Shadows--and a more shadowy light!).

(ll. 121-23)

This is a murky vision, unlike the clarity of ideal love. Ambition not only eventually destroys her warrior, she also offers little in the way of spiritual guidance. The transference from ideal love to ambition is something that occurs within Tamerlane, and this change represents his dark side. Having deceived his young love, ambition leads him through shadowy visions and he mistakes the latter for the former:

Parted upon their misty wings,  
And, so, confusedly, became  
Thine image and--a name--a name!  
Two separate--yet most intimate things.

(ll. 124-27)

He has replaced Heaven with earth, love with passion, and spiritual love with materialistic avarice.

Through her death ideal love eventually triumphs over ambition. Tamerlane returns home to discover that his innocent beloved is dead and gone: "I reach'd my home--my home no more-- / For all had flown who made it so" (ll. 213-14). All of the sections in which Tamerlane reflects on the brevity of life, and the subsequent despair which accompanies this feeling of loss, have their origin in Tamerlane's awakening of consciousness. Expecting to find ideal love at home, Tamerlane discovers that he is left alone. What Tamerlane remembers of his past he does not like; but the awareness itself appears to be enough to make him joyous near the approach of his own death (ll. 222-29). Moreover, the father he talks to, like ideal love, knows nothing of the passion called ambition (ll. 129-30). With ideal love or the positive anima now dead, the speaker turns to the father, a symbol of the Self. And Tamerlane's final narration of his wonder of how ambition crept into his life reveals the indeterminateness of the origin of intuitive glimpses and the unconscious:

How was it that Ambition crept,  
Unseen, amid the revels there,  
Till growing bold, he laughed and leapt  
In the tangles of Love's very hair?  
(ll. 240-43)

Tamerlane has purged himself of passion and is now amazed that he had made the wrong choice. His past life was a ludicrous quest and therefore appears absurd; it also appears grotesque because of the fantastic personification of ambition, tugging,

with earth-like gravity, at love's hair. However, his present life is blessed with a rebirth of consciousness in the loss of his beloved.

"Ulalume--A Ballad" (P. 103-106) is another poem which constitutes a conflict between heavenly and earthly visions. It opens with a tone of melancholy. The first stanza sets a mood of grief with its barren and withering landscape of the "ghoul-haunted woodland of Weir" (l. 9). Furthermore, we know what is occurring in the poem is a recollection, because of the past tense used by the speaker. In stanza two we are told directly by the speaker that the poem is definitely a recollection of a past experience. The elements of past and present time must be kept separate. The present time indicates the happy union of Psyche and the speaker at the end of the poem. The element of past time is the poem which the speaker is recollecting:

These were the days when my heart was volcanic  
 As the scoriac rivers that roll--  
 As the lavas that restlessly roll  
 Their sulphurous currents down Yaanek,  
 In the ultimate climes of the Pole--  
 That groan as they roll down Mount Yaanek,  
 In the realms of the Boreal Pole.  
 (ll. 13-19)

The speaker suffers from a lack of harmony within his psyche. He has a restless heart which is aflame with passion, while outwardly he has a cold look of calmness, which conceals his inner struggle. Consequently, his mental faculties have been agitated and his memory has therefore been affected as he walks with Psyche:

We noted not the dim lake of Auber,  
 (Though once we had journeyed down here)  
 We remembered not the dank tarn of Auber,  
 Nor the ghoulish-woodland of Weir.  
 (ll. 26-9)

How could anyone forget such surroundings and atmosphere? The speaker and his Psyche certainly cannot be united at this point. The speaker tells us this himself. Eric Carlson rightly believes that the revelations of the speaker are the key to understanding the conflict within the poem.<sup>5</sup> The narrator tells his ballad as he recollects it and we must take him at his word. Consequently, we must accept the separation of the speaker and Psyche as necessary to the process of recollection.

The fact that both the speaker and Psyche are not aware of their whereabouts signifies that Psyche is not fulfilling her proper role. The speaker follows Astarte despite Psyche's warning:

Sadly this star I mistrust--  
 Her pallor I strangely mistrust--  
 Ah, hasten!--ah, let us not linger!  
 Ah, fly!--let us fly!--for we must.  
 (ll. 52-5)

To ignore such a warning from one's own Psyche, or one's positive anima, would result in misdeeds. As stanza five tells us, Astarte is Venus, the goddess of passion. The speaker knows this in recollection but obviously could not recognize the consequences of obeying his passions when he first saw Astarte. He is at war with his psyche in the poem. Carlson rightly points out that "on the stage of the narrator's inner self a psychodrama is acted out, Psyche and Astarte

symbolizing the contending forces."<sup>6</sup> Astarte symbolizes the speaker's earthbound vision, attraction or the negative anima, which he chose to follow rather than intuition, repulsion or Psyche, the positive anima; therefore, the speaker deceives himself.

As a result of the speaker's choice, Psyche's power is overcome and her wings trail in the dust symbolizing the degradation of the speaker's soul through his negative anima. The earthly vision is the path to the grave. And when Psyche discovers the tomb the speaker recalls that he had been there the previous year to inter Ulalume:

On this very night of last year,  
That I journeyed--I journeyed down here!--  
That I brought a dread burden down here--  
On this night, of all nights in the year,  
Ah, what demon hath tempted me here?  
(ll. 86-90)

The "dread burden" was Ulalume's body; it also represents the despair that the speaker experienced upon her death. Hence, he could not overcome the rational fact that she was physically gone forever. We should note the marked emphasis of the speaker's use of the first person singular in the above quote. He speaks of a demon who brought him there. That demon is within himself because he followed his negative anima, Astarte, rather than his positive anima, Psyche. Psyche has been separated from the speaker long enough for the speaker's passions to control his inner Self.<sup>7</sup> When this occurs the female figure of intuition becomes impotent. However, the speaker realizes his mistake as he replies to his own question:

Well I know, now this dim lake of Auber--  
     This misty mid region of Weir:--  
 Well I know, now, this dank tarn of Auber--  
     This ghoul-haunted woodland of Weir.  
                                     (11. 91-4)

His realization, "now," is that he should have recognized the woodlands of Weir before. Once this realization is accomplished he is in unison with Psyche in denouncing the evil powers of the passions (11. 95-104). He now knows that his unbalanced passions were part and parcel of Astarte, the negative anima. As Poe states in the "Drake-Halleck" review the passions have no necessary co-existence with the imagination.<sup>8</sup> Therefore, Ulalume's death eventually assists in creating a rebirth of the speaker's intuitive power.

The female figure in "Ulalume" is the unifying element of the self which releases the speaker from his obsessive passion. However, his passions have become so powerful that the speaker must expunge their control by actually suffering the sight of the tomb. With the sense of wound the speaker is able to transcend the power of his passions. After the speaker transcends his passions he attains the self-knowledge with which he began the poem as the teller of a ballad. Carlson points out that at the end of the poem the "repetition of lines from the first stanza suggests a return to the reality of his grief, and consequently to the tragic self-knowledge which re-establishes the unity of the moral-emotional self."<sup>9</sup> The speaker is reunited with Psyche without whom he would forever be lost in the ghoul-haunted world of passion.



Before analysing more poems I would like to mention Poe's own highly sensitive nature and its relation to my approach to his poems. Two examples of Poe's sensitivity originate in the relation of his mental associations derived from creative perception:

The orange ray of the spectrum and the buzz of the gnat (which never rises above the second A), affect me with nearly similar sensations. In hearing the gnat, I perceive the color. In perceiving the color, I seem to hear the gnat.<sup>10</sup>

I believe that odors have an altogether peculiar force, in affecting us through association; a force differing essentially from that of objects addressing the touch, the taste, the sight, or the hearing.<sup>11</sup>

In the first example one can see that for Poe objects perceived through the senses somehow become disembodied from their original state of existence. He is able to create associations which go beyond sense perception. In the second example he makes an aesthetic distinction between an olfactory sensation and the other four senses. Both examples allude to the power of the mind to dissociate itself from the phenomenal world to create an imaginative reality capable of re-categorizing sensations and feelings.

Poe's record of Virginia's continual bouts with death is the best example of Poe's ability to imaginatively recreate the events occurring around him:

I am constitutionally sensitive--nervous in a very unusual degree. I became insane, with long intervals of horrible sanity. During these fits of absolute unconsciousness, I drank--God only knows how often or how much. As a matter of course, my enemies referred the insanity to

the drink, rather than the drink to the insanity. I had, indeed, nearly abandoned all hope of a permanent cure, when I found one in the death of my wife. This I can and do endure as becomes a man. It was the horrible never-ending oscillation between hope and despair which I could not longer have endured, without total loss of reason. In the death of what was my life, then, I receive a new, but--O God!--how melancholy an existence.<sup>12</sup>

This reads like a typical narration from one of Poe's tales. Poe explains his existence as wavering between sanity and insanity. Sanity being created by insanity: "I became insane, with long intervals of horrible sanity." Forced to confront Virginia's death as a reality he suffers moments of "absolute unconsciousness." These moments are not totally incapacitative; they only render him incapable of living without the stupor-inducing aid of drink. During the intense moments of self-awareness the line between sanity and insanity virtually disappears. It is the life/death uncertainty which almost dissociates Poe from his reasoning power. However, he is, fortunately, capable of recording his anguish with a clarity that placates the almost morbid-sounding relief he experiences at Virginia's death. And like the narrator of "The Raven" he is forced to accept Virginia's death as inevitable. In his own life Poe tried to uncover the rationale or idea behind his actions; consequently, as he states in "The Philosophy of Composition," the discovery of the inner meaning is necessary to the understanding of his poetry.

In "To One in Paradise" (P. 59) a state of melancholy is overcome when the speaker, in the last stanza, re-creates

Ianthe as a spiritual being.<sup>13</sup> This spiritual elevation releases the speaker from mundane despair to a feeling of indeterminate joy. The first stanza establishes the relation to Ianthe while she was alive, she was a "green isle in the sea" (l. 3). Like the female figure in "To F\_\_\_\_," Ianthe represents a peaceful island in a sea of chaos. The second stanza presents the conflict of past and future time within the speaker:

A voice from out the Future cries,  
 "On! on!"--but o'er the Past  
 (Dim gulf!) my spirit hovering lies  
 Mute, motionless, aghast!  
 (ll. 10-13)

The voice from the future is preparing him to transcend the despair of his loss. The motionlessness of the speaker expresses the spiritual stagnation he has succumbed to because of his horror-stricken awareness of Ianthe's death.

