"The Fall of the House of Usher" and the Architecture of Unreliability

Abstract:

This chapter examines what many scholars consider the most accomplished and representative of Poe's tales, "The Fall of the House of Usher" (1939). After a brief overview of the main axes of interpretation in the story's reception history, I propose an analysis of the tale's main narrative strategy, the unreliable narrator, which I argue is typical of Poe's short fiction in general. Linking this device to the unstable architectonics of the house in the story, the chapter shows how the unreliability of the narrator lies at the heart of the text's ability to choreograph active reader participation. I will also historicize the specific kind of unreliable narrators that Poe favors – those lacking a moral conscience or ethically-informed perception – in the context of antebellum debates about slavery.

Keywords:

Edgar Allan Poe, Usher, unreliable narrator, antebellum, conscience, reader participation, slavery, race

"The Fall of the House of Usher" occupies a singular place in the Poe canon. Considered by many critics as his best and most representative short fiction, the story appears in countless anthologies and collections. It is considered foundational for the American Gothic as well as more specifically the Southern Gothic.[1] Despite its ubiquity and popularity

among critics and readers alike, the meaning of "The Fall of the House of Usher" has proved uniquely elusive. Poe's ability to create an undercurrent of suggestiveness is nowhere displayed more masterfully than in this story, and few texts have generated so many and such divergent readings. "Usher," with its first-person narration, underground crypts, and multilayered literariness (including two embedded texts, an epigraph and a profusion of allusions to other texts), appears as the very apotheosis of hidden depths and encrypted meaning. The result has been a dizzying array of critical interpretations claiming to offer the "key" to the textual house of Usher (as in Darrel Abel's influential 1949 essay by that title[2]). Psychoanalytic readings held a central place in the story's early reception history, followed by philosophical and historical allegories, and later by a range of poststructuralist readings suggesting that reading and/or writing themselves were the real subjects of the tale.

I propose to show that Poe constructed this story to offer both an implied meaning and an affective reading experience in which the "discovery" of the "hidden" meaning is carefully choreographed into the temporal movement though the narrative by its unreliable narration. In the critical history of "The Fall of the House of Usher," the narrator has often been subject to scrutiny and debate – especially since he calls attention to his own subjective fallibility so often and so insistently – but readings that do so often tend to ignore the larger historical and cultural context of the tale. By looking at how the story's narrative unreliability is linked to cultural debates about slavery, conscience, and moral insanity, I hope to explain both the tacit content of "The Fall of the House of Usher" and its intended aesthetic effect.

Although most readers will be familiar with the tale, a short synopsis might help to refresh our sense of the story's enigmas. An unnamed narrator approaches the house of his childhood friend and spends a moment reflecting on the bleakness of the landscape, his own inexplicable dread, and his inability to coax the terrible scene into assuming a sublime aspect. His optical experiment of looking at the house though its reflection in the dark tarn

anticipates both the motif of doubling that will recur throughout the story, and the ending, when the house actually collapses into the tarn. Inside, he finds his friend greatly altered, in the grip of an extreme nervous agitation and an illness which makes his senses acutely over-sensitive. In one of only two occasions where Usher speaks, he informs the narrator – and reader – that he is terrified of any incident that would excite his overwrought nerves – in short, he fears any unusual incident at all. Shortly after, his sister Madeline dies and is temporarily stored in a dungeon deep below the house, upon which the two friends resume their activities of reading and playing music. Soon, however, Usher's demeanor changes dramatically and he appears even more agitated as he seems to be "listening to some imaginary sound" and "laboring with some oppressive secret" (M 2: 411). The last third of the story is taken up by the gradually building suspense over the course of a stormy evening when the narrator attempts to distract Usher by reading him a chivalric romance, while mysterious sounds from deep within the house appear to echo descriptions of sounds in the book. Finally, in his second monologue, the distraught Usher confesses to having heard his sister's struggles in the tomb for days and his terror at her probable desire for revenge. A moment later Madeline appears at the door and falls upon him, killing him, at which the house splits down along its fissure and disappears into the tarn as the narrator flees.

Some of the ambiguities that have inspired critics include the status (and specifically, the reliability) of the narrator, the oddly evanescent character of Madeline, her relationship to Usher (the possibility of an incestuous union), and her uncannily impermanent death (with the issue of medical body-snatching and catalepsy in the background). As mentioned earlier, Poe succeeds in creating an aura of many-layered suggestiveness around the story, leading many readers and critics to believe that there is more to it than meets the eye. The perennial question of tone (so masterfully treated by Jonathan Elmer[3]) emerges with the curious play in the story around the narrator's excessive self-consciousness at some moments and complete

obliviousness at others. The story also treats its embedded romance ("The Mad Trist") with so much irony that a reader is left wondering if the equally exaggerated frame narrative can be taken fully at face value. Finally, a detail that has intrigued readers is Usher's belief that the stones of his house are alive and sentient, something that appears to be confirmed in the latter part of the tale, when the house collapses into the tarn in which it was initially reflected. These are only some of the suggestive details generating debate among critics and scholars, several of which I will address in the sections to follow.

Critical Overview

Poe's critical reception has varied considerably since his death in 1849. In the nineteenth century, Poe was praised by Charles Baudelaire for his refined artistic sensibility, for his perfect mastery of craft, and his self-avowed devotion to aesthetic effect (in essays such as "The Philosophy of Composition" and "The Poetic Principle").[4] The Symbolists, also convinced that the point of art was to stir the emotions rather than impart lessons, embraced Poe as a precursor.[5] In the early twentieth century, however, an obsessive interest in hidden meanings took center stage in Anglo-American literary scholarship, and Poe – with his explicit interest in madness, secrecy and narrative indirection – invited many such readings, especially those of a psychoanalytical and psycho-biographical nature. Princess Marie Bonaparte, a member of Freud's inner circle in the 1920s, argued that Poe's work emanated largely from his unresolved sense of loss of his mother, and that Usher was a projection of this loss.[6] Reading the tale through the prism of his own psychological concerns, D. H. Lawrence argued that Madeline and Roderick exemplify the mutual destruction and loss of soul that can occur when two people love each other too much.[7] One of the most influential recent examples of a psychological approach can be found in G.R. Thompson's 1973

monograph, *Poe's Fiction: Romantic Irony in the Gothic Tales,* in which he meticulously demonstrates the analogies constructed by Poe in the text between the house and Usher's sanity, suggesting that the story chronicles a gradual descent into madness.[8] In 1981, J.R. Hammond argued that Roderick Usher is "a mirror image of Poe or at least a projection, a doppel-ganger, of himself as he imagined himself to be,"[9] and in 1996, Eric Carlson discussed "Usher" in *A Companion to Poe Studies* under the rubric of "Tales of Psychal Conflict," focusing exclusively on the many readings taking either Usher or the narrator as psychological case studies, confirming the popularity of this approach.[10]

