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. . . forms that no man can discover
For the tears that drip all over . . .
Poe, "Dream-Land"

POE'S AESTHETIC DISCOURSE registers a crisis of masculine literary sentiment sparked by the influx of women poets to the American marketplace in the 1830s and '40s. At this time, white, middle-class women, supposed embodiments of the emotions associated with privatized domestic life, gained greater sanction not only to write, but also to publish in the most "intimate" of forms, lyric poetry. "The whole tendency of the age is Magazine-ward," Poe proclaims in 1846, and women poets were invited to cultivate this potentially wayward public medium with genteel literary sentiments (*Marginalia* 139). Concerned that this emerging group might be more constitutionally suited to write poetry than they, male writers sought to define a specifically masculine literary sensibility. Stabilizing the shifting ground of aesthetic authority required delicacy, however, in order not to alienate female readers; for just as women entered the market in unprecedented numbers as producers of literature, they were also gaining influence as a powerful class of literary consumers.[1]

Poe's solution to the dilemma of women's encroachment in the literary domain did not lie in a simple dismissal of female achievement, because women's attention, both personal and literary, was extremely

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important to his poetic practices. Instead, he imagined women poets in ways that seek to reconcile their multiple roles: muse, literary competitor, and audience for his own poetry. While designating women as the "natural" site of poetic utterance, Poe also argues that poetic "truth" lies in a theatrical performance of the feminine.[2] Identifying women poets with his poetic images of women, Poe enacts a drama of evacuation within his poems in which he drains women of their poetic potency while claiming that the transfer of powers is in the spirit of feminine mimicry. For an audience of women poets, Poe himself performs a "feminine" poetry which simultaneously mirrors and upstages their own practices. He extends and consolidates these aesthetic claims in his criticism, an almost exclusively male genre in the 1840s. Reappraising the impact of these forgotten women poets upon a canonical figure presents new ways to understand the work of canonical writers, the canonization process, and the structure and habits of American literary criticism.[3]

Imagining women as the power generators of poetic discourse, Poe's critical interest in their work is extensive and sustained. Although his reviews of women poets outnumber those of male poets in his later criticism, they are rarely treated in studies of his poetics.[4] When not ignored altogether, these frequently positive reviews are usually dismissed as either a display of vapid gallantry or an aberration in taste bearing little relation to his more serious considerations of male peers such as Hawthorne and Longfellow. In his own time, however, Poe was considered a leading—and by far the most rigorous—critic of female writers, discriminating at one point between "poetesses (an absurd but necessary word)," and female poets worthy of admiration and serious critique (*Marginalia* 58–59). To the second category belonged writers like Frances Sargent Osgood, Sarah Helen Whitman, Elizabeth Barrett, Amelia Welby, and Elizabeth Oakes Smith. In a review of Barrett's *Drama of Exile*, Poe laments that "the inherent chivalry of the critical man" results in the "unhappy lot of the authoress to be subjected, time after time, to the downright degradation of mere puffery" (*Complete* 12: 1). Poe promises, in contrast, to pay Barrett the respect of telling her "the truth" about her work (2). While proving Poe's critical pronouncements "sincere" at any juncture would be a hopeless task, his critical treatment of women poets is comparable to that of their male counterparts.

Poe's critical pronouncements on women's poetry are torn between delimiting a separate character for female genius and rewarding poet-

esses by welcoming them into the male world of the "poet." Poe trounces anthologist Rufus Griswold, for example, for elevating "aristocrats" over "poets" in his *Poets and Poetry of America*, and for relegating certain worthy writers, men and women alike, to the desultory category of "various authors." Poe laments the disservice done to poets such as Sarah Josepha Hale, Horace Greeley, John Quincy Adams, and Frances Osgood ("one of our sweetest of poetesses") by "throwing openly the charge of their incompetency to sustain the name of Poets, and implying that they were only occasional scribblers[.] (This and of such men, is again from Rufus Wilmot Griswold!)" (*Complete* 11: 241). More than once, Poe includes women, and even "poetesses," under the rubric of "such men" and "Poets." He compares Elizabeth Barrett favorably to Tennyson; he also says that "The Sinless Child" demonstrates that its creator, Elizabeth Oakes Smith, had the potential, even if she lacked the discipline, to have written "one of the best, if not the very best of American poems" (*Complete* 12: 16; 13: 85).

While Poe often measures everyone against a single aesthetic standard, he also attributes superior artistic powers to the woman poet. He defends Maria Brooks against Charles Lamb's claim that her poem "Zóphiël" was so good that a woman could not have written it:

> As for Lamb's pert query—"was there ever a woman capable of writing such a poem?"—it merely proves that Lamb had little understanding of the true Nature of Poets—which, appealing to our sense of Beauty, is, in its very essence, feminine. If the greatest poems have not been written by women, it is because the greatest poems have not been written at all. (*Collected Writings* 358)

For Poe, the "true" "essence" of poetry is its "feminine" appeal to the reader's aesthetic sense. Designated as the natural location of feminine Beauty, women possess an innate capacity for poetic expression. While both Lamb and Poe were certainly familiar with the romantic commonplace that poetic accomplishment in men arises from their feminine aspect, Poe perceives a new dilemma: if one accepts a female claim to poetic authorship, one must recognize that women ostensibly contain more of that feminine element from which poetry emerges than men.[5]

Rufus Griswold tries to work through this problem in the introduction to his popular anthology *The Female Poets and Poetry of America*

(an 1848 sequel to *Poets and Poetry of America* that newly segregates women poets in a separate volume—an organizational scheme which itself indicates male anxiety over female poetic achievement): "It does not follow, because the most essential genius in men is marked by qualities which we may call feminine, that such qualities when found in female writers have any certain or just relation to mental superiority. The conditions of aesthetic ability in the two sexes are probably distinct, or even opposite" (16). While Griswold's formulation reserves the domain of the feminine for the male writer, elsewhere he insists that the woman writer should emanate a pure essence of femininity, an accomplishment belonging preeminently to Frances Sargent Osgood: "All that was in her life was womanly, 'pure womanly,' and so is all in the undying words she left us. This is her distinction" (qtd. in Hewitt 16). In Griswold's aesthetic hierarchy, this ultrafeminine poetry takes a diminutive second place to men's accomplishments. His writings thus register an irreconcilable contradiction: if the feminine is the indispensable ingredient in poetry, then why isn't women's poetry, which supposedly contains a purer essence of femininity, superior to that of men?