There is a subtle shift in the speaker's awareness in the third stanza. He cries that his beloved "light of Life" is dead and that he is like a tree that has been destroyed by a power from without, or like a clipped eagle. The essence of his life is gone and an undercurrent of the spiritual stagnation of stanza two is carried over to this stanza in the form of a symbolic loss of fecundity. The parenthetical lines in this stanza can be read two ways: (1) as an elaboration on the previous line that the speaker will be creative no more, and (2) as a subtle warning the speaker issues to himself to stop thinking negatively.

No more--no more--no more--  
 (Such language holds the solemn sea  
 To the sands upon the shore).  
 (ll. 17-19)

Until now the speaker has been concerned only about his own melancholy. To overcome despair he must readjust his vision of his beloved, and by doing so he will redeem his lost joy.

Stanza four is a gradual realignment of the speaker's reasoning and intuitive powers:

And all my days are trances,  
 And all my nightly dreams  
 Are where thy grey eye glances,  
 And where thy footstep gleams--  
 In what ethereal dances,  
 By what eternal streams.

The first two lines indicate the total absorption of time and the third and fourth lines indicate the total absorption of place Ianthe assumes in the speaker's imagination.

Ianthe, like the past, is dead; through his psychic wound the speaker is capable of re-creating Ianthe as a spiritual guide. And in the last two lines one can see that the indeterminateness of Ianthe's new geographical locale is an allusion to the rebirth of the speaker's ability to experience the soul-elevating moments of an intuitive glimpse. She becomes a vision of his own Self, where the cosmos is momentarily subsumed by his imagination in order for him to overcome his despair.

Turning to "To Helen (Whitman)," (P. 114-16) we see Poe's approach to his female figure in a different light. This poem deals in the mode of a ballad where an exciting

episode in the speaker's life is revealed. The opening lines begin with a recollection: "I saw thee once--once only--years ago: / I must not say how many--but not many." The speaker continues this reminiscing mood for forty-seven lines. In the first sixteen lines a mood of enchantment surrounds the description of Helen. A moonbeam descends from the heavens and falls

Upon the upturn'd faces of a thousand  
Roses that grew in an enchanted garden,  
Where no wind dared to stir, unless on tiptoe.  
(ll. 8-10)

Within the space of ten lines Poe takes us to a mysterious garden of enchantment. Even the wind dare not offend. This garden is inhabited by Helen, who is described as poetry in line sixteen. This Helen exists in a realm much like the Helen in Poe's "To Helen." However, there is a difference in the atmosphere. The garden of "To Helen (Whitman)" is a nocturnal garden illuminated by moonlight.

The description of Helen's presence as poetry is symbolically revealing. Here we see the female figure embodying the power of transcendence or imagination. Even the flowers die in ecstasy in Helen's presence. Helen is like the anima who has the power to annihilate the conscious ego and awaken the unconscious inner Self of man. And this is what Helen's presence does for the speaker. Consequently, it is no wonder that the speaker witnesses the annihilation of the world around him as the poem evolves to its conclusion; because, he is witnessing the awakening of his

unconscious through Helen's presence. Furthermore, the death of the flowers and the annihilation of everything except Helen's eyes represents the symbolic death which must take place for the birth of the speaker's unconscious.

The mood of the first sixteen lines is one of awe and admiration for Helen. Line seventeen describes Helen dressed in white, which symbolizes purity. At this point Helen has the qualities of antiquity and the intellectual beauty of the other Helen. However, this pure image begins to disintegrate. The roses smile and die in line fourteen when moonlight falls upon them. Line twenty describes the same moonlight falling on Helen's face and she is "alas in sorrow." Helen's garden is more like the mood of Milton's "Il Penseroso" rather than "L' Allegro."

Line twenty-one notes a change in the mood of the speaker. He no longer describes his first sight of the garden, he becomes pensive:

Was it not Fate, that, on this July midnight--  
Was it not Fate, (whose name is also Sorrow,)  
That bade me pause before that garden-gate,  
To breathe the incense of those slumbering roses?  
(ll. 21-4)

The speaker discontinues his description of the garden and Helen to muse over the circumstances which had brought him there. He equates fate with sorrow. This coupling of fate and sorrow heightens the effect of the sorrow on Helen's face. David Halliburton states that lines seventeen through twenty are "an almost funereal tableau, so strong is the association, here and elsewhere in the poem, between the

loving and the lifeless."<sup>14</sup> Poe links fate and sorrow here to capture the inherent anguish in the symbolic cyclical process of life and death. Sorrow cannot be avoided when death occurs. Helen symbolizes the destructive forces necessary for the transcendence of the conscious ego in order to attain an awareness of the inner Self. However, out of this sorrow for the annihilation of the conscious ego is born the Spring of the unconscious; one does not exist without the other.

Another important element is the momentary shift in the mood of the speaker to that of pensiveness. Something happened to the speaker when he first saw Helen and he is reflecting and reconstructing the events which have deeply affected his intellect. Poe is establishing a reason for what occurs in the following lines of the poem. Literally, the speaker establishes fate as the originator of the extraordinary events which follow.

In line twenty-five the speaker establishes himself and Helen as the only beings who are aware of the world: "The hated world all slept." This is another facet of the evolution of the development of oneness between the speaker's conscious and his unconscious. He has been preoccupied with Helen from the beginning of the poem and now that preoccupation annihilates the rest of the world. However, the speaker does not stop there, he, next, annihilates the topography of the garden:

And in an instant all things disappeared.  
 (Ah, bear in mind this garden was enchanted!)  
 The pearly lustre of the moon went out:  
 The mossy banks and the meandering paths,  
 The happy flowers and the repining trees,  
 Were seen no more: the very roses' odors  
 Died in the arms of the adoring airs.  
 (ll. 29-35)

The line which I find interesting is the parenthetical line thirty. Why did Poe inject this line? It is possible that he felt that such extraordinary occurrences would not be acceptable to his pragmatic reader. Whatever the reason, Poe does not want his reader to forget that he is now beyond the normal restrictions of time and place.

Next, we see the annihilation of Helen except for her eyes: "Save only the divine light in thine eyes-- / Save but the soul in thine uplifted eyes" (ll. 37-8). The speaker has taken us from the existence of an enchanted garden to the existence of nothing but a pair of eyes. However, the eyes contain the soul of Helen. Halliburton calls this process essentialization.<sup>15</sup> Furthermore, we discover that Helen's eyes have become the speaker's very essence: "I saw but them--they were the world to me" (l. 37). Nothing else needs to exist because the speaker's anima is enabling him to perceive his inner Self. Helen's eyes embody all knowledge:

What wild heart-histories seemed to lie enwritten . . .  
 How dark a wo! yet how sublime a hope . . .  
 How fathomless a capacity for love!  
 (ll. 42, 44, 47)

Helen's eyes amass the capacity of a female figure who knows both sorrow and joy, love and hate, good and evil. This is



a female figure of experience; the speaker has tasted good and evil.

In lines fifty and fifty-one a ghost is seen: "And thou, a ghost, amid the entombing trees / Didst glide away. Only thine eyes remained." I interpret the "thou" to mean that which remains of Helen except her eyes. But the speaker has already told us in line thirty-six that Helen's body had disappeared. Why did Poe inject a ghost at this point? It may be that the speaker's imagination is leaving any filmy residue of Helen's materialistic reality behind, like a snake shedding its skin. And, in the last fifteen lines Helen's eyes become the absolute essence, or the inner Self, of the speaker cleansed of any kinship with materialistic reality. Her eyes have become the soul essence and savior of the speaker:

Their office is to illuminate and enkindle--  
My duty, to be saved by their bright light,  
And purified in their electric fire,  
And sanctified in their elysian fire.  
(ll. 57-60)

Hence, she becomes pure creative power at this point, like the fourth type of the anima: wisdom transcending even the most holy and most pure. Furthermore, the power of Helen's eyes is quite similar to Coleridge's primary imagination:

The primary IMAGINATION I hold to be the living  
Power and prime Agent of all human Perception,  
and as a repetition in the finite mind of the  
eternal act of creation in the infinite I AM.<sup>16</sup>

The speaker attains an all-pervasive transcendental vision of beauty through Helen's eyes which are "two sweetly

scintillant / Venuses, unextinguished by the sun!" (ll. 65-6). This light is more brilliant than the sun. Therefore, Helen's eyes exist somewhere beyond the star Al Aaraaf. And, accordingly, John Ruskin's definition of the imagination seems strikingly like the development of consciousness in "To Helen (Whitman)":

Imagination is based upon, and appeals to, a deep heart feeling; and how faithful and earnest it is in contemplation of the subject-matter, never losing sight of it, nor disguising it, but depriving it of extraneous and material accidents, and regarding it in its disembodied essence.<sup>17</sup>

Helen's eyes and Ruskin's definition of the imagination have much in common. The imaginative vision of the speaker has him so in thrall that he is totally preoccupied with Helen and he does all that Ruskin outlines, especially regarding her disembodied essence, her eyes. The evolution of Helen's eyes contains the dramatic development of the step-by-step process of the speaker's imaginative revelation of his inner Self. "To Helen (Whitman)" is an imaginative journey toward the total ontological recognition of the Self<sup>18</sup> or, as Poe names it in "Eureka," the individual man-god.