The other most common readings are also often allegorical, but adopting a more philosophical, political or historical focus. For example, in 1949 Darrel Abel proposed that the tale exemplified a contest between "Life-Reason" and "Death-Madness" for the possession of Roderick Usher.[11] Similarly, Michael Hoffman, in "The House of Usher and Negative Romanticism" (1965), argued that the house in the tale is meant to represent the Enlightenment and therefore its demise represents the realization that the world is not as ordered and meaningful as the Enlightenment presumed.[12] Although many critics succumb to the temptation to read the story allegorically, lured by its explicit preoccupation with hidden depths and multi-layered architectonics, there is little evidence in Poe's fictional or critical work to suggest that he worked in an allegorical mode in his stories except on rare occasions.[13] In an 1842 essay on Nathaniel Hawthorne, Poe wrote that "there is scarcely one respectable word to be said" for allegory (ER 582). "Under the best of circumstances," Poe continues, "it must always interfere with that unity of effect which, to the artist, is worth all the allegory in the world" (583).

Unpacking this notion of "effect" for a moment, it would appear that for Poe the impact of a work of art was largely a matter of choreographing the intricate interplay between expectation and discovery as a reader progressed temporally through a text. In much of his

fiction, the main point is neither explicitly named by the text nor a deep hidden meaning needing excavation by a critic; rather, it is in between: a question of attending to the fairly obvious *cues* Poe provides the reader. For example, the story "William Wilson" is about a capricious boy who ignores his conscience to such an extent that when it returns in an externalized form to keep giving him unsolicited advice he fails to recognize it and ends up murdering it, thereby becoming a sociopath (referring at the beginning of the tale to his "later years of … unpardonable crime"; M 2: 426). The cues, or rather, *clues*, in this story include the opening epigraph, which explicitly names "CONSCIENCE" (caps. in original, M 2: 426) as a "spectre," anticipating the way the narrator's conscience will haunt him like a ghost until he finally murders it, initiating an unimpeded life of crime.

In short, Poe often embeds a meaning that requires the reader to infer something that he does not state explicitly, but this reading is not a question of "interpretation" in the conventional sense of the word nor of allegory but rather of connecting the dots in order to understand the basic elements of the plot. In the late tale "Hop-Frog," the reader is made to understand – while the unreliable narrator pointedly does *not* – that the abused slave Hop-Frog is planning revenge upon the king who has kidnapped and tormented him. Generating strong dramatic irony, the tale requires the reader to infer from the situation (master-slave) and the visible but otherwise unexplained signs of Hop-Frog's internal agitation (e.g. grating his teeth) that the seemingly innocent preparations for the king's masquerade ball are actually a desperate plot for revenge and escape (M 3: 1353).

With post-structuralism in the 1970s and 80s, allegorical readings made way for a new and intense attention to Poe's craftsmanship, the complexity of his irony, and a fascination with his self-consciousness as a writer.[14] In fact, Poe's linguistic playfulness was often read as a prescient anticipation of Derridean deconstruction itself. Though more reliant on close textual analysis than allegorical approaches, many post-structuralism-inspired

readings tended to have the same pre-scripted conclusion, namely, that the text has no single meaning or is in fact about its own meaninglessness. For example, Joseph Riddel's 1979 essay sees in "Usher" a self-reflexive fable about the absence that lies at the center of any text, an absence of meaning and presence and life, except as simulacrum of a simulacrum.[15] Riddel argues this absence is allegorized in the story by the house of Usher itself, which is constructed upon a crypt, an architectural feature that allegorizes for Riddel the notion that fiction is always constructed upon a "hollow coffin," i.e. an emptiness at its center. The embedded story and the other fragments and allusions to books and manuscripts are all attempts to defer the confrontation with the terrifying contents of the crypt, which, for Riddel, is not a prematurely buried woman but the missing body of the meaning of the text (128-129).

Focusing more on the reading process, Harriet Hustis has argued that Poe embeds an interpretive "gap" that calls for the reader's participation.[16] In this, Poe is working within a larger tradition of "gothic reading," which, according to Hustis, creates a "disturbance" in the reading process, and which "bothers without quite spoiling narrative pleasure," making readers active participants in the gothic plot. The narrator is important to this process because he is the stand-in for the reader as well as a double for Usher, though he is also different from both in that he is a naïve reader, and this difference creates the gap that characterizes so-called "gothic reading." Hustis concludes, like Riddell, and most other poststructuralist critics, that the point of all this effort is ultimately to show the "interpretive uncertainty" of texts. The ease with which poststructuralist critics find ambiguity and hermeneutic gaps in this story, and in Poe in general (whose critical fortunes surged with the arrival of poststructuralism in the 1970s), is due to the fact that he deliberately embeds unreliable narration into almost every story, but the unreliability generally has a larger rhetorical purpose than to signify only itself, as I will show later.

Emerging from poststructuralist concerns but far more attentive to textual specificity and detail, Scott Peeples' essay on "Usher" for the *Cambridge Companion to Edgar Allan Poe* offers an account that focuses on the meticulous "constructiveness" of the text.[17] Peeples examines the technical care with which Poe built his texts, like an engineer, carefully crafting correspondences between Usher's house and the text (182). Ultimately, the story is "about" its own construction, and specifically about the tension between the loss of control depicted *in* the story and the complete control that Poe the author keeps over his fiction as he enacts the "artist's fantasy of bringing that dead house to life" (188). Peeples begins with Poe's authorial stance but also brings into focus the central importance of the house itself to any reading of the story, as is evident from the pun embedded in the title, where "house" refers to both the physical structure and Usher's family line. This focus on the rhetorical complexity of "The Fall of the House of Usher," where the setting is an agent as well as a backdrop, brings us to the question of the possible correspondences between the the story, its uncannily volatile house and the larger cultural context of the story's production.