This potential threat to male poetic accomplishment was partially neutralized through a frequent identification of antebellum women with poetic "song": light, spontaneous-seeming amateur verse that "elevates" the reader's taste in preparation for more serious forms of literature. While feminine sensibility infused men's intellects, it resided in women's hearts, from which poetry emanated as naturally as a heartbeat (DeJong, "Fair" 269). Critic George William Curtis says, for example, that Sarah Helen Whitman's poetry exudes "pure and holy and feminine feeling, as if the singer's heart were a harp so delicate that even chasing sun and shadow swept it into music" (qtd. in Whitman, *Hours* x).[6] Women poets were frequently characterized as fonts of authentic, unmediated emotion. The lyric, therefore, was the privileged vehicle for female poetic expression; however, because women's song was a natural extension of womanhood, by definition it was not art.

For both Poe and his contemporaries, then, female verse inextricably linked the personal and the poetic, and the physical body and poetic form: Poe goes so far as to say at one point that "a woman and her book are identical" (*Complete* 12: 1). But for Poe, more than other purveyors of female verse such as Griswold, a woman's duplication of her book may be construed doubly: her book may record the expres-

sions of the heart, or the heart may also lend itself to the expressions of the book. In a review of Frances Osgood's "Elfrida, a Dramatic Poem, in Five Acts," Poe celebrates this transitive relation: "There is a fine feeling blending [sic] of the poetry of passion and the passion of poetry" (*Complete* 13: 110). Emphasizing the harp over the heart in the conventional formulation of female poetic ability, Poe highlights the natural capacity of women to produce art. If women and poems are equally sources of beauty, then the woman poet displays artful rather than artless emotions. Thus, while much literary commentary of the period stressed the naturalness of women's poetic utterance, Poe emphasized the female poet's natural capacity for the artistic. This difference helps explain Poe's broad appeal for the women poets of his generation, who, regardless of self-effacing proclamations, energetically sought fame and literary acclaim.

Poe's theory of female artistry emphasizes women's dramatic abilities: if the body is drama's primary instrument, and women's bodies are naturally artistic, then women must make exceptional actors. For Poe (whose mother was a successful actress and his father a failure upon the stage), women possessed an uncanny ability to imbue their poems with the aesthetic impression of an emotional presence which was often emphatically not their own. Poe's association of the dramatic with both the woman and the poet is clear in a review of a performance by actress Anna Cora Mowatt, whom he greatly admired: "her seemingly impulsive gestures spoke in loud terms of the woman of genius—of the poet deeply imbued with the truest sentiment of the beauty of motion" (*Complete* 12: 187–88). Mowatt is admirable not because she is naturally impulsive, but because she can *feign* spontaneity so convincingly. Poe's syntax equates acting with both the woman of genius and the poet, implying that male poets must transform themselves into theatrical women if they wish to be poetic geniuses.

This homogeneous relation between women and art inevitably produces the dramatic lyric, a sincere form of theater, and Poe praised women's dramatic lyric performances as well. He voiced particular enthusiasm for "Lady Geraldine's Courtship" by Elizabeth Barrett, spoken in the voice of a male poet who has fallen in love with an aristocratic woman; an elegy by Amelia Welby, written from the point of view of a young man who mourns the death of his wife, and Elizabeth Oakes Smith's "The Sinless Child," a story of a modern, blameless "Eva" told

in the third person. All the poems evoke an author figure obliquely, as the object of the narrative rather than the speaking subject. Any strictly autobiographical reading is impossible, even while autobiographical speculation is encouraged. For Poe, the woman was the ultimate poet, or poem. The seamless performance, the very difficulty in distinguishing the artist from the production, or the woman from her role as artist, is the sign of poetic genius.

Poe participated in public literary romances with two of the poets he esteemed, Sarah Helen Whitman and Frances Sargent Osgood, because he valued their status as embodiments of poetic sentiment. This formulation counters the more familiar view that he flattered their poetry because he was blinded by their personal charms. Exchanging love poems with Whitman and Osgood in the pages of the literary journals and newspapers of the late 1840s, Poe participated in full-scale dramatic productions of personal life. Of Anna Blackwell Poe inquires: "Do you know Mrs. Whitman? I feel deep interest in her poetry and character. . . . Her poetry is, beyond question, *poetry*—instinct with genius" (qtd. in Ticknor 49). Due to the inextricable link between female "character" and poetry, Poe's poetic romances generate romantic poetry: he engages Beauty in dialogue in hopes of absorbing some of its power.