What is being proposed in the following exegesis of "The Raven" (P. 95-9) is that the speaker's psychological state of mind prior to his confrontation with the raven produces the impetus for what occurs in the poem. This approach is being used because of what Poe says in "The Philosophy of Composition":

I added the two concluding stanzas of the poem--- their suggestiveness being thus made to pervade

all the narrative which has preceded them. . . .  
 The reader begins now to regard the Raven as  
 emblematical--but it is not until the very last  
 line of the very last stanza, that the intention  
 of making him emblematical of Mournful and  
Neverending Remembrance is permitted distinctly  
 to be seen.<sup>19</sup>

In his exegesis of "The Raven" Poe only mentions that there is an emblematic relation between the raven and the speaker. Poe never explains the concomitant inferences. Many critics have dealt with this relationship but not its immediate affinity to the death of Lenore. I suggest that because of the speaker's sensitivity to Lenore's death he tries to nullify his sorrow by rationally constructing an environment which will erase his memory of her. He is unsuccessful because his passionate, irrational, or unconscious self, devours his rational self and becomes an obsession.<sup>20</sup> The obsession, however, forces the speaker to confront his erroneous judgement and regain the psychic balance he had lost because of Lenore's death.<sup>21</sup>

Antithesis is the motivating factor in "The Raven": there are conflicts between: night and day, the calm room and the stormy night, Pallas and the raven, and evermore and nevermore. Night and day is the first conflict to appear:

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.  
(ll. 7-12)

He wishes for the morrow to come with the hope that Lenore will be no longer on his mind. Or the inference may be drawn that with the coming of night also comes the dreams of Lenore. Either way, he is trying to construct a daylight environment, symbolic of rational waking life. And by reading books he hopes to lock himself into an environment where he does not have to think of Lenore. Obviously, he loved deeply, but now assigns Lenore to a realm where she will remain, "Nameless here for evermore," which is a further indication of his attempt to expunge her from his life; she is with the angels now. All of which indicate that the speaker is attempting to escape the reality of Lenore's existence alive or dead by rationalizing her away.

However, when the speaker peers into the darkness beyond the open chamber door he whispers "Lenore" after having dreamed "dreams no mortal ever dared to dream before" (l. 26). He cannot control his dreams; they come from deep within his soul, like the "fantastic terror" he experiences during the commonplace rustling of the curtains in stanza three. And out of the darkness, silence, or nothingness, "stepped a stately Raven of the saintly days of yore; / Not the least obeisance made he" (ll. 38-9). This could be simply an ordinary pet gone astray, but for the speaker, as Poe says, there is an added "air of the fantastic" which

approaches very close to the ludicrous in the speaker's mode of perception upon the raven's entrance.<sup>22</sup> For the speaker, the raven immediately has, to an excessive degree, an air of high seriousness. Asked, the bird replies that his name is nevermore: this may sound like an absurd statement but the speaker so thoroughly integrates the raven's reply into his own being that it gains objective reality through the speaker's subjective questioning and answering. The raven becomes emblematic of the speaker's own irrational obsession. Because of the speaker's projection of his own self into the raven, it functions only through the one-way dialogue. It is the speaker's unconscious self pushing itself to extreme limits to be heard.

Poe says that the speaker queries the raven as he does, "because he experiences a phrenzied pleasure in so modeling his questions as to receive from the expected 'Nevermore' the most delicious because the most intolerable sorrow."<sup>23</sup> Poe also refers to the speaker's mental state as "the human thirst for self-torture, and in part by superstition, to propound such queries to the bird as will bring him, the lover, the most of the luxury of sorrow, through the anticipated answer 'Nevermore.'"<sup>24</sup> This is the same manner in which the Jungian wound or hurt operates to help one regain psychic balance, through a transcendence of the ego-consciousness to achieve a union and oneness with the inner Self. Poe explains an identical reaction to a Jungian-like ego-conscious wound, with the individual's eventual

transcendence of self to achieve the recognition of the larger self:

In the life of every man there occurs at least one epoch when the spirit seems to abandon, for a brief period, the body, and, elevating itself above mortal affairs just so far as to get a comprehensive and general view, makes thus an estimate of its humanity, as accurate as is possible, under any circumstances, to that particular spirit. The soul here separates itself from its own idiosyncrasy, or individuality, and considers its own being, not as appertaining solely to itself, but as a portion of the universal Ens. All the important good resolutions which we keep--all startling, marked regenerations of character--are brought about as these crises of life. And thus it is our sense of self which debases, and which keeps us debased.<sup>25</sup>

In "The Raven" it is the speaker's sense of self which reacts against total acceptance of Lenore's death. By doing so he is debased into suffering through an irrational obsession, or a frenzied pleasure as Poe names it.

Aside from what Poe says concerning the reasons for choosing a bust of Pallas for the raven to alight on, the bust also has an inner meaning.<sup>26</sup> The bust of Pallas is a symbol of the dead Lenore, who now exists with the angels. Pallas Athena is an archetypal symbol of a goddess who assists man, like the positive anima. However, she can render no assistance to the speaker because he tries to exclude her from his thoughts. For this reason the raven is reawakening the speaker's consciousness. Therefore, the raven and the bust of Pallas are the composite symbol of the speaker's unconscious. This is no more evident than in the penultimate stanza:

"Be that word our sign of parting, bird or fiend!"

I shrieked, upstarting--

"Get thee back into the tempest and the Night's  
Plutonian shore!

Leave no black plume as a token of that lie thy  
soul hath spoken!

Leave my loneliness unbroken!--quit the bust  
above my door!

Take thy beak from out my heart, and take thy  
form from off my door!"

Quoth the Raven "Nevermore."

One facet of the lie is that the speaker will never "forget this lost Lenore" (l. 83). He wants to remain in lonely isolation and not think of Lenore, but the raven fills the very heart, that is soul, of the speaker with remembrance. Moreover, the raven informs the speaker that he will never again hold Lenore in his arms. All that is left for the speaker is neverending remembrance and the nothingness beyond death. Therefore, the nothingness outside the chamber door is now an integral part of the speaker's soul, lodged forever in his heart.

The composite symbol of the raven and Pallas becomes a neverending vision for the speaker:

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!  
(ll. 106-108)

Remembering that in the beginning of the poem Lenore is with the angels and "Nameless here for evermore" (l. 12), one can understand the full impact of the speaker's last "nevermore." His soul will be lifted from the shadow nevermore which implies that it shall evermore be one with Lenore.

As John Lynen affirms: "Ultimately, 'Nevermore' means the final unity, which is death to the self and the cause of the lover's despair in losing Lenore."<sup>27</sup> Through a dialectical process the contradiction of the self and the other is resolved, because of the speaker's awareness of the inevitable nothingness of his own self, which he perceives through the raven's eyes, the speaker's doors of perception. Lynen also says that "'Nevermore' means sorrow to the speaker because he cannot escape living in a world of distinct things, where his own individuality is a cause of suffering."<sup>28</sup> I agree with this only partially because it implies that the speaker's final awareness is materialistic. There is a spiritual awareness present also. The speaker in "The Raven" is like the speaker in "The Sleeper" (P. 52-4), who states emphatically that life on earth, for some people, is antithetical to life beyond death:

Some tomb from out whose sounding door  
 She ne'er shall force an echo more,  
 Thrilling to think, poor child of sin!  
 It was the dead who groaned within.  
 (ll. 58-61)

For Irene the door separates the dead, who are miserable, and the living, who are not. One must, also, appreciate that the speaker does perceive Irene's misconception and that he, therefore, reunites both realities by dematerializing or by transcending the door. Beyond the finiteness of man, there are intuitive glimpses which give man supernal beauty, knowledge, or awareness. The speaker in "The Raven" does transcend his finite self through the assistance of his anima



who helps raise the speaker's sorrow to a sublime awareness in the last stanza.

The wound aspect of the unconscious surfaces again in "Lenore" (P. 56). There is a conflict of perception between the speaker and De Vere. The speaker is the spokesman of what death means to the unimaginative populace:

Come, let the burial rite be read--the funeral  
song be sung!--  
An anthem for the queenliest dead that ever died  
so young--  
A dirge for her the doubly dead in that she died  
so young.

(11. 5-7)

The speaker feels the sorrow of Lenore's death and he can also recognize the present need for her burial. De Vere, on the other hand, is incapable of totally accepting Lenore's burial. He would rather blame the public for her death:

"Wretches! ye loved her for her wealth and ye  
hated her for her pride;  
And, when she fell in feeble health, ye blessed  
her--that she died:--  
How shall the ritual then be read--the requiem  
how be sung  
By you--by yours, the evil eye--by yours the  
slandrous tongue  
That did to death the innocence that died and  
died so young?"

(11. 8-12)

De Vere is in an agitated state of mind. There must have been something about Lenore that De Vere knew and the public did not. Or is it all in his mind? Whatever the case, De Vere feels more akin to the dead Lenore than the populace attending the funeral.

At this point the speaker tells De Vere not to rave but to allow Lenore's funeral to continue, so her spirit will

not be wronged. Then the speaker says that he can empathize with De Vere's loss of his young love. Next, as Halliburton points out, the speaker invokes "the presence of the dead Lenore through a poignant description":<sup>29</sup>

For her, the fair and debonair, that now so  
                   lowly lies,  
 The life upon her yellow hair, but not within  
                   her eyes--  
 The life still there upon her hair, the death  
                   upon her eyes.

(ll. 17-19)

This vivid description evokes something in De Vere because he consents to the burial. (Poe seems to have a particular fascination for hair as a symbol of change. In "The Sleeper" (P. 52-4) the speaker says:

Strange is thy pallor! strange thy dress!  
 Strange, above all, thy length of tress,  
 And this all solemn silentness!

(ll. 34-6)

In the silence of death Irene's hair appears to have grown longer. Lenore's hair still has life when her eyes are lifeless. And when Berenice becomes emaciated, her eyes are lifeless but her hair changes from black to "innumerable ringlets . . . of vivid yellow."<sup>30</sup> I have come to the conclusion that the hair changing appearance acts as a symbol of life beyond death in these particular instances.) The conventional arguments for the burial had failed. The speaker saw Lenore as beautiful, but mortal. This was not so for De Vere; Lenore was beyond convention. Only the description of Lenore's beauty can convince De Vere to have her buried.