To conclude this first section, looking at the history of the critical reception of "The Fall of the House of Usher" reveals two main trends: first, a psychoanalytic and philosophical trend of assigning a single meaning to the text, and another more recent trend of denying it meaning altogether. Both tendencies arise from critical paradigms (e.g. psychoanalysis, deconstruction) that search for evidence of their own pre-existing assumptions while generally ignoring the historical and cultural issues that informed Poe's era. Recent scholarship that benefits from the insights of poststructuralism and its attention to form and language, but also engages with cultural studies approaches, has produced a new generation of readings linking historical questions to formal ones and can help us read "The Fall of the House of Usher" against the backdrop of antebellum America.

Cultural Criticism and Cultural Context

Possibly the most important development in Poe criticism in recent decades has been the emergence of race and slavery as central preoccupations. Discussion of Poe's views on these issues and how they might have impacted his work – however obliquely – have reshaped Poe studies since the 1990s. John Carlos Rowe's claim in 1992 that "Poe was a proslavery Southerner and should be reassessed as such in whatever approach we take to his life and writings" can be taken as the opening salvo to this debate.[18] The same year, Toni Morrison called for an investigation into the "Africanist" presence in American literature and identified Poe as one of the key figures who have shaped the chiaroscuro dynamics of the American literary imagination.[19] Other important contributions to this discussion include Teresa Goddu's *Gothic America* (1997), which proposed a more nuanced approach to reading race in Poe, and questioned specifically the facile reduction of racism to an exclusively Southern issue.[20] Lesley Ginsberg's claim that "The Black Cat" can be read as a study of how slavery corrupts owners raised the prospect of a far more complex Poe, one who understood that slavery was at the heart of the American "political uncanny," a horror story rife with repression, projection and various forms of collective psychosis.[21] In Ginsberg's influential reading, Poe emerges as a subtle critic of slavery despite his alleged "proslavery pronouncements" (122).

Yet even these few proslavery pronouncements have been called into question in recent years. The most important instance of Poe writing explicitly about slavery, which he did astonishingly rarely, considering how much he wrote in an era increasingly obsessed by the topic, is a review known as the "Drayton-Paulding" review, which depicted slavery sentimentally as a benevolent and civilizing institution.[22] One of the most important turns in the recent debate about Poe's racism was the publication of Terence Whalen's *Edgar Allan Poe and the Masses* (1999), which explored the literary marketplace in which Poe worked,

offered plausible explanations for many of Poe's aesthetic and political positions in light of the pressures impinging upon him economically as a writer and editor, and most importantly, refuted the longstanding claim that Poe wrote the "Drayton-Paulding" review.[23] Analyzing internal textual evidence, Terence Whalen painstakingly demonstrated that Beverly Tucker, a Southern ideologue and writer, was its author. Whalen also pointed out that it is likely that Poe entertained a centrist view on slavery that combined an "average racism" with a belief that slavery should be gradually phased out (111). This would have been a common view among educated Southerners, and one that allowed Poe to offend neither Southern nor Northern sensibilities in his book reviews.

Not easily resolved one way or the other, given Poe's penchant for ambiguity and irony, the debate about Poe's racial politics produced an entire collection of essays devoted to the issue, Gerald Kennedy and Liliane Weissberg's *Romancing the Shadow* (1997). In this volume, John Rowe once more argues that Poe's representations of race consistently upheld antebellum racial hierarchies and stereotypes and thereby affirmed the imperial fantasies and ambitions of the era.[24] Most of the other essays, however, attempt to adopt a more nuanced view. Leland S. Person examines the subversive reversibility of black and white race markers – especially in terms of skin and hair color – in order to argue that Poe's Gothic fictions function to destabilize "the psychological constructs of white male racism."[25] J. Gerald Kennedy painstakingly combs through Poe's oeuvre and biographical scholarship to find evidence of Poe's contacts with slaves and explore his "conflicted relationship" with the South's "peculiar institution." Comparing *The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym* to the *Narrative of Frederic Douglass* (1845), Kennedy concludes that Poe's novel invites oddly subversive and pessimistic readings of encounters between natives and American whites, tacitly undermining Southern arguments in favor of slavery at the time.

This tendency to understand a slave's natural desire to revolt, based on an implicit

recognition of slaves' suffering and discontent, universally denied or ignored by advocates of slavery, gives Poe's depictions of slavery an abolitionist tinge regardless of how grotesquely racist his physical descriptions of black characters could be. For instance, as described earlier, the late story "Hop-Frog" requires the reader to understand the natural desire of the slave to punish his master in order to guess what the eponymous character is plotting for the cruel king. The character himself is depicted as "a dwarf and a cripple," walking in an awkward and comic gait, but the entire story hinges on the reader identifying with Hop-Frog's rage and desire for revenge against the morally blind narrator, who is a court lackey and unable to perceive the injustice of the situation he describes (M 3: 1345). The inevitable desire to rebel and take revenge on one's master is also explicitly depicted in the comic "Four Beasts in One" (1833), where the wild animals that have been domesticated to be "*valets-de-chambre*" stage a mutiny and eat their masters (M 2: 123).

Poe's recognition of the violence inherent in the master-slave relationship flies directly in the face of the most common arguments put forward by defenders of slavery in the south, especially in the wake of the Nat Turner revolt of 1831. The work of Southern lawyer and social theorist George Fitzhugh sums up many of the arguments that emerged in the 1830s and 40s. These arguments, as Sam Worley has noted, moved away from the "necessary evil" view of slavery that had held sway in earlier decades and relied increasingly on the "virtual codification of strategies that posed slavery as a positive good."[26] In *Cannibals All! Or Slaves Without Masters* (1857), Fitzhugh argues that slavery is natural to human nature: "Man is a social and gregarious animal, and all such animals hold property in each other. Nature imposes upon them slavery as a law and necessity of their existence. They live together to aid each other, and are slaves under Mr. Garrison's higher law. Slavery arises under the higher law, and is, and ever must be, coëval and coëxtensive with human nature."[27] In other words, Fitzhugh claims that slavery is an inherent and natural part of human society

and history. Going even further, he argues that the state of dependence created by slavery is the natural precondition for true affection and kindness between people, because every one knows their role and place, and there is no jostling for power. In fact, Fitzhugh avers, it is the slave who is really the master in the South, because it is the slave who is maintained and cared for: "The humble and obedient slave exercises more or less control over the most brutal and hard-hearted master. It is an invariable law of nature, that weakness and dependence are elements of strength, and generally sufficiently limit that universal despotism, observable throughout human and animal nature. The moral and physical world is but a series of subordinations, and the more perfect the subordination, the greater the harmony and the happiness." Fitzhugh's argument directly refutes Harriet Beecher Stowe's influential argument in *Uncle Tom's Cabin,* published five years earlier, that power corrupts and that absolute power corrupts the slaveowners absolutely, making them cruel and blind to slaves' suffering.[28]