Of all the women poets, Frances Osgood, with whom Poe carried on a literary flirtation in the pages of the *Broadway Journal* while he was editor, symbolized poetry incarnate: "Mrs. Osgood was born a poetess only—it is not in her nature to be anything else. Her personal, not less than her literary character and existence are one perpetual poem" (*Complete* 13: 105). For Poe, Osgood was so poetic that she was incapable of writing anything else, namely any species of prose:

> She begins with a desperate effort at being sedate—that is to say, sufficiently prosaic and matter-of-fact for the purpose of a legend or an essay; but in a few sentences we behold uprising the leaven of the unrighteousness of the muse; then, after some flourishes and futile attempts at repression, a scrap of verse renders itself manifest; then another and another; then comes a poem outright, and then another and another and another, with little odd batches of prose in between, until at length the mask is thrown fairly off, and far away, and the whole article—*sings*. (*Complete* 15: 104)

In an ironic reversal, the "mask" of prose, associated with the real (the "prosaic"), is thrown off to expose the more artful genre, which is Osgood's true form of expression. Combining aspects of both genius and muse, Poe posits Osgood as a passive creator, the fecund site where wild poetry breeds and escapes into the world, even against her will. However, "the warm *abandonnement* of her style," which makes her the visible manifestation of poetic process, prevents her from becoming a premier poet. Her amateurism reconfirms a poetry of presence, never to be matched by poetic output. With "more industry, more method, more definite purpose, more ambition," Mrs. Osgood "might have written better poems; but the chances are that she would have failed in conveying so vivid and so just an idea of her powers as a poet" (*Complete* 13: 175). While Osgood's amorphous relation to poetry relegates her to the realm of eternal amateur, her "astonishing facility" also renders her capable of emitting poetry in any vein, and of imitating the signature verse of another. Poe took Osgood's talent so much to heart that, when he felt incapable of producing a new poem to read before the Boston Lyceum, he asked her to write "a poem that shall be equal to my reputation" (qtd. in Silverman 286).

By emphasizing Osgood's incompleteness as a poet, Poe creates a space for himself to finish what she so energetically starts. Osgood's work only "affords us glimpses . . . of a capacity for accomplishing what she has not accomplished and in all probability never will" (*Complete* 13: 176). The ambiguous phrasing suggests that Osgood affords Poe glimpses of his own capacity for accomplishing what remains a mirage in her own work. Poe imagined women poets as sites of poetic ore that he might mine, a theme that is familiar from his poems and tales, which often take as their source and center the death of a beautiful young woman. J. Gerald Kennedy has said that "in calling poetry the 'rhythmical creation of beauty,' and then designating the death of a *beautiful woman* as the most poetical of topics, Poe established an implicit metaphorical relationship between the death of beauty and poetic texts" that "dramatize[s] the writer's problematic relationship" to his work (75). The "metaphorical relationship" is more properly between the death of a beautiful woman and Poe's generation of a poetic text. This equivalence implies a convertibility between the terms: not only do poetic texts thematize the deaths of beautiful women, but beautiful women generate poetic texts. Poe's poems dramatize the writer's rela-

tion to women poets by acting out the transfer of energy from female poetic wellsprings to his own poems.[7] Poe himself encouraged a tendency among his critics, which Kennedy's formulation exemplifies, to read women symbolically. Draining women of substance in his poems, encouraging them to stand as markers for other things, Poe transforms his all-too-present female poetic rivals into marmoreal emblems, momentarily quieted so that his own work might take center stage.

Rather than rejecting the feminine, Poe becomes an expert in the field, out-feminizing the feminine in a masculine rendition that inverts female poetic practice and thus exoticizes the banal performativity of the female poet. Countering a poetry of presence, Poe roots his alternative poetics in a drama of evacuation, which takes as its explicit subject the process of conversion that makes a woman's poem into a man's. "To Helen," Poe's funereal portrait of Sarah Helen Whitman, "clad all in white, upon a violet bank," celebrates the "poetry of [her] presence" even while highlighting its conversion to the presence of his poem (*Collected Works* 443). In the initial image of Whitman among her flowery creations ("roses that grew in an enchanted garden"), poet and poems, equally embodied, share one landscape: "I saw thee half reclining; while the moon / Fell on the upturn'd faces of the roses, / And on thine own, upturn'd—alas, in sorrow!" Almost immediately, however, the speaker sees the roses die of an excess of sameness: even their odors "died in the arms of the adoring airs." The speaker dismantles both the landscape ("in an instant, all things disappeared") and Whitman ("thou, a ghost amid the entombing trees / Didst glide away") until "*Only thine eyes remained.*" Her eyes—"two sweetly scintillant Venuses, unextinguished by the sun"—stay behind because they serve as the illuminating force for the speaker's poetic landscape. The juxtaposition of the lingering eye-stars and the departed Whitman recalls the need for the integrity of even a ghostlike body, returning the reader to the recalcitrant problem of Poe's poetic dilemma: he needs her to stay, in order to provide the materials for his poem, and he needs her to go in order to make his poem anew.

Poe's evacuative aesthetic is most clearly propounded, as well as performed, in "The Raven" and its critical companion piece, "The Philosophy of Composition." The pairing of poem and critique resonates with Poe's attempts to elaborate a poetics of absence. While "The Philosophy of Composition" works as an extension of the poem it interprets (and I

will discuss this effect presently), "The Raven" serves as a study of composition, particularly as it relates to the interplay of gender and genre. Poe explores issues of feminine influence within the poem by working from an identifiable female rhythmic prototype, "Lady Geraldine's Courtship" by Elizabeth Barrett.[8] Highlighting her influence, Poe dedicated his volume *The Raven and Other Poems* (1845) to Barrett. He also encouraged readers to compare his poem with its most obvious precursor by publishing a review of Barrett's *Drama of Exile* in January 1845, shortly before the first publication of "The Raven," which pays special attention to "Lady Geraldine's Courtship":

> With the exception of Tennyson's "Locksley Hall," we have never perused a poem combining so much of the fiercest passion with so much of the most ethereal fancy, as the "Lady Geraldine's Courtship," of Miss Barrett. We are forced to admit, however, that the latter work is a very palpable imitation of the former, which it surpasses in plot or rather in thesis, as much as it falls below it in artistical management, and a certain calm energy—lustrous and indomitable—such as we might imagine in a broad river of molten gold. (*Complete* 12: 16)

The dueling referential "its" contribute to the reader's uncertainty about what status "the palpable imitation" holds, and which qualities adhere to the original and which to the copy. By highlighting Barrett's derivative qualities shortly before he presents his own imitation of her poem, Poe demonstrates his solidarity with a second-comer and consolidates his identification with the female poet seeking to establish legitimacy within a male tradition.