Lenore may be buried, yes, but not with conventional ritual: "Let no bell toll, then, lest her soul, amid its

hallowed mirth, / Should catch the notes as it doth float up from the damn'd Earth! (ll. 23-4). Lenore's beauty was not conventional therefore her ascension should not be conventional. And, according to Daniel Hoffman, "'Lenore' is a Gothic ballad in the operatic mode, in which Guy De Vere upholds the ideality of his pure devotion to Lenore, while the priest the speaker is the spokesman of a corrupt conventional Christian piety."<sup>31</sup> Consequently, the first line of "Al Aaraaf" is a crystallized definition of the essence of Lenore: "O! nothing earthly save the ray." Now we see why De Vere was repulsed at the speaker's desire for conventional ritual. De Vere does not want to allow anything of the "damn'd earth" to touch Lenore, especially her soul.

Halliburton explains why: the "victory in the poem is that of Lenore herself--her release from earthly ties (aided by De Vere's decision not to sing a conventional song) and her ascent to heaven."<sup>32</sup> After De Vere assents to Lenore's burial he says, "And I--to-night my heart is light:--no dirge will I upraise, / But waft the angel on her flight with a Pæan of old days!" (ll. 25-6). De Vere will not taint Lenore's ascension with conventional song. Lenore's ascension is of a glorious nature. The reference to singing a pæan takes us back to the grand old days of antiquity found in "To Helen." Thus, the implication of Lenore equalling intellectual beauty is evinced.

De Vere perceives Lenore as a goddess beyond the approach of other mortals. His mental anguish at the beginning of the



That the wind came out of the cloud, chilling  
 And killing my Annabel Lee.  
 (ll. 21-6)

Their love was so harmonious and happy that even the love of the angels in Heaven appears as a shadow in comparison. Their love is very powerful, as is evidenced in the following lines:

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.  
 (ll. 27-33)

Their love is so intense that no power on earth, in Heaven, or in hell, can affect it. The speaker explains that their love transcends not only the materialistic powers of earth, which Poe calls attraction, but the supernal powers of the gods as well. Therefore, their love is supra-supernal, that is Divine Love. It is the reciprocating union of Self and Psyche.

The physical death of Annabel Lee is the final transcendentalization of their love:

For the moon never beams without bringing me dreams  
     Of the beautiful Annabel Lee;  
 And the stars never rise but I see the bright eyes  
     Of the beautiful Annabel Lee;  
 And so, all the night-tide, I lie down by the side  
 Of my darling, my darling, my life and my bride  
     In her sepulchre there by the sea--  
     In her tomb by the side of the sea.  
 (ll. 34-41)

He dreams of Annabel Lee continually at night and associates the stars with her eyes. There is no earlier indication in

the poem of a marriage so theirs must now be a spiritual union.<sup>33</sup> His journey to the "sepulchre there by the sea" may be interpreted at least two ways: (1) that he actually lies by the corpse, or (2) that the word "there" indicates an imaginative journey. I prefer the latter interpretation because of the stated sublimity of their love before her death. She therefore enables his love to transcend death. Halliburton confirms Annabel's transcendent power: "She is . . . like the second Helen and Marie Louise, a continuing presence. Through that extraordinary power of survival that only women possess, she has transcended death."<sup>34</sup> Consequently, Poe's female figure again functions like the archetypal anima symbolizing the transcendental or unifying power of the Self.

The death, then, of the female figure effects an awakening of consciousness. She symbolizes the glimpse of supernal beauty and Divine Love. At her death the speaker is forced to confront his own destiny without the physical presence of the other. What usually remains for the speaker is the confrontation with the nothingness beyond death, which produces existential despair and melancholy. The release from despair comes about only when the speaker re-integrates his love on a spiritual level, which Poe calls repulsion. The re-integration generally takes place differently in each poem. Tamerlane lives out his life before he comes to realize his error in deceiving his young love. The speaker's passions in "Ulalume" become so powerful that he suffers his way through them before perceiving that

Astarte is a demon created from within his own self. And when one attempts to erase love from memory as in "The Raven" the unnaturalness of the act hurls the psyche into a frenzy. With despair overcome, the speaker experiences a sublime melancholy consisting of a transcendence of the conscious self and the spiritual unity with the inner Self. The recognition of the Self, in Poe's poetic cosmology, is symbolic of the soul-elevating union with the Divine Being, the ultimate aim of poetic effect. A similar process of consciousness occurs in Poe's tales that deal with the death of the female figure. The following chapter of this study will concentrate on a select number of these tales.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Erich Neumann, Amor and Psyche: The Psychic Development of the Feminine a Commentary on the tale by Apuleius, trans. Ralph Manheim (New York: Princeton University Press, 1971), p. 81.

<sup>2</sup> Edgar Allan Poe, "Eureka," The Complete Works of Edgar Allan Poe, ed. James A. Harrison (1902; rpt. New York: AMS, 1965), XVI, 185-86.

<sup>3</sup> M.-L. von Franz, "The Process of Individuation," Man and His Symbols, ed. Carl Gustav Jung (1964; rpt. New York: Dell, 1972). Pages 193 through 195 contain one example of how the positive anima assists one through an unsettling predicament.

<sup>4</sup> Franz, pages 187 through 191 contain one example of how the negative anima leads one to destruction.

<sup>5</sup> "Symbol and Sense in Poe's 'Ulalume,'" American Literature, 35 (March 1963-Jan. 1964), 25-6.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., p. 26.

<sup>7</sup> Ann Belford Ulanov, The Feminine in Jungian Psychology and in Christian Theology (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1971). I quote the following passage for the sake of immediate information. "Jung understands the psyche to be a self-regulating system structured in polarities, such as consciousness-unconsciousness, reason-instinct, love-hate, etc. The polar tension between the opposites is the source of the psyche's energy as well as the matrix for its functioning and growth into wholeness. If one pole of a polarity is excessively emphasized, the energy will flow into its opposite. This is called enantiodynamia. An example is the hyperrational person who develops irrational obsessions" (p. 27).

<sup>8</sup> "The Culprit Fay, and Other Poems," VIII, 283.

<sup>9</sup> Carlson, p. 29.

<sup>10</sup> Poe, "Marginalia," XVI, 17-18.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., p. 31.

<sup>12</sup> "Poe to \_\_\_\_\_," XVII, 287-88.

<sup>13</sup> Floyd Stovall, ed. The Poems of Edgar Allan Poe (Charlottesville: The University Press of Virginia, 1965), p. 240.



<sup>14</sup> Edgar Allan Poe: A Phenomenological View (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1973), p. 168.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> "From Biographia Literaria," English Romantic Writers, ed. David Perkins (New York: Harcourt, 1967), p. 452.

<sup>17</sup> The Literary Criticism of John Ruskin: Abridged Edition, ed. Harold Bloom (New York: Norton, 1972), p. 35.

<sup>18</sup> John F. Lynen, The Design of the Present: Essays on Time and Form in American Literature (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1969), p. 220.

<sup>19</sup> "The Philosophy of Composition," XIV, 208.

<sup>20</sup> Ulanov, p. 27. See note number seven above.

<sup>21</sup> Sarah Helen Whitman, Edgar Poe and His Critics (New York: AMS, 1966). I quote the following passage because it is partly responsible for my interpretation given in the text. "Edgar Poe sought earnestly and conscientiously for such solution/s/ of the great problems of thought as were alone attainable to an intellect hurled from its balance by the abnormal preponderance of the analytical and imaginative faculties. It was to this very disproportion that we are indebted for some of those marvellous intellectual creations, which, as we shall hope to prove, had an important significance and especial adaptation to the time" (pp. 33-4).

<sup>22</sup> "The Philosophy of Composition," XIV, 205.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., p. 203.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., p. 207.

<sup>25</sup> "A Chapter on Suggestions," XIV, 186.

<sup>26</sup> "The Philosophy of Composition," XIV, 205.

<sup>27</sup> Lynen, p. 266.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> Halliburton, p. 159.

<sup>30</sup> Poe, "Berenice," II, 23.

<sup>31</sup> Daniel Hoffman, Poe Poe Poe Poe Poe Poe Poe (New York: Doubleday, 1972), p. 71.

<sup>32</sup> Halliburton, p. 160.

<sup>33</sup> Floyd Stovall, Edgar Poe the Poet: Essays New and Old on the Man and His Works (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1969), p. 225.

<sup>34</sup> Halliburton, p. 173.

## CHAPTER 4

### A CRISIS OF IDENTITY

As in Poe's poetry, the female figure in the tales impresses upon the narrator a perception of his singular destiny. However, the major difference between the poetry and the tales is that in the tales Poe elaborates on the narrator's psychic states more fully, without losing his control of the symbolic intent or framework. As Hamilton Wright Mabie aptly observes: "the action in Poe's stories is really symbolical; that which is significant and appalling lies behind it."<sup>1</sup> The tales, like the poetry, are being read as representations of various singular intuitive glimpses. Behind the rational construction of each tale lies the inner meaning which we ought to seek.

Nowhere can one find a more explicit example of the direct relationship of the artistic imagination and the female figure than in "The Oval Portrait." As the artist's last imaginative stroke is applied to the portrait his bride dies. But this is not the whole of the tale. The melancholy caused by her death is there, but the more important point is how it remains there. The first half of the tale explains the narrator's present circumstances and mood. In the second half of the tale we discover the history of the portrait. We learn of the strained relationship between the bride and her artist husband. He is obsessed with painting her portrait.

She is jealous of his love for art, but concedes to his desire to do her portrait.

The narrator sets the mood of the tale as he enters the room, while suffering a "desperately wounded condition." The room, like many of the rooms in Poe's tales, is isolated and is strangely furnished. The room has its own individual air about it, with its tapestries, paintings, bizarre architecture, and gold coloring. After viewing the furnishings the narrator is overwhelmed by the sheer personality of the room, and his own weakened state: "in these paintings my incipient delirium, perhaps, had caused me to take deep interest."<sup>2</sup> He is in a state of delirium where reason is not a constant participant. In this state of delirium the paintings in the room become journeys of glorious devotion. Other important aspects of mood are that it is night, and that the narrator's bed with "the fringed curtains of black velvet which enveloped the bed itself," (T. IV. 245) has a distinct funereal air about it. None of the aspects of the room have a striking effect when considered individually; however, considered in their totality they form a symbolic, dream-like pattern of the unconscious. One would not want to extend this symbolic meaning too far because the important realization of consciousness occurs in the narrator's perception of the portrait. His initial reaction to the portrait functions like a revelation of the unconscious or an intuitive glimpse.