Despite the warnings of writers such as Stowe, the issue of slavery in the antebellum U.S.represents one of history's most acute examples of collective moral blindness. As Lesley Ginsberg writes in her article on "The Black Cat," the Southern response to Nat Turner's 1931 rebellion was stupefaction, in particular with regard to his motives. For example, the *Richmond Enquirer* wrote that Turner acted "without any cause or provocation, that could be assigned" (quoted in Ginsberg, 100). Thomas Gray, the man who extracted Turner's confession, expresses sympathy with readers' frustration at seeing the "insurgent slaves ... destroyed, or apprehended, tried, and executed ... without revealing anything at all satisfactory, as to the motives which governed them" (quoted in Ginsberg, 101). Nothing highlights the absurdity of the slaveholding South's failure to recognize the violence inherent to the institution of slavery more than Dr. Samuel Cartwright's 1851 report in the *New Orleans Medical and Surgical Journal* that among the "diseases and peculiarities of the

Negro race," as his article was titled, was a treatable illness called "drapetomania, or the disease causing Negroes to run away." According to Cartwright, if slaves are kept "in the position that we learn from the Scriptures he was intended to occupy, that is, the position of submission," and treated with kindness, then "the negro is spell-bound, and cannot run away."[29] The notion that a slave would want to be free regardless of how kind his master might be, and that holding another human being in bondage is itself an extreme form of violence inviting the most extreme measures in return, seems to have not occurred to these self-deluded defenders of slavery.

Herman Melville's 1855 novella "Benito Cereno" is a canny examination of precisely this kind of blindness, with the naïve Captain Amasa Delano failing to grasp that the distressed Spanish slave ship he has boarded is in the midst of a slave mutiny despite much strange behavior on the part of its crew and captain. Scholars and readers such as Toni Morrison have generally understood Captain Delano as an example of the "willful blindness" of the antebellum South. As Morrison puts it, Delano's complacent myopia "is similar to the 'happy, loyal slave' antebellum discourse that peppered early debates on black civil rights."[30] In contrast to such complacent myths, Poe's depictions of relationships of subordination, in stories such as "Metzengerstein," "The Black Cat," "Hop-Frog" and *The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym*, are, like Stowe's and Melville's, consistently rife with violence, deceit, mutiny and mutual cruelty, undermining on every level the view of human nature as affectionately hierarchical advocated by proslavery ideologues like Fitzhugh and Cartwright.

Although "The Fall of the House of Usher" does not seem to be as directly concerned by race as *Hop-Frog* or *The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym*, numerous critics have seen a link between the story and the debate raging at the time about slavery. [31] In 1960, Harry Levin suggested that "The Fall of the House of Usher" could be read as a prophetic comment on the plantation system of the South. Specifically, he saw the South's "feudal pride and

foreboding of doom" mirrored in the story, and Usher as "driven underground by the pressure of fear."[32] While Levin's reading acknowledges the vague sense of threat informing the tale, Maurice S. Lee has suggested that more specifically it is "slave rebellion" that "potentially lurks" in the story.[33] This is not to argue that the story is meant as a simple allegory of Southern slavery and the threat of revolt. Instead, the issue of slavery should be regarded as a cultural framework for understanding the emotional charge of the story's principal tensions and tropes. For example, the subterranean crypt where Madeleine is placed as a precaution against grave-robbing physicians had once been a dungeon and has subsequently been used as a store-room for gun powder or "some other highly combustible substance" (M 2: 410). As I have argued in an earlier publication, this oddly detailed history of the room links its past function as a site of feudal-style imprisonment to the idea of combustibility, an association that would have resonated suggestively with the fear of insurrection in the post-Turner South, though its immediate function in the story is to allow a plausible explanation for the collapse of the house.[34]

Although the story anticipates the implosion of the nation around the issue of slavery twenty years later, the more immediate aspect of the text which which invites reading it in terms of slavery is its preoccupation with revenge for imprisonment and premature burial (reflecting figuratively how slavery constitutes what Orlando Patterson has called a "social death"[35]). Much of the power of the latter part of the story depends for its emotional charge on the fact that Madeline's struggle with her coffin and crypt is ignored for days. This fact (i.e., Madeline's long struggle) is what Poe himself pointed to as the point of the story. In an 1845 review article of his own work Poe wrote that the main effect (or "thesis of the story") can be described as "the revulsion of feeling consequent upon discovering that for a long period of time we have been mistaking sounds of agony, for those of mirth or indifference" (ER 871).[36] Literally, this refers to the sounds of Madeline's struggle to escape her tomb,

sounds which Usher has deliberately ignored and which the narrator has mistaken for the sounds in "Mad Trist." Structurally, it recalls the masquerades and other festivities used to mask the sounds of suffering in other Poe stories, as in "The Mask of the Red Death" or "Hop-Frog." The effect he describes here is complex, assuming both a process in time ("sounds we *have been mistaking*" followed by a "consequent" feeling of revulsion), and an ethical framework ("revulsion" here being essentially an affective response akin to horror, arising from a realization of our failure to act ethically). The word "mirth" in this passage is used in the technical sense that chivalric romances, like the story the narrator reads to Usher, are a form of amusement. Moreover, the fact that the narrator chooses to read a *chivalric* romance would have a special purchase in the context of the South, which tended to imagine its cultural roots in the medieval and Scottish chivalric traditions. The term "indifference" is equally freighted with cultural resonance, bringing us to the issue of conscience and its absence that many abolitionists argued was a natural result of the slave relationship, namely, that it dulled the moral faculty of the master and of the culture that tolerated slavery in general, inexorably pulling it toward a kind of moral numbness and idiocy.