Taken together, the two poems work as variations upon a theme, encouraging a contemplation of the differences between Barrett and Poe, and, more broadly, between models of female and male poetic achievement. A comparison of just two lines highlights this process:

> Barrett: With a murmurous stir uncertain, in the air, the purple curtain
> Swelleth in and swelleth out around her motionless pale brows. (Browning 105)
> Poe: And the silken sad, uncertain rustling of each purple curtain

> Thrilled me—filled me with fantastic terrors never felt before. (*Collected Works* 364)

In both poems, a male poet speaks of his unattainable love. However, while Barrett's poet records his close observation of Lady Geraldine's queenly presence, framed and enhanced by the swelling curtains, which register her unspoken passion, Poe's poet notes his lover's absence in passing, and then shifts to an observation of his own sensations about the curtains. While thrushes and songbirds, emblems of poetic musicality, fill Barrett's lines, Poe populates his poem with a single "croaking" bird that can only repeat human words learned from its previous owner. Even this scant comparison suggests that "The Raven" parodies its own reliance upon imitation of a feminine precursor, and asserts itself as original by highlighting its mirror-like reflexivity.

Poe also leaves traces within his poem to suggest that he enacts a symbiotic—or, with the presence of the scavenger bird, an explicitly parasitic—model of creation in "The Raven"'s composition. Aligned with the raven, the poet-speaker replaces female inspiration by drawing from it. Whereas the beautiful woman inspires the poem, her evacuation is prerequisite to its existence. Contemplating the memory of his departed loved one, the speaker sits in the velvet chair that was her habitual resting place in order to compose his poem: "This and more I sat divining, with my head at ease reclining / On the cushion's velvet lining that the lamp-light gloated o'er, / But whose velvet violet lining with the lamp-light gloating o'er, / *She* shall press, ah, nevermore!" (368). Not only does Lenore's absence inspire the poet to link "fancy unto fancy," but he literally occupies her vacated space while composing his poetic tribute. The speaker thus underscores rather than hides the fact that Lenore's death provides him with an opportunity for poetic generation.

Caught in an insoluble dilemma, the speaker cannot completely erase Lenore and still retain the poem's reason for being: the elegiac occasion of "*Mournful and Never-ending Remembrance*" ("Philosophy" 373). He professes his need to remember Lenore, the center and source of his imagining, even while asserting his need to forget her in order to assert his poetic primacy. As a result, the speaker simultaneously asserts his desire to forget and stimulates his desire in remembering by repeating

the tantalizing word Lenore, an ambivalent marker for a banished presence, or a presence of banishment: "'Respite—respite and nepenthe from thy memories of Lenore; / Quaff, oh quaff this kind nepenthe and forget this lost Lenore.' / Quoth the Raven 'Nevermore'" (*Collected Works* 368; 82–84).[9]

Highlighting his appropriation of the feminine, the speaker encourages readers to ponder the implications of an aesthetic that foregrounds its exploitative tendencies. Although in "The Philosophy of Composition" Poe states that the tone of "The Raven" is characterized by sadness, this contemplation of "the death of a beautiful woman" ultimately results in vicarious titillation, offering a rare opportunity to experience "the most delicious because the most intolerable of sorrow" ("Philosophy" 369). The speaker promotes himself to the reader as an expert on suffering who has achieved heightened sensibility through Lenore's death, which provides him with an occasion not only to experience, but also to give guided tours through "fantastic terrors never felt before." The speaker stresses the ways that his poem provides an occasion for novel entertainment: "For we cannot help agreeing that no living human being / Ever yet was blessed with seeing bird above his chamber door— / Bird or beast upon the sculptured bust above his chamber door, / With such name as "Nevermore" (367; 51–54). The collective pronoun aligns the speaker with the reader in admiration of his brand-new, never-before-seen amalgamation. The poet thus makes himself into an observer of his own performance who celebrates its vicarious qualities as the basis of readerly identification. At a dramatic remove from the incident of even a fictional lover's death, the narrative is concerned with the thrill that the theatrical portrayal of a loss would evoke in an audience, to which the speaker himself belongs. Voyeur to the speaker's preoccupation with his own sensation, the reader never gains insight into the memory of a dead lover, unless she understands the speaker's narcissistic aestheticization of grief as an attempt to block the memory of the loved one. Against the backdrop of a feminine poetics imbued with heartfelt emotion, Poe's speaker openly disowns his grief, transforming it into a show for the viewer's pleasure.