As he moves the candelabrum the speaker is completely startled by the portrait:

But while my lids remained thus shut, I ran over in my mind my reason for so shutting them. It was an impulsive movement to gain time for thought--to make sure that my vision had not deceived me--to calm and subdue my fancy for a more sober and more certain gaze. (T. IV. 246)

Sense perception is only the beginning of the narrator's vision. His eyes close automatically for him to perceive the thought behind his vision: "for the first flashing of the candles upon that canvas had seemed to dissipate the dreamy stupor which was stealing over my senses, and to startle me at once into waking life" (T. IV. 246). An awakening to a higher consciousness occurs through an indefinable impulse, that is an unconscious glimpse, through the medium of the portrait, which consequently functions like the anima.

The narrator continues to describe the portrait and to rationalize why he felt so dazzled by his first glimpse. It was not the workmanship or the immortal beauty of the female which first struck him: "I had found the spell of the picture in an absolute life-likeness of expression, which at first startling, finally confounded, subdued and appalled me" (T. IV. 247). He is startled and thrown into confusion, then overwhelmed by the expression of the portrait, and then repulsed by the totality of its poetic effect. Without knowing the history of the painting he is able to perceive through the portrait the beauty and the horror of

its creation. What he sees is the immortality in the portrait which was drawn out of the mortal woman. The history of the portrait reinforces his vision; furthermore the female's self-sacrifice for love heightens the intuitive effect of the female figure in the mind of the narrator.

The history is not as forceful in its dramatic effect as the narrator's working out of his vision on a rational level, but it serves as an adequate background material. While the bride loves her husband, he loves art to an obsessive degree. He does not see her pining away because he has become totally absorbed by his imaginative vision: "the painter had grown wild with the ardor of his work, and turned his eyes from the canvas rarely, even to regard the countenance of his wife" (T. IV. 248). For it was their love of each other, and not entirely his own ability, that enabled him to paint so well (T. IV. 249). He sees the spirit of love she creates within him, and therefore he need not gaze on her person in order to paint her: "And he would not see that the tints which he spread upon the canvas were drawn from the cheeks of her who sate beside him" (T. IV. 248). With his last brush stroke the female's glowing spirit is transported into the portrait. Her death evinces a tragic sense but the tale is not a tragedy. Their love appears so intense that no direct feeling of loss results, because she has become deathless through love, which is spiritual love. However, her death does evoke a sense of hurt, the psychic wound, in the narrator beyond his "reverent awe." And by forcing the

narrator to uncover his impulsive reaction through a rational naming process the portrait functions like the anima figure.

In "The Fall of the House of Usher" the narrator becomes involved in the action of the tale. His journey to the house, his crossing the abyss-like tarn, and his passing through the maze-like halls to Roderick's room, are symbolic of a journey into the deepest recesses of the unconscious.<sup>3</sup> The house, Roderick, and Madeline, are parts of the symbolic psychic drama. We see less of Madeline than we do the narrator or Roderick, but the part which she plays is a motivating force of the tale. Roderick knows that he and Madeline are doomed to be annihilated. Meanwhile, his actions are an attempt to escape their union and subsequent death. Their physical emaciation is identical to the decaying stones of the house. However, as human beings they possess a greater degree of repulsion, that is conscious intelligence, than the stones.<sup>4</sup> Roderick's reaction to his fate constitutes a conscious reaction against repulsion, although he finally accepts it. His initial fear originates in the awareness that the collapse of the family is inevitable. Like the cosmogony in "Eureka," the seed of the family's annihilation lies in the original diffusion from unity. The house/family<sup>5</sup> is the symbol of the larger self, whose origin is in the forgotten days, and which maintains unity by subsuming the individual stones, or family members, into an apparent whole. Roderick rejects the merging into the ultimate Self. Madeline, on the other hand, does not, for

her actions complete the return to unity, or the Self. She therefore functions like the positive anima, although in her destructive role she looks quite negative.

An examination of how the narrator reacts to his dream experience will facilitate later discussion and understanding of Roderick and Madeline's actions. His first reaction to the house is one of insufferable gloom unrelieved "by any of that half-pleasurable, because poetic, sentiment" (T. III. 273). He is completely taken back and compares his vision to "the after-dream of the reveller upon opium--the bitter lapse into everyday life--the hideous dropping of the veil" (T. III. 273). Poe uses the opium dream experience to represent a divergence from waking consciousness in many of the tales. Compare the gloom of the opium dream in "Usher" to the bliss in "Ligeia":

In beauty of face no maiden ever equalled her.  
It was the radiance of an opium-dream--an airy  
and spirit-lifting vision more wildly divine  
than the phantasies which hovered about the  
slumbering souls of the daughters of Delos. Yet  
her features were not of that regular mould which  
we have been falsely taught to worship in the  
classical labors of the heathen. (T. II. 249-50)

The opium dream in the beginning of "Usher" foreshadows the air of gloom which pervades the tale. It lowers rather than raises the veil over perception. Not to see beyond the veil means a lack of the imaginative glimpse necessary for the progress of knowledge.<sup>6</sup>

When the narrator peers into the tarn there he sees the inverted image of the house which gives him "a shudder even more thrilling than" (T. III. 274) his vision of the house.



It is in the "black and lurid tarn" where the strangeness of beauty lies, and where the veil of perception is raised. The tarn is symbolic of the abyss or nothingness, that which can be called nothing less than the Divine Being, or the creative volition of pure possibility. In the tarn one sees the spiritual reality which lies beyond sense perception. In the abyss lies the Eureka unity to which both material reality, which Poe calls attraction, and spiritual reality, which Poe calls repulsion, inevitably return. And it is into this purely spiritual abyss that the family of Usher returns. But the process of return is replete with the narrator's ignorance of what is going on between Roderick and Madeline. It is not until the end of his dream that the narrator perceives his own symbolic return to unity, or the Self.

The letter the narrator receives from Roderick is a summons from the narrator's soul or inner self.<sup>7</sup> He is being called within to witness a symbolic process of psychic growth. He crosses the tarn and is led into the deep recesses of his mind, which is Roderick's bizarre room, where "an air of stern, deep, and irredeemable gloom hung over and pervaded all" (T. III. 278). This is the same type of gloom the narrator had experienced while looking at the house. The gloom becomes so oppressive that it eventually pervades the narrator himself.

As he becomes more attuned with the gloom of the house, and Roderick's mental agitation, the narrator learns more about himself. Three major events in the narrator's

process of consciousness are Madeline's first death, his admission that he cannot sleep, and Madeline's final union with Roderick. After Madeline's first death the narrator vicariously experiences the unconscious motives behind Roderick's new creativity, especially his insight into the meaning of "The Haunted Palace." Later, the narrator cannot sleep because Roderick's agitation begins to penetrate his consciousness and his rational perspective: "I felt creeping upon me, by slow yet certain degrees, the wild influences of his own fantastic yet impressive superstitions" (T. III. 290). When he hears the sounds which come from he "knew not whence" he admitted that he could not explain why sleep failed him, "except that an instinctive spirit prompted" him (T. III. 290). Following this instinctive or unconscious action he reads the "Mad Trist" to Roderick. Like "The Haunted Palace," this tale offers the narrator an intuitive awareness of what is occurring between Roderick and Madeline, because it is the narrator who chooses the tale this time. The symbolic meaning of the tale will be discussed later. He then watches as Roderick is being united with Madeline, which fulfills the destiny of the family. And when the house plunges into the tarn the narrator watches a symbolic presentation of the ego-self being subsumed by the inner Self, which, in Poe's terms, is the final union with the Divine Being. Poe explains this process in "Eureka": "Think that the sense of the individual identity will be gradually merged in the general consciousness--that Man, for

example, ceasing imperceptibly to feel himself Man, will at length attain that awfully triumphant epoch when he shall recognize his existence as that of Jehovah."<sup>8</sup> Roderick suffers from a conflict between his rational and imaginative faculties, that is, ego-consciousness and the unconscious respectively. We see Roderick through the narrator's perspective and this is how he views Roderick's dilemma. One example of Roderick's mental imbalance is his oscillating manner of speaking:

His voice varied rapidly from a tremulous indecision (when the animal spirits seemed utterly in abeyance) to that species of energetic concision--that abrupt, weighty, unhurried, and hollow-sounding enunciation--that leaden, self-balanced and perfectly modulated guttural utterance, which may be observed in the lost drunkard, or the irreclaimable eater of opium, during the periods of his most intense excitement. (T. III. 279)

At times Roderick controls his animal spirits, a symbol of the unconscious, in a stilted indecisive manner. At times the animal spirits outdo his reason and they speak in guttural tones and they are equated with the otherworldly tone of opium dreams. The narrator witnesses Roderick's unconscious slowly but perceptibly taking control of his entire being.

Roderick's battle against irrationality is epitomized in two symbols: the family house and Madeline Usher. He continually tries to ward off the power of the house, because the house has obtained an overwhelming influence over his spirit (T. III. 281). The house or family is a threat to his individual ego-conscious existence. And the

agent of that threatening influence is Madeline. John F. Lynen rightly notes that she symbolizes the union which will consume his individuality.<sup>9</sup> When she appears to die, Roderick's unconscious creativity becomes dominant. He becomes a painter of ideas. The only painting of Roderick's that the narrator describes is identical to the tomb where Roderick will later place Madeline. Moreover, the painting in the tale and the tomb are both archetypal symbols of the unconscious. It is only after Madeline's death, when the narrator reads "The Haunted Palace," that he perceives Roderick's "tottering of his lofty reason upon her throne" (T. III. 284).

We later discover that Madeline had not actually died. The simplest explanation for this mock death is that her illness was of such a nature that a cataleptic state was induced. Whatever the reason, Roderick's painting of the tomb implies an unconscious awareness on his part that she was not dead. Early in the tale the narrator is skeptical of Roderick's opinion of the "terrible influence which for centuries had moulded the destinies of his family, and which made him what I now saw him--what he was" (T. III. 286-87). After Madeline's death, however, the narrator begins to believe Roderick. Consequently, Madeline functions like an anima who brings Roderick's unconscious to consciousness.