Bad Conscience, or, Moral and Epistemological Unreliability

If slavery is the backdrop to the story, the more immediate subject of the tale's construction and specific effect is the issue of conscience and moral apperception. This is a concern of Poe's in many of his short stories and is a key feature of the unreliability of his narrators.[37] Conscience, as a specific cognitive faculty, was the subject of particular interest and attention in the 1830s, as the debate over slavery was heating up. Francis Wayland, President of Brown University, devoted five chapters to "Conscience, or the Moral Sense," in his tract on moral philosophy, *Elements of Moral Science* (1835), describing its specific function as "repelling vice" and contesting a subject's "lower propensities," but also as

helpless to do anything but advise. Wayland's language gives conscience an independent existence and agency, conceptualizing it as an entity separate from the decision-making subject. He repeatedly stresses the importance of "hearkening" and "obeying" the "impulses" of conscience and argues that one's conscience could be strengthened or atrophied, like a muscle, by use or disuse. Moreover, not only could individuals weaken and destroy their conscience by failing to obey it, but entire communities could collectively deaden and lose their moral sense by repeated acts of cruelty or violence. Citing gladiatorial Rome and revolutionary France as examples, Wayland argues that failure to heed conscience on a collective level produces a collective loss of moral sensibility.[38]

In light of the great political issues at stake in the question of conscience in a slaveholding society, it is no surprise that a writer as acutely aware of the subtleties of power, exclusion, and social repression as the once privileged and then disowned and nearly destitute Poe would take this up as a key concern.[39] What is surprising is how Poe scholarship has largely overlooked the fact that lack of conscience is the main form of unreliability that many of his first-person narrators display. Poe uses morally unreliable first-person narrators in stories such as "The Cask of Amontillado," "Mellona Tauta," "The Business Man," "The Black Cat," and "The Imp of the Perverse," and their function is always to describe but fail to recognize crucial elements of the story, especially of an ethical nature. An obvious example is "The Tell-Tale Heart," where the narrator betrays his moral insanity quite quickly by avowing at the end of the second paragraph that he is a murderer ("I made up my mind the take the life of the old man"; M 3: 792). At the other end of the spectrum, the narrator of "Berenice" is revealed only at the end of the story to be the perpetrator of a horrible crime. When we learn that Berenice's teeth are in his possession we are forced to infer that he has pulled them out from her alive (as her body is disfigured and his own clothes are "clotted with gore"; M 2: 218). Even the ending is narrated "unreliably" by never using the word

"teeth." Instead, the narrator describes "thirty-two small, white, and ivory-looking substances" falling to the floor (M 2: 219) This absurdly indirect description (after all, who could recognize that there are *thirty-two* of anything in a single glance?), like all unreliable narration, requires the reader to produce the final meaning him or herself by recognizing them as teeth even though the narrator does not name them as such. In "The Cask of Amontillado," in contrast, it dawns gradually upon the reader than the seemingly congenial narrator is a sociopath intent upon revenge. His sadism is only fully revealed at the moment near the end when he mocks his victim's pleas for mercy by repeating them sarcastically ("*For the love of God, Montresor*!¨ "Yes" I said, "for the love of God!"; M 3:1263).

Similarly, the narrator of "The Fall of the House of Usher" betrays the limitations of his unimaginative subjectivity gradually during the course of the last section of the narrative. It could be argued that the narrator begins to plant doubts in the reader's mind with his initial lengthy descriptions of his unexplained emotions upon first seeing the house, and his provocative comparisons to narcotics (repeated again soon after when he tries to describe Usher's manner as that of an "irreclaimable eater of opium"; M 2: 402). This is because the entire narrative is structured to prepare the reader for the specific effect that Poe wanted to create with this story – as mentioned before, the "the revulsion of feeling consequent upon discovering that for a long period of time we have been mistaking sounds of agony, for those of mirth or indifference" (ER 871).

In order to create that temporally complex effect, involving "a long period of time" during which "sounds of agony" are mistaken for sounds of "mirth," Poe structures the story in roughly two parts with Madeline's apparent death as the fulcrum. In the first part, all the necessary cues and clues are established that will help the reader later make sense of what is happening and that the narrator will fail to understand, namely, that Madeline has been entombed alive and has managed to escape the underground crypt. These clues include

references to the narrator's unreliability, Madeline's catalepsy and lifelike appearance, but also the explanations foreshadowing Usher's own "unreliability," since he is the first to fail to attend to Madeline's struggle. Thus, two of Usher's three main speeches occur in this section, one reported and one given as direct speech. The first speech informs the narrator (and the reader) that Usher has preternaturally sensitive hearing as well as a general acuteness of the senses (M 2: 403). The other speech allows him to explain his fear of any incident, "even the most trivial," which would operate upon his "intolerable agitation of the soul" (M 2: 403). In short, he is hyper-sensitive and morbidly perceptive of sounds, and terrified of anything that would upset him. These elements, along with some suspicion that the narrator's judgment is not entirely transparent and reliable, are all that are needed after Madeline is entombed and Usher's manner dramatically changes as he appears to be "listening to some imaginary sound" and "laboring with some oppressive secret" for the reader to guess that the cataleptic Madeline was not dead when she was entombed and that Usher can hear her stirring (M 2: 411). We know that he is terrified of any unusual incident, and are given thereby a motive for why he does not dare to tell anyone what he hears. Usher's strange behavior thus constitutes a hermeneutic gap that invites the reader to fill it with a plausible explanation, which Poe has carefully prepared.

The long last section of "The Fall of the House of Usher," in which the narrator describes hearing "low and indefinite sounds" that continue to grow louder and more alarming as he reads the "Mad Trist" to Usher in order to distract him, is the dramatic and emotional heart of the story (M 2: 411). Its rhetorical power depends on the fact that most readers – even first time readers, I would contend, if they have read attentively – are aware or suspect that Madeline has been buried alive and that the narrator and the brother seem (or pretend) to not recognize this fact. I say "pretend" because Usher turns out to have heard her struggles all along. He is, in fact, the sociopath at the heart of the story, who has suppressed

his conscience and moral judgment, like the narrator of "William Wilson." In contrast to Usher's deliberate failure to rescue his sister, the narrator is merely blind (and deaf) to her suffering. The seeming stupidity of the narrator is illustrated by at least one film adaptation by making him into a myopic bumbling fool.[40] The effect for the reader is a curious combination of ill-ease with regard to Madeline's torture and approach and the epistemological pleasure inherent to drawn-out scenes of dramatic irony (when the reader knows something crucial the protagonist does not). This scene continues as long as possible in order to amplify its uncanny effects: an angry Madeline laboriously draws closer while the two men read and listen to the sounds of her approach in a state of obvious denial. The situation generates a peculiarly ethical position for the reader, who is aware of the suffering that the main characters do not recognize or deliberately ignore.