The vicarious quality of Poe's poetry was not lost upon his contemporaries. Some readers even literalized their impressions, accusing Poe of killing his wife in order to have a fitly mournful subject for "The

Raven." With "passions controlled by the presence of art until they resembled sculptured flame," according to one published accusation, Poe "deliberately sought [Virginia's] death that he might embalm her memory in immortal dirges" (qtd. in Whitman, *Edgar* 42–43). This peculiar type of character assault, which hovered around Poe, found its starting point in his own poems, which encouraged scandalous readerly fantasies. Such accusations ignore the distinction between material and poetic worlds that underpins the poetic conflation. In "The Raven," as in other poems ("Ulalume," "The Sleeper"), a dead woman stands in for a publicized robbery of feminine forms. Not surprisingly, a woman poet, Sarah Helen Whitman, recognized this distinction and defended Poe against the charge of wife-killing in the name of art: "A serious objection to this ingenious theory may perhaps be found in the 'refractory fact' that the poem was published more than a year before the event [Virginia's death] which these persons assume it was intended to commemorate" (*Edgar* 42–43). Whitman's eloquent and influential defense testifies to the paradoxical power of Poe's poetic crime scenes to mobilize female sympathy.[10]

Underscoring its recycled qualities and proudly confessing its poetic secondariness, "The Raven" echoes "Lady Geraldine's Courtship" as well as any number of other precursors. While I have focused on this single pairing, Poe frequently embeds identifiable fragments or aspects of poems written by women within his own forms. In "Ulalume," the speaker replicates the plot of Elizabeth Oakes Smith's "The Summons Answered," in which a reveler arrives unwittingly at his wife's tomb. Buford Jones and Kent Ljungquist have recently argued that Frances Osgood's "The Life Voyage" is a model for Poe's "Annabel Lee" (275–80).[11] Contemporaries would have been able to identify many of these "plagiarisms," particularly if they were part of a select group who followed each other's work in the literary journals. Wearing rather than hiding his female influence, Poe generates a masculine poetics of flattery that particularly appeals to an audience of female poets.

There is substantial evidence to support the hypothesis of Poe's special appeal for women poets, particularly in the context of the New York literary salons of the mid 1840s where he recited "The Raven" and other poems (Silverman 280). Elizabeth Oakes Smith, a poet who frequented the salons, recalls the special attraction Poe held for women:

> He did not affect the society of men, rather that of highly intellectual women with whom he liked to fall into a sort of eloquent monologue, half dream, half poetry. Men were intolerant of all this, but women fell under his fascination, and listened in silence. (Smith 88)

Though women imagined themselves as Poe's captive audience, they were voluble in describing the event. Their fascination lies in the ways that his poetic self-presentation mirrors their own. Elizabeth Barrett reportedly told Frances Osgood that "it was worth a trip to New York to see Poe's 'wild eyes flash through tears' when he read Barrett's poems" (qtd. in Silverman 287). The image of Barrett coming from afar to listen to her own verse emerge from Poe's mouth is a decidedly narcissistic fantasy, and women also analyzed this appeal. Smith remarked upon Poe's "chameleon-like temperament, by which he assimilated to those with whom he associated, and thus each analyzer of Poe gives us a glimpse of his own idiosyncrasies rather than a revelation of this unique wonderful creation" (qtd. in Ljungquist and Nickels 243).

Women poets confirm Poe's poetry as a powerful site of female identification by making him over to look like themselves. The mirror-like qualities of his poems inspired reciprocity, generating echoic responses in his female contemporaries. Among others, both Osgood and Whitman wrote elegies to Israfel, the angelic poet of Poe's own verse (Osgood 465–66; Hewitt 163–64). Like his poetic sisters' harp-like hearts, Israfel's "heart-strings were a lute." However, the poet who speaks in Poe's poem is *not* Israfel, but an earthly poet who laments his distance from that ideal: "If I could dwell / Where Israfe l / Hath dwelt, and he where I, / He might not sing so wildly well / A mortal melody, / While a bolder note than this might swell / From my lyre within the sky" (*Collected Works* 175–77). In making Poe into Israfel, the women poets render him closer to the ideal of the Poetess whose heartstrings sing effortlessly. This conversion process suggests that they read his poetic performances of writerly and emotional blockage—one speaker's vicarious detachment in "The Raven," another speaker's anxious dismemberment of Helen—as a plea for female assistance.

Just as he once asked Frances Osgood to write his poem, Poe calls upon the loquacity of the poetess to give voice to his unspoken feel-

ings, which, he implies, are also her own. Smith records just such a moment:

> I noted his [Poe's] delicate organization—the white, fine skin of a face that had upon it an expression of questioning like that of a child, a shade of anxiety, a touch of awe, of sadness; a look out of the large, clear eyes of intense solitude. I felt a painful sympathy for him, just as one would feel for a bright, overthoughtful child. I said at once: "Ah, Mr. Poe, this country affords no arena for those who live to dream." (116–17)

Convinced that she has read his expression properly, Smith gives sympathetic voice to his imagined plight. She and Poe take their cues in this mutual performance from Poe's poetry. Women feel moved to translate for the angelic Israfel whose "voice, all mute" cannot be discerned by less ethereal beings. But their voluble assistance only reaffirms Poe's need to render the ladies mute in turn. Together they participate in a dynamics of reciprocal translation in which women poets give voice to Poe's imagined suffering (which resembles their own), and Poe's lyric personae speak for the mute (sleeping, dead) women in their poems.