It is in the parallel structure of the "Mad Trist" and Madeline's struggle to bring the unconscious to consciousness that the full impact of the psychic drama is felt. It is

through Ethelred's breaking down the hermit's door and the slaying of the dragon that the symbolic meaning of Madeline's escape from the coffin and the tomb is revealed. According to Jungian psychology the hero-dragon battle is the symbolic expression of the process of growing up.<sup>10</sup> Roderick is being forced to confront his ultimate fear, the paradoxical loss of identity, despite his efforts to reason the inevitable union away. When Madeline appears from behind the door she looks like she has just fought a dragon. Moreover, her white shroud covered in blood may be viewed as a symbolic loss of virginity and growth into womanhood. They are united and die into spiritual life as the house plunges into the tarn. As in "Eureka," one's individual identity is subsumed by the larger self. And Roderick's fear of the union expresses the terror that a wound to ego-consciousness entails.

The narrator in "The Assignment" is very much like the narrator in "Usher." He is someone from the outside world who enters the private lives of the young man and Aphrodite. And he is not aware of the meaning behind the drama being acted out until the end of the tale. Like Roderick, the young man acts out the narrator's dream or vision:

Once more thy form hath risen before me!--not--oh not as thou art--in the cold valley and shadow--but as thou shouldst be--squandering away a life of magnificent meditation in that city of dim visions, thine own Venice--which is a star-beloved Elysium of the sea, and the wide windows of whose Palladian palaces look down with a deep and bitter meaning upon the secrets of her silent waters. (T. II. 109)

It is on the silent waters of Venice that the narrator journeys rudderless, like many of Poe's narrators, into the preternatural day of the smaller channel, where he slowly drifted "down towards the Bridge of Sighs" (T. II. 110). Like the self-illuminating subterranean passageway of Roderick Usher's painting this smaller channel symbolizes a journey into the unconscious.

The cause of the journey is Aphrodite's hysterical shriek. She, like the anima, is the power which motivates. Moreover, she acts as two different types of anima figure. We first see her in Helen-like attire standing motionless "in the statue-like form itself" (T. II. 111). However, at this point in the tale she does not function entirely like Psyche. We do not discover until a bit further on in the tale that she is married to the "Satyr-like," that is lecherous, Mentoni. In the past she had chosen the biological relationship with Mentoni, being on the first level of the anima, over the spiritual devotion, the third level of the anima, of the young man. What is occurring during the rescue scene is the process of Aphrodite progressing to the third level of the anima. After all the attempts at rescue fail, the young man, who responds to Aphrodite's gaze (T. II. 111), saves the child with apparent ease. The child's rescue from the "pitchy darkness" and chaos of the canal is symbolic of the anima's spiritual rebirth in the young man. When he confronts Aphrodite after the rescue she as a

statue is "started into life" (T. II. 113), signifying the spiritual rebirth of love.

Their death at the end of the tale consummates the spiritual union of opposites. Their love is reciprocal love similar to the reciprocal love in "Annabel Lee." After drinking the poisoned wine the young man tells the narrator that "properties of place, and especially of time, are the bugbears which terrify mankind from the contemplation of the magnificent" (T. II. 123). He is saying that everyday rational restraints create a habitual discomfort towards man's irrational and imaginative power. In the process man loses the capacity to liberate himself from the rational self when the unconscious beckons. For it is the unconscious or imaginative vision which gives the young man's room its distinct individuality (T. II. 117). Poe says elsewhere that it is only the individual's taste which can defeat the uniformity of the masses.<sup>11</sup> And it is his anima figure, Aphrodite, who acts as a guide to the young man's unique individuality. Through their spiritual union they transcend the chaotic darkness of the canal and offer a soul-elevating glimpse to the narrator: "I staggered back towards the table--my hand fell upon a cracked and blackened goblet--and a consciousness of the entire and terrible truth flashed suddenly over my soul" (T. II. 124).

The female figure in "Morella" is a mysterious phenomenon who brings joy and terror to the narrator. There is a close relationship between Morella and the narrator's

fate. He first describes her as affecting his soul in an undefinable manner; still, he marries her because fate dictates (T. II. 27). As the tale develops we learn that not only does Morella know things about the narrator which he does not know, but that he cannot comprehend how she knows. She provides the narrator with the joy of discovery beyond the powers of reason: "In all this, if I err not, my reason had little to do" (T. II. 28). But this power of discovery also terrifies him: "joy suddenly faded into horror, and the most beautiful became the most hideous" (T. II. 28). The joy/terror represents the wound inherent in the process of discovering one's destiny or individuality through the other.

The conflict within the narrator appears to originate in his interest in "that identity which at death is or is not lost for-ever" (T. II. 29). Moreover, the "marked and agitated manner in which Morella" (T. II. 29) mentions the speculations on life beyond death increases the narrator's curiosity. The desire to know, and the frustration of not knowing, give rise to the narrator's discontent with Morella's mysterious manner. Rather than to look within for an answer to his irresolution, the narrator transforms his confusion into hate for Morella. From this point on the tale develops in such a way that it defies literal interpretation. Morella's rebirth is too fantastic to remain credible on a literal level. Morella, now, functions like an anima. And like many of Poe's females Morella's eyes become symbols of



perception: "I met the glance of her meaning eyes, and then my soul sickened and became giddy with the giddiness of one who gazes downward into some dreary and unfathomable abyss" (T. II. 29-30). Through the assistance of the anima the speaker begins to confront the unconscious. The abyss, death, or nothingness, lies within the speaker and Morella assists him in recognizing that fact. The process of recognition actually begins when Morella dies. On her deathbed she tells the narrator that he does not love her now but he will adore her in death. She also says that his "days shall be days of sorrow--that sorrow which is the most lasting of impressions" (T. II. 30-1). Her prophesy is identical to Poe's concept of the melancholy inherent in the death of a beautiful woman.

Morella's prophesy is fulfilled because the narrator deeply loves their child: "She grew strangely in stature and intellect, and was the perfect resemblance of her who had departed, and I loved her with a love more fervent than I had believed it possible to feel for any denizen of earth" (T. II. 31). While intensely concerned with the survival of his own identity after death the narrator watches in amazement as Morella is being reborn before his eyes:

Could it be otherwise, when I daily discovered in the conceptions of the child the adult powers and faculties of the woman? . . . I could no longer hide it from my soul, nor throw it off from those perceptions which trembled to receive it--is it to be wondered at that suspicions, of a nature fearful and exciting, crept in upon my spirit, or that my thoughts fell back aghast upon the wild tales and thrilling theories of the entombed Morella? (T. II. 31-2)

He is slowly perceiving, through the medium of the anima, that death is not an end but a necessary step in the process of life. Poe was later to bring this idea to its fullest poetical implications in "Eureka," where death implies the inevitable unity with the Divine Being, which is a rebirth of pure spirit through the annihilation of the individual self.

During the child's baptism, a ritual which symbolizes the cleansing of evil and a rebirth of innocence, the narrator utters the name Morella. He has been consciously thinking of "many fair titles of the gentle, and the happy, and the good" (T. II. 33). Though he loves the child he names her Morella, thereby consigning her to death. Now he recognizes that the name comes from his own unconscious self: "What fiend spoke from the recesses of my soul, when, amid those dim aisles, and in the silence of the night, I whispered within the ears of the holy man the syllables-- Morella?" (T. II. 33). He has never mentioned Morella's name to the child and now she is being reborn as Morella only to die. Morella was not loved before, but now the narrator loves her more than he ever imagined was possible. Because of Morella's second death the narrator's life becomes steeped in sorrow with remembrance of his beloved. This is Poe's melancholy, or the Jungian wound, through which the narrator comes to terms with his own destiny. Morella now symbolizes a spiritual presence within, an intuitive

glimpse of supernal love, or a psychic rebirth for the narrator.

"Ligeia" is one of the most debated of Poe's tales. One of the questions frequently raised about this tale is: Whose will brings Ligeia back, the narrator's or Ligeia's? Floyd Stovall touches upon the essential issue in the argument when he says, "if Ligeia was literally brought to life in the substance of Rowena, what became of her afterward, since obviously she is not alive when the narrator writes his story?"<sup>12</sup> There is evidence in the tale to support the idea that it is the narrator's will which brings Ligeia back, this will be discussed later. Like most of Poe's fictive women, Ligeia is far above the narrator in learning. However, she has no, absolutely no, substantial existence except that which is filtered through the narrator's mind. As the narrator tells us in the first paragraph of the tale: "it is by that sweet word alone--by Ligeia--that I bring before mine eyes in fancy the image of her who is no more" (T. II. 249). She is dead as the tale begins. One may also assume that she died after her rebirth, but before the tale was told. This does sound confusing, but it is plausible. These are only a few of the arguments that arise when trying to uncover the mystery of Ligeia's rebirth. One could make a lengthy study of the arguments alone; however, this is not my purpose. I am convinced that Ligeia's rebirth is not a material rebirth; it is an image within the narrator's mind.