The climax of the story is then Usher's second direct speech, prompted by a "distinct, hollow, metallic, and clangorous" sound, obviously (inferable as) Madeline's tomb door being opened, which makes the narrator jump to his feet, but which leaves Usher "undisturbed," once more proving that he has *already* been hearing the sounds of Madeline's struggle and ignoring them. Now, characterized by a "stony rigidity" and "a sickly smile," Usher confesses his long deception and failure to act: "Not hear it? -- yes, I hear it, and have heard it. Long -- long -- long -- many minutes, many hours, many days, have I heard it -- yet I dared not -- oh, pity me, miserable wretch that I am! -- I dared not -- I *dared* not speak! *We have put her living in the tomb!* Said I not that my senses were acute? I *now* tell you that I heard her first feeble movements in the hollow coffin. I heard them -- many, many days ago -- yet I dared not -- *I dared not speak!*" (M 2: 416). In this speech, Usher explains the hermeneutic gaps in the last section of the story, which the reader had been invited to guess at as soon as the narrator mentioned that Usher seemed to be "laboring with some oppressive secret" and "listening to some imaginary sound" (M 2: 411).

Usher's monologue continues and illuminates the latter part of the story in more detail: ["]And now -- to-night -- Ethelred -- ha! ha! -- the breaking of the hermit's door, and the death-cry of the dragon, and the clangour of the shield! -- say, rather, the rending of her coffin, and the grating of the iron hinges of her prison, and her struggles within the coppered archway of the vault! Oh whither shall I fly? Will she not be here anon? Is she not hurrying to upbraid me for my haste? Have I not heard her footstep on the stair? Do I not distinguish that heavy and horrible beating of her heart? Madman!" -- here he sprang furiously to his feet, and shrieked out his syllables, as if in the effort he were giving up his soul – *"Madman! I tell you that she now stands without the door!*" (M 2: 416)

It is at this point that Usher reveals the specific content of the fear that lies at the heart of his agitation, namely, that Madeline is coming to reproach and possibly punish him for his failure of conscience and will. This climax evokes the unspoken but pervasive anxiety about revenge – the fear that the men and women who have been prematurely buried in the state of social death that slavery represented would refuse to stay dead and would claim the vengeance that was arguably rightfully theirs – that hung over the antebellum South and that gives this story its peculiar *frisson* even if the particulars seem to be geographically unspecified.[41] One of several odd and enigmatic things about this final speech is Usher calling the narrator "madman." We have been led by the narrator to regard Roderick as verging on unhinged, and yet this accusation from Usher can remind us of how the many clues the narrator had dropped about his own mental instability in the opening paragraphs: his references to opium consumption, to his "insufferable gloom," his "superstition," and long familiarity with "the paradoxical law of all sentiments having terror as their basis" (M 2: 399). The fact that the term "madman" can easily apply at this point to either Usher or the narrator himself is also one of many instances of the radical convertibility that characterizes

Poe's work (as Joan Dyan has noted[42]), namely, that things and people are oddly convertible and interchangeable, like Rowena and Ligeia in the story by that name.

Another odd thing about this speech, as many critics have noted, is the overly formal expression "*without the door"* for "outside the door." This curious phrase has been used to argue that Usher has had incestuous relations with his sister while she was alive, or even after she has been entombed, since "*without the door*" could be read to mean that she has lost her hymen (the figurative door to her physical self).[43] While it is true that Poe may have followed Gothic tradition in permitting suggestions of incest to arise, the oddness of the expression is also another way in which the content of the narrative is mirrored by and inseparable from the oppressive and unreliable architectonics of the house. For instance, it is the door of the dungeon which is the source of the sounds that the narrator and Usher hear and/or ignore for a large segment of the story.

Similarly, the whole structure of the house has been a source of crucial ambiguities. For example, while giving "little token of instability," the house is nevertheless doomed to collapse (M 2: 400). The presence of the fracture that will ultimately make the house collapse into the tarn is alluded to at the beginning in the highly subjectivized and uncertain way that characterizes Poe's treatment of the narrator from the start. The narrator reports the crack while appearing not see it: "Perhaps the eye of a scrutinizing observer might have discovered a barely perceptible fissure, which, extending from the roof of the building in front, made its way down the wall in a zigzag direction, until it became lost in the sullen waters of the tarn" (M 2: 400). The conditional tense ("might have") and adverb evoking uncertainty ("perhaps") both call attention to the fact that the narrator is precisely NOT the "scrutinizing observer" needed to notice and fully understand the meaning of the "barely perceptible" flaw in the structure.

The house is central and present to the story in other ways as well, from the pun of the title, collapsing the family and the physical building into one entity, to the suggestively black ("ebon") floors, hinting at the black substratum of Southern society, and the general gloom both inside and outside the mansion, as well as the crucial details of the placement of the crypt underneath the house, which leads Madeline's muffled sounds of struggle to be arising from *below*. John Timmerman has argued that "In no other work … has Poe structured this sentience, or interconnectedness, between the physical world and mental/psychological world more powerfully and tellingly" than in "Usher."[44] In fact, Poe emphasizes the importance of the house by including the poem "The Haunted Palace" as recited by Usher in a moment of "artificial excitement," an allusion to the fact that Usher and the narrator are possibly indulging in "artificial" – i.e. narcotic – diversions. Despite Poe's reluctance to use allegory in fiction, here, as in other poems, he is clearly indulging in the equally artificial pleasure of unalloyed allegory, with an extended comparison of the face-like castle and its "monarch Thought" to Usher's mind and reason also "tottering … upon her … throne," as the narrator spells out (M 2: 406). With this embedded poem, Poe traces out the connections between house and mind in as explicit terms as possible, opening up the possibility to read the story – one one level – as a descent into madness, either on the part of Usher, or the narrator, or both, as produced by the mechanisms of denial, repression and lack of conscience that we have seen. Lindon Barrett's suggestion that reason is associated with whiteness in antebellum America opens the door to a more tacitly racialized reading of "The Haunted Palace," while Betsy Errkila explicitly sees the "hideous throng" of the poem, which invades and overcomes the reign of reason behind "the pale door," as an allusion to the American fear of insurrection by "Negroes and lower classes."[45]

Another example of the importance of the house to the unfolding of the story is the strangely large place given in the narrative to Usher's theory that the atmosphere around his

house is intimately linked to the *fungi* covering the stones of the house and the trees around it, linking all together in a close network of charged and sentient matter. This theory is interesting for several reasons. First of all, most immediately, the issue of the atmosphere around the house becomes yet another occasion to demonstrate the narrator's unreliability. He keeps insisting that Usher's theory is untrue and even beneath notice ("Such opinions need no comment, and I will make none"; M 2: 408), and yet the end of the narrative bears out Usher's version. During the final scene, the house is indeed enveloped in a thick gaseous and glowing cloud, which disappears together with the house when both sink into the tarn.