Poe's poetry displaces women's poetry by offering a masculine rendition of the feminine which draws attention to its own "crime" by encasing the evidence, the female corpse, within the poem that has absorbed the female spirit. Furthermore, these poems take as their primary audience the "poetesses" whose materials they borrow. Critics have been too quick to diagnose Poe in the terms he himself presented in his poetic self-portrait of an isolated, tortured artist, cast out from society, plagued by loss, deprived of a loving woman's nurture. In fact, Poe was one of the most successful among his contemporaries in enlisting the attention of accomplished women, in part because of the appeal of this pathetic self-portrayal. Orphaned as an infant, Poe casts himself as a sufferer of incurable loss; his perpetual mourning fuels his spiritual quests to the netherworld in search of female solace beyond the grave. Ironically, Poe's inconsolable mourning serves as a powerful draw for female sympathy: his primary audience consists of women who are moved at the plight of men who are unloved by women. Some of the seemingly more peculiar traits of Poe's poetry are variations on conventional themes in American Victorian poetry, particularly in the poetry

of women, who were most intimately associated with the period's poetic practice. Rather than evidence of social isolation, the themes in Poe's poetry are signs of cultural engagement, an aspect of Poe's work that is just beginning to receive significant amounts of attention.[12]

If within his poetry Poe establishes a cross-gendered identification with women poets even as he attempts to upstage them, in his critical essays he negates that relation in order to establish an affective tie with the "race of critics" who "are masculine—men" (*Complete* 12: 1). Poe hyper-masculinizes the traditionally masculine genre of the critical essay, advertising its analytical hold over the poetic realm of feminine feeling. His titles alone drive home this point: "The Rationale of Verse," "The Poetic Principle," and "The Philosophy of Composition" all celebrate the critic's ability to arrive at distilled truths of art which are invisible to readers and common authors alike. This gesture towards dominating the terrain of poetry with an alien rhetorical force, however, becomes Poe's attempt to extend his poetic claims by expanding his performance of emotional distance via the poetic feature of voice. Linked to his lyric speakers by the power of authorial association, Poe's critical voice offers a lens through which to gaze at the agony of the poet from a distance enforced not by lack of feeling, but by excess.[13] In Poe's critical scenario, a tortured soul finds relief in the realm of thought, but blankly recalls, like one in shock, the source of pain: the poem. This overlay of ironic distance upon an image of a suffering soul creates a model of emotional suppression, a powerful and enduring constellation signifying masculine literary sentiment that Poe helped to organize. Rather than a separate genre, Poe's essays are more accurately demonstrations of poetic mastery which seek to relocate the ground of affective authenticity from the heart of the poetess to the page of the critical essay.[14]

As the companion piece to "The Raven," "The Philosophy of Composition" offers the clearest example of this process. Published in *Graham's Magazine* in April 1846, the essay rode the wave of the poem's tremendous success. Poe reminds his readers that he is the author of the poem that many had found haunting, even as he adopts an incongruous critical voice that offers to "render it manifest that no one point in the poem's composition is referable to either accident or intuition" (365).[15] Numerous people who had heard one of Poe's many public readings of the poem had testified to the uncanny quality of the event; by revealing

that impression to be a mere product of the reader's imagination, perhaps Poe hoped to create a second sensation. The vast difference between Poe's critical and poetic voices enhances the mystique of Poe the author, for in trying to reconcile the disparity between the essay and the poem, readers must posit an author outside the two texts who stands behind both.

Overdubbing the voice of the young scholar, Poe's philosopher voice displays and disowns the emotions of his poem's speaker, who has already displayed them to the poem's readers. While the essay purports to tell the tale of the poem's purely rational construction—"which proceeded, step by step, to its completion with the rigid consequence of a mathematical problem"—more accurately, the critic decomposes the poem into its elements, exposing in the process the fictional nature of the poem's speaker ("Philosophy" 365). "Commencing with a consideration of an effect," Poe relocates the source of melancholy regret from the poem's speaker to a universal reader who would agree that "the death . . . of a beautiful woman is unquestionably, the most poetical topic in the world—and equally is it beyond doubt that the lips best suited for such a topic are those of a bereaved lover" (364, 369). Ironically, however, this disavowal of sentiment closes the distance between Poe, the living breathing poet, and the "*Mournful and Never-ending Remembrance*" evoked in the poem (373). For once the speaker is gone, who else but Poe might own "the lips . . . of a bereaved lover"?

Poe contrasts this emotionally detached state—which paradoxically signifies greater emotional authenticity—favorably against that of other poets who make claims to "ecstatic intuition," a description that recalls his profile of Fanny Osgood and other "poetesses." Like a showman, Poe opens the curtains on the theatricality of lyric: "Most writers—poets in especial—prefer having it understood that they compose by a species of fine frenzy—an ecstatic intuition—and would positively shudder at letting the public take a peep behind the scenes" (364). Reversing the feminine terms of evaluation, Poe exposes the theatricality of the poet's performance of the natural, and naturalizes theatricality as the poet's authentic environment. His gesture of sincerity is to expose their fraudulent version of it. Poe lets the public look, even stare "at the wheels and pinions—the tackle for scene-shifting—the step-ladders and demon-traps—the cock's feathers, the red paint and the black patches, which, in ninety-nine cases out of the hundred, constitute the proper-

ties of the literary *histrio*" (364–65). Whereas other poets would shrink at the idea, Poe purports to tell precisely how he composed "The Raven." Ironically, the poet's mental processes consist of nothing but a banal process of recombining clichéd images into elaborate, tantalizing new forms. Poe speaks of "originality" as an "obvious" and "easily attainable . . . source of interest" (364). Nor does he "pretend" to "originality in either the rhythm or the meter of the 'Raven'" (370). Instead, the secret of the poem's success lies in the "originality of combination" (370). Indeed, his poetic method is original only in its extreme lack of any claim to originality. Poe posits a purified theater that, in highlighting its own artifice, is more genuine than the "seemingly natural" theater of his female contemporaries. Removing the site of authenticity from the female poet's body to the masculine critical gaze, Poe engineers a critical lens that finds validity in absence and distance rather than presence and proximity.