Like Morella, it is not Ligeia as a physical woman that intrigues the narrator. What interests the narrator is Ligeia's knowledge. Hoffman comes to the same conclusion: "She is described, admired, adored, nay, worshipped, not so much for what she looks like, or for who she is, but for what she knows, what contemplation of her boundless mind makes Narrator (he nowhere names himself) think that he knows."<sup>13</sup> The knowledge which the narrator seeks is concentrated in Poe's favorite image--Ligeia's eyes:

For eyes we have no model in the remotely antique. . . . They were even fuller than the fullest of the gazelle eyes of the tribe of the valley of Nourjahad. . . . The hue of the orbs was the most brilliant of black . . . The "strangeness," however, which I found in the eyes, was of a nature distinct from the formation, or the color, or the brilliancy of the features, and must, after all, be referred to the expression. Ah, word of no meaning! behind whose latitude of mere sound we intrench our ignorance of so much of the spiritual. . . . I was possessed with a passion to discover. Those eyes! those large, those shining, those divine orbs! they became to me twin stars of Leda, and I to them devoutest of astrologers. (T. II. 251-52)

We could pause here and announce that Ligeia's eyes contain all of the necessary ingredients of Poe's concept of the poetic effect and, therefore, Ligeia represents ideal beauty. This is true, but such a proclamation would not explain away the remainder of the tale. Morella's eyes look into the narrator's soul and sicken him (T. II. 29). Morella's eyes create terror in the narrator, which he attempts to avoid throughout the tale. Ligeia's eyes are symbols of devotion, and create a longing for knowledge in the narrator. He peers

into Ligeia's eyes to discover the knowledge beyond "the remotely antique":

There is no point, among the many incomprehensible anomalies of the science of mind, more thrillingly exciting than the fact--never, I believe, noticed in the schools--that, in our endeavors to recall to memory something long forgotten, we often find ourselves upon the very verge of remembrance, without being able, in the end, to remember. And thus how frequently, in my intense scrutiny of Ligeia's eyes, have I felt approaching the full knowledge of their expression--felt it approaching--yet not quite be mine--and so at length entirely depart! (T. II. 252)

Ligeia's eyes transport one to primordial time, when the unconscious was in its infancy, when man was blessed with the first twinge of consciousness to know who, what, where, and why, he existed. Her eyes offer the type of knowledge which cannot be communicated through the rational methods of the classroom; therefore, they are embodiments of the unconscious, or of an intuitive glimpse in Poe's terms.

After listing a series of analogies which express the knowledge Ligeia's eyes offer, the narrator quotes the following lines from Glanvill, to help explain his mystical phrase "Ligeia's beauty passed into my spirit" (T. II. 252): "And the will therein lieth, which dieth not. Who knoweth the mysteries of the will, with its vigor? For God is but a great will pervading all things by nature of its intentness. Man doth not yield him to the angels, nor unto death utterly, save only through the weakness of his feeble will" (T. II. 253). If God pervades all things then death also must be part and parcel of God. This is the idea so expertly

expounded in "Eureka": "each soul is, in part, its own God--its own Creator:--in a word, that God--the material and spiritual God--now exists solely in the diffused Matter and Spirit of the Universe; and that the regathering of this diffused Matter and Spirit will be but the re-constitution of the purely Spiritual and Individual God."<sup>14</sup> The Glanvill passage hints at this knowledge, but the narrator cannot quite complete the puzzling inferences on his own. He can instinctively, that is unconsciously, feel, but not totally grasp, the knowledge through Ligeia's presence: "Without Ligeia I was but as a child groping benighted" (T. II. 254). Consequently, Ligeia functions like an anima by acting as a guide to the knowledge which the speaker must discover from his own inner Self, which is the diffused God residing in his own breast.

Ligeia's struggle with death reveals the anguish and terror inherent in the awareness that the material body, which Poe calls attraction, must cease to exist. However, in the passage quoted below, we witness Ligeia breaking through this anguish and resigning the body to its fate:

I would have soothed--I would have reasoned; but, in the intensity of her wild desire for life,--for life--but for life--solace and reason were alike the uttermost of folly. Yet not until the last instance, amid the most convulsive writhings of her fierce spirit, was shaken the external placidity of her demeanor. Her voice grew more gentle--grew more low--yet I would not wish to dwell upon the wild meaning of the quietly uttered words. My brain reeled as I hearkened entranced, to a melody more than mortal--to assumptions and aspirations which mortality had never before known. (T. II. 255)

Ligeia's words terrify the narrator and he hesitates explaining their "wild meaning" and can only say that they have an immortal melody. Ligeia's desire for life is momentarily revealed to the narrator through her melodious voice, communicating to him man's inner and spiritual immortality. Love, love, love, "Ligeia's more than womanly abandonment to love" (T. II. 256) is what eventually begins the narrator's own awakening of consciousness. Ligeia may utter encyclopedias of immortal words but only love can help the narrator transcend his own rational self. More will be said later about the power of love. "The Conqueror Worm" is read by the narrator as death approaches Ligeia and she struggles against the inevitable. However, she again breaks through the barrier of death and returns "solemnly to her bed of death" (T. II. 257). Her last words are a key to the knowledge of the spiritual life beyond death: "Man doth not yield him to the angels, nor unto death utterly, save only through the weakness of his feeble will" (T. II. 258). She is telling the narrator that death conquers only if one accepts death as the end of life and not as a rebirth into spiritual unity.

After Ligeia's death the narrator suffers the melancholy inherent in Poe's concept of the death of a beautiful woman. Rather than acknowledge Ligeia's immortal and spiritual existence the narrator wallows in despair: "ah, could it be forever?--upon the earth" (T. II. 261) without her. Life on earth without Ligeia's presence becomes a state of eternal damnation for him. He has not yet transcended his

psychic wound and therefore he is unable to perceive his own inner spiritual power. His despair leads him to design his macabre chamber. David Halliburton rightly states that the chamber "is the spatial compliment of the narrator's consciousness, which, as he repeatedly informs us, is in a dreaming state."<sup>15</sup> The black coloring, the arabesque tapestries, the five sarcophaguses have a funereal air about them. Ligeia's termination at death is the narrator's foremost conscious thought. However, he continually mentions that he desires to have her alive. From deep within his soul, that is his unconscious, Ligeia is slowly being re-created, through his devout love, as part of his inner Self. Ligeia, functioning like the anima, is assisting the narrator in his transcendence of the non-creative idea that death is the end of being.

Lady Rowena is virtually nothing compared to the "unforgotten Ligeia." Rowena is married off to the narrator by her family simply because of avarice. She loves the narrator "but little," and he loathes her, because she is nothing more than a biological counterpart. Here we have the contrast between "a sense of duty" type of love and the love the narrator had felt during his marriage to Ligeia. And when Rowena dies the narrator sits by her bed, but he does not mourn her death; he thinks about Ligeia: "I turned my glances to the pallid and rigid figure upon the bed. Then rushed upon me a thousand memories of Ligeia--and then came back upon my heart, with the turbulent violence of a



flood, the whole of that unutterable wo with which I had regarded her thus enshrouded" (T. II. 264). Now we witness that the power of his love begins to rush from his unconscious and flood his mind. From this point on the tale becomes more and more fantastic and impossible to interpret literally.

Following his thinking about Ligeia, the narrator thinks he sees Rowena revive and the symbolic process of the awakening of the unconscious commences: "I had heard the noise, however faint, and my soul was awakened within me" (T. II. 265). He does hear the noise because it originates within his own unconscious self, and he now gives himself "up to passionate waking visions of Ligeia" (T. II. 265). This thinking about Ligeia and the consequent revivification of Rowena continues all night. Two things happen to the corpse: the first symbolizes the end of the narrator's rational concept of death as the end of being, and the second symbolizes the narrator's coming to terms with the spiritual and creative power of his inner Self. The first is represented by the process of revivification of Rowena's dead body that the narrator achieves through his mental or psychic concentration on Ligeia. Here we see the symbolic death of death itself as perceived by the narrator. The second is represented by the "wild change in the personal appearance of the corpse" (T. II. 267). This symbolizes the psychic change which is about to take place in the narrator. As "the apparition" rises from the bed the narrator is thoroughly terrorized and chilled "into stone." According

to M.-L. von Franz this is a typical reaction when one confronts the unconscious: "Sometimes it first offers a series of painful realizations of what is wrong with oneself and one's conscious attitudes. Then one must begin the process by swallowing all sorts of bitter truths."<sup>16</sup> The bitter truth is that the narrator, though he thinks about Ligeia, feels that he has lost her love forever. The realization comes to the narrator when "the apparition" from the unconscious opens her eyes and the narrator shrieks, "can I never--can I never be mistaken--these are the full, and the black, and the wild eyes--of my lost love--of the lady--of the LADY LIGEIA" (T. II. 268). Ligeia's rebirth, through Rowena's death, therefore, symbolizes the rebirth of the narrator's spiritual love, which he had thought to have lost forever. For the narrator subtly informs us in the beginning of the tale that he has the power to recreate his love from within his own psyche: "it is by that sweet word alone--by Ligeia--that I bring before mine eyes in fancy the image of her who is no more" (T. II. 249).

"Eleonora" has a similar type of rebirth of the female figure as it is in "Ligeia." In "Eleonora" the narrator tells us outright that only through dreams may one experience intuitive glimpses, especially daydreams: "They who dream by day are cognizant of many things which escape those who dream only by night. In their grey visions they obtain glimpses of eternity, and thrill, in awaking, to find that they have been upon the verge of the great secret" (T. IV. 236).

These dreams by day have a power similar to Ligeia's eyes to transport one beyond rational knowledge. The narrator then tells us that the first epoch of his life was an indisputable "condition of lucid reason." And that the second epoch of his life was a condition of shadow and doubt, which we may "play unto its riddle the Oedipus" if we cannot doubt its validity (T. IV. 237). Although the second epoch of his life seems more plausible than the first, we shall examine his first epoch and then attempt to discover the inner meaning of his second epoch. The female figure is the central character in each epoch, and Poe, being true to his usual form, makes Eleonora and Ermengarde represent more than mere mortal women.

The first epoch of his life is shared with Eleonora. She begins the tale as a female figure of innocence, falls in love with the narrator, and then dies. The valley of many colored grass goes through sympathetic changes with each change Eleonora experiences. During her innocence the river is silent, the grass is a soft green, and there are a multitude of beautiful flowers. When Eleonora falls in love the color of the grass deepens, the stream produces a divine melody, and ten ruby-red asphodels replace each white daisy as it dies. These changes in nature symbolize Eleonora's loss of sexual innocence as she succumbs to "the passions which had for centuries distinguished" her and the narrator's race (T. IV. 239), which is the human race. However, Eleonora's love, Eros, is not merely biological, because she

also discusses with the narrator the many changes which have taken place in the valley. At this point in time she functions like the second type of the anima: romantic and aesthetic level, however, still characterized by sexual elements.