Usher's belief in the sentience of the physical matter of his mansion and tarn takes on a still more ironic significance when read in light of a culture whose laws defined some human beings as things. If we consider that African Americans were bought and sold like chattel on the premise that they were not human, the debate about Usher's belief in the consciousness of his physical environment assumes a sinister suggestiveness. It was, after all, the condition of the white Southern slaveholder to be surrounded by sentient beings whose intelligence and emotions had to be denied in order for the structure of the economy to stand.

To conclude, "The Fall of the House of Usher" is the keystone to Poe's later work. With suggestive indirection, it evokes sympathy for the sufferer of a grave injury, namely, live entombment accompanied by abandonment (conscious, in the case of the sociopathic Usher, and heedless, in the case of the "inept" narrator, as Timmerman characterizes him[46]). Like many stories of this period (including, notably, "Hop-Frog") "Usher" betrays what Gerald Kennedy has described as "potential empathy for those in bondage."[47] It is perhaps also no accident that Poe's later work *Eureka* makes a strangely moving case for the absolute equality of all souls and all animate beings as mere figments of a larger "Divine Being" into which all will one day melt ("the sense of individual identity will be gradually merged in the general consciousness"; H XVI: 314). In any case, although the narrative is dense with details

and allusions that are never *all* entirely accounted for by any single reading or interpretation, the emotional *effect* of the tale clearly depends on the horror and unease that readers are invited to feel as they discover the cruelty on which the unstable House of Usher stands.

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[1] Dennis R. Perry and Carl H. Sederholm, *Poe, "The House of Usher," and the American Gothic* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009).

[2] Darrel Abel, "A Key to the House of Usher," *Twentieth Century Interpretations of* 'The Fall of the House of Usher'*: A Collection of Critical Essays,* ed. Thomas Woodson (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1969).

[3] Jonathan Elmer, *Reading at the Social Limit: Affect, Mass Culture, and Edgar Allan Poe* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995).

[4] Lois Boe Hyslop and Francis E. Hyslop, "New Notes on Edgar Allan Poe," *Baudelaire as a Literary Critic* (University Park: Pennsylvania UP, 1964), 114-135.

[5] William Pietrykowski and Elizabeth Renker, "From Poe to Rimbaud: A Comparative View of Symbolist Poetry," *JUROS* 2 (2011), 39-47.

[6] Princess Marie Bonaparte, from *The Life and Works of Edgar Allan Poe: A Psycho-analytic Interpretation* (1933), trans. John Rodker, reprinted in *Twentieth-Century Interpretations of "The Fall of the House of Usher,"* ed. Thomas Woodson (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall, Inc., 1969).

[7] D.H. Lawrence, *Studies in Classic American Literature* (1923), eds. Ezra Greenspan, Lindeth Vasey and John Worthen (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2003), 7-162. Similarly, Patrick Quinn saw incest as the secret heart of the story, proposing that the main conflict staged by the tale is "the warfare taking place in Roderick … by his consciousness against the evil of his unconscious. See Patrick F. Quinn, *The French Face of Poe* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1954), 245.

[8] G.R. Thompson, *Poe's Fiction: Romantic Irony in the Gothic Tales* (Madison, The U of Wisconsin P, 1973), 96.

[9] J.R. Hammond, *An Edgar Allan Poe Companion* (London and Basinstoke: Macmillan Press, 1981), 71.

[10] Eric W. Carlson, "Tales of Psychal Conflict: 'William Wilson' and 'The Fall of the House of Usher,'" *A Companion to Poe Studies*, ed. Eric W. Carlson (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1996), 188-208.

[11] Darrel Abel, "A Key to the House of Usher," *Twentieth Century Interpretations of* 'The Fall of the House of Usher'*: A Collection of Critical Essays,* ed. Thomas Woodson (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1969), 179.

[12] Michael J. Hoffman, "The House of Usher and Negative Romanticism," *Studies in Romanticism* 4.3 (Spring, 1965): 158-168.

[13] This is not to say that Poe never uses allegory at all. He certainly uses it in his poetry, and stories such as "The Masque of the Red Death" lend themselves well to allegorical readings, but the emotional and aesthetic effect of a tale is far more likely to be his main focus.

[14] For more on Poe's irony, see Elmer (note 2).

[15] Joseph N. Riddel, "The 'Crypt'of Edgar Poe," *boundary 2* 7.3 (Spring 1979): 117-144, 130.

[16] Harriet Hustis, "'Reading encrypted but persistent': The Gothic of Reading and Poe's 'The Fall of the House of Usher,'" *Studies in American Fiction* 27.1 (March 22, 1999): 3-20.

[17] Scott Peeples, "Poe's 'constructiveness' and 'The Fall of the House of Usher,'" *The Cambridge Companion to Edgar Allan Poe*, ed. Kevin J. Hayes (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2002), 178-190.

[18] John Carlos Rowe, "Poe, Antebellum Slavery and Modern Criticism," *Poe's Pym: Critical Explorations*, ed. Richard Kopley (Durham: Duke UP, 1992), 117.

[19] Toni Morrison, *Playing in the Dark: Whiteness and the Literary Imagination* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1992).

[20] Teresa Goddu, *Gothic America* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), 93.

[21] Lesley Ginsberg, "Slavery and the Gothic Horror of Poe's 'The Black Cat,'" *American Gothic: New Interventions in a National Narrative*, eds. Robert K. Martin & Eric Savoy, (Iowa City: Iowa UP. 1889), 99-128, 123.