Poe's aesthetic model methodically inverts his portrayal of his female competitors' practices. Instead of arising from the spontaneous, the mystical, and the unquantifiable, originality in verse is characterized by the crafted, the banal, and the mechanically deducible. While emotion dictates the form of women's utterance, Poe selects through analytical process the most "*universally* appreciable" focus at every stage of composition. Whereas he characterizes the poetess as a font of poetic language and feeling ("The poetess speaks because she feels, and what she feels—but what she feels is felt only by the truly poetical"), Poe starts as far away from the lyric self as possible, working backwards, not even from the poem's end, but from the "effect" he imagines that the poem might have on its readers (*Complete* 13: 115; "Philosophy" 364). The perverse opposite of those of his female contemporaries, Poe's critical practices must have instilled an odd sense of familiarity in their 180-degree difference, as if he encouraged the reader to recognize the image and the influence of the feminine in the labor he invests in reversing it.

This reversal further suggests that Poe's aesthetic system is designed to convert the poetess from the ideal producer of poetry into an ideal consumer of his own. Poe's rendition heightens the narcissistic, self-performative aspects latent in female-identified verse forms. By downplaying the relationship of the lovers within the poem, however, Poe foregrounds an intimate relationship between himself and his female

contemporaries. In "The Raven" (as well as in many of his other poems) Poe's speaker adopts the role of the feminized man that was a popular figure in the poems of his female contemporaries: the poet-speaker of "Lady Geraldine's Courtship," for example. This casting decision encourages the tendency to equate poet with poetic speaker, because, like his speakers, Poe was a male poet. He thus encourages his female contemporaries to fantasize that he is the living embodiment of their poetic image, attentive to his lover even beyond the grave. Poe must imagine readers in the image of the woman poet, the ultimate home of Beauty, when he tries to ascertain what sorts of things might be "*universally* appreciable," and arrives at the conclusion that "'the death . . . of a beautiful woman is, unquestionably, the most poetical topic in the world—and equally is it beyond doubt that the lips best suited for such a topic are those of a bereaved lover.'" This formulation makes a captive audience of one sector of Poe's literary competition. For it was undoubtedly seductive for women to imagine themselves into the position of Poe's lost love and the object of his poetic tributes. The multiple bids for the role of the inspiration of "Annabel Lee" are well-known: at least three women, two of them poets, believed the poem was written for her alone.[16] If the most poetical topic is a male lover's longing for his female lover, then women would have difficulty imagining themselves into the role of poet in Poe's poetic system with the same level of authenticity that Poe, himself a male poet, could claim. For while we have seen that Poe was particularly drawn to poems by women told from the perspective of a bereaved male lover, in his criticism, Poe naturalizes the link between himself and that figure.

Positioning women in the role of audience and himself in the role of poet with superior claims to emotional authenticity, Poe's critical essays stabilize the fluid, imitative play of cross-gendered poetic exchange. Rather than a systematic attempt to disenfranchise women poets, however, Poe's negotiations of the critical genre seek to carve out a specifically masculine poetic space. By annexing the critical essay to the "province of poetry," Poe creates a hybridized model of masculine literary sentiment. Rather than a separate sphere of discourse, his essays overlay his poetry in order to create a composite portrait of an authentic male artist. Confirming and extending this aesthetic fusion of critic and poet, influential critic (and poet) Daniel Hoffman locates the key to Poe's

artistic sensibility at the point of a generic comparison. "A remarkable achievement *in candor*," "The Philosophy of Composition" offers the second half of a confession that begins in Poe's poems (91):

> What is the relation between his claim that imagination is a rational and orderly premeditated process and his need to drape it in crepe at the bier of a beautiful woman? What is the connection but that the straitjacket method enables the poet to deal with his obsessive and inescapable subject by compelling him to think about something else, something other than the woe vibrating within him which to think of would overcome him. So the method of his art enables the madness of his matter to be spoken. (92)

"The woe vibrating within" Poe is made visible through generic juxtaposition: his critical assertions of aesthetic rigor complement and authenticate the obsessive crepe-draping of the poems. If the strength and rigidity of the "straitjacket method" betray the power of the contained emotion, then criticism is a more radical form of artistic self-containment than poetry-writing, and is thus, paradoxically, the location of authorial self-revelation.

Present in Poe but missing from his descendants is an acknowledgment of his aesthetic exchange with his female contemporaries. Following cues from Poe's essays while ignoring the evidence from his poems, critics have consolidated a tradition of Poe scholarship in which the figure of the woman poet has suffered an ever more radical absorption into the figure of the male poet. Baudelaire's mid-century interpretations of Poe have played a key role in this process. In appropriating Poe for his own poetico-critical project, Baudelaire suppresses Poe's expressions of female identification and indebtedness, while exaggerating his literary misogyny. Looking to Poe in order to ask how to write an elite poetry within a market economy, Baudelaire finds an answer in the exorcism of female influence.

In his 1856 introduction to his first volume of translations of Poe's works, Baudelaire portrays a monstrous America, founded at a point of civilizational decline that is articulated in its democratic organization, whose unchecked impulses and enormous energy find their outlet in indiscriminate productivity. In the American literary marketplace, exces-

sively prolix writers proliferate: "America babbles and rambles with an astonishing volubility. Who could count its poets? They are innumerable. Its bluestockings? They clutter the magazines" (122). Deprived of the protective milieu surrounding his aristocratic European forebearers, the great American poet confronts an innumerable throng of profit-oriented writers whose dubious poetic projects stand on equal footing with great literary works. The productivity of "the money-making author" mimics the mindless generativity of mass production and threatens to drown the true artist (Poe), adrift in the modern world.