When Eleonora discovers the full import of being human she cannot avoid being absorbed by the thoughts of death. Halliburton is correct when he says that "the prospect of death<sup>7</sup> does not frighten Eleonora, who knows that she will continue to exist in the afterlife."<sup>17</sup> She only fears that the narrator will leave the valley and transfer his love of her, which is "so passionately her own to some maiden of the outer and every-day world" (T. IV. 240). The narrator proposes to have a curse invoked against him, witnessed by "the Mighty Ruler of the Universe" (T. IV. 240), if he breaks his vow to her: "the bright eyes of Eleonora grew brighter at my words; and she sighed as if a deadly burden had been taken from her breast" (T. IV. 241). Here we see the female figure progressing to the third level of the anima: love raised to the height of spiritual devotion. Eleonora dies and the narrator remains behind in the valley. The narrator remains constant in his devotion and the valley changes. The river loses its divine melody and is replaced by soft sighs of the wind. The valley now takes on a funereal air. Eleonora visits the narrator only once: "I was awakened from a slumber like the slumber of death by the pressing of spiritual lips upon my own" (T. IV. 242). However, this is not enough for the

narrator. He desires the love of a mortal woman to fill the void he now feels in his heart. To dream only at night of his beloved is not enough; therefore he leaves the valley.

Amid "the vanities and turbulent triumphs of the world" (T. IV. 242) the narrator remains true to his vow and is only aware of his beloved "in the silent hours of the night" (T. IV. 243). Now, we must remember what the narrator told us in the beginning of the tale: "They who dream by day are cognizant of many things which escape those who dream only by night. In their grey visions they obtain glimpses of eternity, and thrill, in awaking, to find that they have been upon the verge of the great secret" (T. IV. 236). This is the key to the understanding of the riddle of his second epoch. For it is only after the narrator discovers his love within his own Self, in a dream by day, through Ermengarde functioning like his anima, that he again enjoys life to its fullest: "Oh bright was the seraph Ermengarde! and in that knowledge I had room for none other.--Oh divine was the angel Ermengarde! and as I looked down into the depths of her memorial eyes I thought only of them--and of her" (T. IV. 243). Ermengarde symbolizes the third type of anima. This is so because the narrator perceives through her eyes "glimpses of eternity" which he could not perceive in the nightly dreams of Eleonora. Through his dream by day, or the power of the imagination, he transcends the vanities of the world. By perceiving his anima in Ermengarde he is released from his

vow to Eleonora; spiritually speaking, the distinction between Ermengarde and Eleonora is obliterated.

In this selection of Poe's tales we can see that each narrator has his own process of individuation to tell. Madeline is an object of terror and love for Roderick. Without Madeline he has nothing but ego identity. Nevertheless, when he is united with her Roderick achieves spiritual unity with the Divine Being, or the inner Self. Through Morella's death the narrator discovers the immortal power of love and, hence, his own spiritual immortality. And Ligeia's death forces the narrator to perceive his own inner creative power. Like the female figure of the poems examined in this study, the female figure in the tales represent unique intuitive glimpses. However, unlike the poems, the tales focus more upon the narrator's imbalanced psyche, and how he overcomes the imbalance. This readjustment of the psyche creates a crisis of identity for the narrator. He usually suffers a deep psychic wound before he is able to transcend his ego-consciousness. When he does overcome his wound he perceives a rebirth of the creative unconscious within his own Self. Therefore, the female figure is a symbol of perception in the tales discussed in this chapter.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> "Poe's Place in American Literature," The Complete Works of Edgar Allan Poe, ed. James A. Harrison (1902; rpt. New York: AMS, 1965), II, xxvii.

<sup>2</sup> Poe, "The Oval Portrait," IV, p. 245. All subsequent references to Poe's tales are from the Harrison edition and will be listed in the text as follows: (T. IV. 245).

<sup>3</sup> Daniel Hoffman, Poe Poe Poe Poe Poe Poe Poe (New York: Doubleday, 1972), pp. 302-303.

<sup>4</sup> Poe, "Eureka," XVI, 309.

<sup>5</sup> Poe, "Usher," III: The family and the house share the same identity, as the narrator informs us, "the 'House of Usher'--an appellation which seemed to include, in the minds of the peasantry who used it, both the family and the family mansion" (p. 275).

<sup>6</sup> Poe, "Eureka," XVI, 189.

<sup>7</sup> Hoffman, p. 305.

<sup>8</sup> "Eureka," XVI, 314-15.

<sup>9</sup> The Design of the Present: Essays on Time and Form in American Literature (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1969), p. 233.

<sup>10</sup> Joseph L. Henderson, "Ancient Myths and Modern Man," Man and His Symbols, ed. Carl Gustav Jung (1964; rpt. New York: Dell, 1972), p. 118.

<sup>11</sup> "The Philosophy of Furniture," XIV, 105-106.

<sup>12</sup> Edgar Poe the Poet: Essays New and Old on the Man and His Works (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1969), p. 256.

<sup>13</sup> Hoffman, pp. 246-47.

<sup>14</sup> Poe, "Eureka," XVI, 313.

<sup>15</sup> Edgar Allan Poe: A Phenomenological View (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1973), p. 211.

<sup>16</sup> "The Process of Individuation," Man and His Symbols, ed. Carl Gustav Jung (1964; rpt. New York: Dell, 1972), p. 171.

<sup>17</sup> Halliburton, p. 226.

## CHAPTER 5

### CONCLUSION

Edgar Allan Poe's reputation as an artist has suffered ever since Griswold's distorted and vindictive "Ludwig" article. Much of the criticism of Poe tends to be either overtly offensive or defensive. The present study avoids judgement on Poe's artistic merit. Poe deals with almost all facets of life. He is intensely concerned with the what and why of existence. His only fault may lie in his assumption or belief that through art's esemplastic quality we perceive how and why we order life as we do. To peer into one's own soul or the unconscious has been, and probably always will be, the artist's greatest responsibility. To look beyond the rational, to depend on nothing but inner resources, to accept man's irrational and perceptive energy which takes one to the deepest layers of one's own abyss, to love that finite thing called man, these features characterize Poe's piercing artistic courage.

To be confronted with an intuitive glimpse and then to construct consciously a creative artifact are the essential aspects of Poe's literary theory. As readers we should endeavor to understand the thought behind the words on the page. This is the concern of the present study. Poe's theory of how a poem or tale is constructed is not essential to the understanding of his poetic effect. Our intent is to pinpoint one specific aspect of Poe's literary theory and to



look long and hard at how such an aspect functions in Poe's work.

The female figure is a recurring phenomenon throughout Poe's writings. The purpose of this study is to treat each fictive woman as a symbol of the intuitive glimpse; and to comprehend how she interacts with the narrator. Because of the similarity between Poe's concept of the death of a beautiful woman and Jung's concept of the anima--the way in which the anima functions in the male psyche--the Jungian concept of the anima is used to help interpret Poe's female figure.

In the poems in which the female does not die she becomes a symbol of perception. She is also a symbol of perception in the poems where her death is the central issue. Poe's favorite image for this perception is the eyes of the female. We again find this symbol in the tales. The female figure becomes the symbol through which we may perceive an intuitive glimpse. And the intuitive glimpse belongs to the area of irrational perception which has little in common with the process of rational thinking. There is no cause and effect in Poe's intuitive glimpse. Therefore, it is difficult to explain exactly what each intuitive glimpse may mean. We have to stumble about until we can reason out for ourselves what each poem or tale may be trying to tell us. It is as if Poe is giving us the raw data with which we test our own reasoning power beyond limits.

When the female dies the narrator is confronted with a

void in which he is forced to live. And we must follow his consciousness if we are to understand the despair and apprehension he experiences. The death of the female figure functions like the Jungian wound. The anima is the guide to the unconscious and Poe's female figure is the guide to an intuitive glimpse. Both, as we have seen in this study, lead to the ultimate awareness of the divine being, the man-god within, or the inner Self. In the process the narrator experiences the terror one feels when the ego-conscious self discovers that it, as a purely rational agent, does not have absolute control over the whole man. We shall have Poe explain such a type of situation in his own words: "Men have called me mad; but the question is not yet settled, whether madness is or is not the loftiest intelligence--whether much that is glorious--whether all that is profound--does not spring from disease of thought--from moods of mind exalted at the expense of the general intellect" (T. IV. 236). To become mad, to forego the general intellect or man's process of rational thinking, and to lose oneself in an imaginative journey--this is what Poe is attempting to accomplish. What lies beyond the waking world of day to day consciousness is what Poe is trying to assist us in discovering.

This study by no means covers all of Poe's fictional women. A more comprehensive study using the approach outlined in the "Introduction" could include other facets of the psyche and their relation to Poe's fictional characters. One

example could be a study of "William Wilson," in which a comparison could be made between the second Wilson and the Jungian shadow. A similar type of study could be made of those old sailors the narrator stumbles upon in "MS. Found in a Bottle." The possibilities of an extension of this study are numerous.

Edgar Allan Poe takes us on many journeys into the mind. Each journey has its particular meaning. To understand Poe's theory of construction does help us follow his artistic technique. The objective of this technique is to elicit the intended poetic effect. Furthermore, discovering the meaning of a particular poetic effect is difficult because, as Poe tells us, "the range of Imagination is unlimited. Its materials extend throughout the universe."<sup>1</sup> In the following passage Poe speaks about his ability to form his thoughts into words; in doing so he touches upon an idea very similar to Jung's concept of the archetypes:

I am not to be understood as supposing that the fancies, or psychal impressions, to which I allude, are confined to my individual self--are not, in a word, common to all mankind--for on this point it is quite impossible that I should form an opinion--but nothing can be more certain than that even a partial record of the /thought/ impressions would startle the universal intellect of mankind, by the supremeness of the novelty of the material employed, and of its consequent suggestions.<sup>2</sup>

The novelty of Poe's material may be, and is for many persons, worn off by now. However, the "consequent suggestions" of his writings still have the power to illuminate the

ambiguous and dark places of the unconscious. The approach in this study is only one of many which tries to comprehend Poe's imaginative genius.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> "Marginalia," The Complete Works of Edgar Allan Poe,  
ed. James A. Harrison (1902; rpt. New York: AMS, 1965),  
XVI, 156.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 90.

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