[22] See Dana D. Nelson, *The Word in Black and White: Reading "Race" in American Literature, 1638-1867* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1997), for a discussion of this decades-long debate.

[23] Whalen, Terence. *Edgar Allan Poe and the Masses: The Political Economy of Literature in Antebellum America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999).

[24] John Carlos Rowe, "Edgar Allan Poe's Imperial Fantasy and the American Frontier," *Romancing the Shadow: Poe and Race* (Oxford, Oxford UP, 2001), 75-105, p. 100.

[25] Leland S. Person, "Poe's Philosophy of Amalgamation: Reading Racism in the Tales," Ibid., 205-224, 207.

[26] Sam Worley, "*The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym* and the Ideology of Slavery," *ESQ* 40, (1994), 219-50, 222.

[27] George Fitzhugh, *Cannibals All! Or Slaves Without Masters*, Richmond, A. Morris, 1857. http://www.gutenberg.org/files/35481/35481-h/35481-h.htm#CHAPTER_XXXII. Accessed July 4, 2017.

[28] Harriet Beecher Stowe, *Uncle Tom's Cabin,* Norton Critical Edition, ed. Elizabeth Ammons (New York: W.W. Norton, 1994), 7.

[29] https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/aia/part4/4h3106t.html. Accessed Dec. 8, 2017.

[30] Toni Morrison, "Melville and the Language of Denial," *The Nation* 27 January 2014. https://www.thenation.com/article/melville-and-language-denial/ Accessed Dec. 8, 2017.

[31] See, for example, J. Gerald Kennedy's short overview of these approaches in *Strange Nation: Literary Nationalism and Cultural Conflict in the Age of Poe* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2016), 67.

[32] Harry Levin, *The Power of Blackness: Hawthorne, Poe, Melville* (New York: Vintage Books, 1960), 160-161.

[33] Maurice S. Lee, "Absolute Poe," Slavery, Philosophy, and American Literature, 1830-1860 (Cambridge, Cambridge UP, 2005), 23. Stephen Dougherty has also recently read the tale as a "nightmarish prophecy of the of the cultural and political defeat of American slave society," only with a Foucaultian focus on "modern, bourgeois identity" and miscegenation, in "Foucault in the House of Usher: Some Historical Permutations in Poe's Gothic," *Papers on Language & Literature* 37.1 (2001), 19.

[34] At least one Northern newspaper took Nat Turner's revolt as the beginning of the end for the South, writing dramatically that "the first drops of blood, which are but the prelude to a deluge from the gathering clouds, have fallen" (*The Liberator*, Boston, 3 September 1831). The writer warns that the entire country will be the scene of bloodshed and righteous vengeance if slaves are not immediately freed, and that more revolts like Turner's will naturally follow: "Woe to this guilty land, unless she speedily repents of her evil doings! The blood of millions of her sons cried aloud for redress! IMMEDIATE EMANCIPATION can alone save her from the vengeance of Heaven" (reprinted in Henry Irving Tragle, *The Southampton Slave Revolt of 1831: A Compilation of Source Material* [Amherst: The University of Massachusetts Press, 1971], 64). My source for the implications of the combustible dungeon is G.R. Thompson, *Poe's Fiction,* p. 94. For my own discussion of this, see *The Poetics and Politics of the American Gothic* (Surrey and Burlington: Ashgate, 2010), 51.

[35] Orlando Patterson, *Slavery and Social Death: A Comparative Study* (Harvard, Harvard UP, 1985).

[36] Although this review was anonymous, and Thomas Mabbott attributes it to someone else, G. R. Thompson has argued that it is "almost certainly" written by Poe, and the editors of the Library of America edition of Poe's essays and reviews list it as his.

[37] An excellent discussion of conscience in antebellum literature is Richard H. Brodhead, in "Sparing the Rod: Discipline and Fiction in Antebellum America," *Representations* 21 (Winter 1988): 67-96, where he quotes an antebellum guidebook in which the conscience is described as something that seems uncanny for children: "another than themselves, and yet themselves" (79).

[38] Francis Wayland, *The Elements of Moral Science,* ed. Joseph Blau (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1963), 49.

[39] J. Gerald Kennedy even muses that "without employment or income, Poe must nevertheless have drawn occasional, ironic comparisons between his circumstances and those of the slave." In "A Brief Biography," *A Historical Guide to Edgar Allan Poe,* ed. J. Gerald Kennedy (Oxford, Oxford UP, 2001), 19-59, 31.

[40] Most notably, Jean Epstein's *La Chute de la maison Usher* (1928).

[41] Madeline's role as embodiment of repressed conscience is also paralleled by similar characters in other Poe stories, such as, William Wilson's double, already discussed, or the "mummer" who stands in the shadow of the "ebony clock" (one more allusion to the black slave population of the South?) in "The Masque of the Red Death," and causes the death of Prince Prospero, who had also tried to lock his people's suffering outside his castle gates and mask the sound with revels. All these figures function as personifications of stifled conscience returning to exact justice. For a discussion of Southern anxieties about black violence and revenge, see Elizabeth Young, *Black Frankenstein: The Making of an American Metaphor* (New York, New York Press, 2008).

[42] Joan Dayan, "Amorous Bondage: Poe, Ladies, and Slaves," *The American Face of Edgar Allan Poe,* ed. Shawn Rosenheim and Stephen Rachman (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995).

[43] See David Leverenz, "Poe and Gentry Virginia," *The American Face of Poe* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1995), 210-236, 221.

[44] John H. Timmerman, "House of Mirrors: Edgar Allan Poe's 'The Fall of the House of Usher,'" *Edgar Allan Poe's "The Tell-Tale Heart" and Other Stories*, ed. Harold Bloom (New York: Infobase Publishing, 2009), 159-172, 163.

[45] Lindon Barrett, "Presence of Mind," 172; Betsy Errkila, "The Poetics of Whiteness: Poe and the Racial Imaginary," *Romancing the Shadow: Poe and Race,* ed. Gerald Kennedy and Liliane Weissberg (Oxford, Oxford UP, 2001), 41-74, 58.

[46] Timmerman, 160.

[47] J. Gerald Kennedy, "'Trust No Man': Poe, Douglass, and the Culture of Slavery," *Romancing the Shadow: Poe and Race*, eds. Gerald Kennedy and Liliane Weissberg (New York: Oxford UP, 2001), 225-258, 237.