Baudelaire finds Poe's theatrical strategies successful in combating the encroachment of literary materialists in this "maelstrom of mediocrity": Poe distinguishes himself "as a *caricature*" (122, 123). The prototype for his "charlatanry" is also its audience: the writers whom he conquers through his duplicative and dismissive play. Baudelaire contrasts the masculine artificiality of Poe's work with the natural femininity of those writers aligned with market forces. Taking his cue from Poe, Baudelaire links Poe's masculine literary style to an artificial performance of the feminine. He says of *Marginalia's* advocacy of an analytical approach to writing: "The lovers of a fine frenzy will perhaps be revolted by these cynical maxims; but everyone may take what he wishes from them. . . . After all, a little charlatanism is always permitted to genius, and is even proper to it. It is, like rouge on the cheeks of a naturally beautiful woman, an additional stimulus to the mind" (156). Whereas Karen Halttunen argues that antebellum theatricality opposes sincerity and embodies the threat of hypocrisy, Baudelaire suggests that theatricality is a form of transparency that sets off natural beauty. He maps this set of associations onto literary styles, associating the inferior "fine frenzy" with the rougeless female, and Poe's "deliberate," premeditated style with both theatricality and the made-up woman.

The logical conclusion of Baudelaire's argument would be that Poe is a literary transvestite whose charms are superior to the "naturally beautiful" women he imitates. And indeed, he advances precisely this claim, revealing in the process that the ultimate threat to the male writer's autonomy is the female writer, the spirit not of the home, but of the marketplace. Poe's rendition of the feminine beats the literary women on the very terms that they should excel: intensity and sincerity of emotion. Baudelaire's logic is associative:

> As for [Poe's] intense preoccupation with the horrible, I have noticed among a number of men that it was often the result of an immense unused vital energy, or sometimes of a stubborn chastity, or of a deeply repressed sensibility. The unnatural pleasure that a man may feel on seeing his own blood flow, brusque and useless movements, loud cries uttered almost involuntarily are analogous phenomena. Pain relieves pain, action rests one from repose. Another characteristic of his writing is that it is completely anti-feminine. Let me explain myself. Women write and write, with an exuberant rapidity; their hearts speak and chatter in reams. Usually they know nothing of art, or measure, or logic; their style trails and flows like their garments. . . . In the books of Edgar Poe the style is concatenated; the prejudice or the inertia of the reader cannot penetrate the meshes of this network woven by logic. All his ideas, like obedient arrows, fly to the same target. (78–79)

Baudelaire suggests that we read Poe's narcissistic preoccupation with self-inflicted pain as a sign of his heightened capacity for strong feeling, presumably repressed into such perversions in order to protect himself from his less sensitive contemporaries. Baudelaire links Poe's unnaturally heightened sensibility to his "anti-feminine," highly crafted writing style which counters the "natural" feminine writing style. After likening Poe's preoccupation with the horrible to men who enjoy "seeing their own blood flow," Baudelaire repeats this image in transmuted form when describing feminine style, which "trails and flows like their garments." The striking parallel, caused by the repetition of similar images and an identical word, articulates the difference between feminine and masculine styles in terms of control. Women's lack of control is superficial, advertised in their flowing clothing. Internalizing their fashion accessories, women's writing reveals the same careless superficiality. The male writer, on the other hand, is a detached observer of his own uncontrol, which registers not superficially, in his clothes, but crucially, on his body. His writing style uniquely combines ultimate detachment and intense engagement.[17]

While Baudelaire draws a stark contrast between men and women, ultimately he casts masculinity as a theatricalized extension of feminin-

ity. Poe's emotional distress is repressed into a physical symptom that expresses a desire for suicide, a pleasure in seeing blood come to the surface. The analogy—that blood is to man as clothing is to woman—implies that bleeding, as an externalized expression of bodily and mental agony, is men's way of becoming feminine. A man bleeding from a cut is the hysterical equivalent of a woman menstruating. A perverse masculine miming of womanhood, men's flowing blood is an unregenerative, even deadly version of women's fertility. To Baudelaire, Poe's lack of emotional receptivity is the sign of a "deeply repressed sensibility," and his mechanistic tendencies (his "concatenated" style) are a sign of "unused vital energy": both aspects of his style symbolically substitute for what is not there. As I have argued in relation to "The Philosophy of Composition," Baudelaire believes that Poe's theatricality contributes to the reader's impression of his sincerity rather than undercutting it. Canonical values lie in a reaction to a female-identified aesthetic of proximity to the marketplace; however, the masculine performance of distance as a sign of heightened emotional sensitivity contains all the traits of the poetess in inverted form.

Baudelaire thus advances a hypermasculine version of a Poe aesthetic, heavily reliant upon his critical statements, that has profoundly influenced not only the American reception of Poe, but also the development of an American canonical aesthetic which has all but entirely screened out nineteenth-century women poets (Emily Dickinson is the only retention). Critics continue to read Poe as Baudelaire read him: the embattled, heroic artist awash in a sea of female poetry which was indistinguishable from marketplace motions and which therefore appealed, far more readily than his own work, to the popular taste. But in investing Poe with the feminine, Baudelaire and, even more radically, the canon-minded critics who follow, have divested literary history of the significance of women poets, whose presence, a mixed blessing for Poe, is a pure evil for Baudelaire, and an incomprehensibility for later scholars. Hoffman awards Poe the position of "the first critic in this country to insist that literary work be measured by literary standards alone," but in the same breath expresses bafflement about Poe's peculiar interest in poetesses:

> True, [Poe's] own standards were not only high but a little odd: he couldn't keep himself from overpraising poetesses who wrote

> elegies to dead lovers, finding in the effusions of such nobodies as Mrs. Amelia Welby and Elizabeth Oakes Smith the nearly articulated intimations of the theme which became the sole burden of his own verse, and its undoing. But when I read Poe's notes on poetry—not on contemporary poems . . . Poe on poetic principles makes a lot of good sense. (94)

Hoffman suggests that Poe overestimates the extent to which women poets offered "nearly articulated intimations" of his own work. Echoing Poe's critical gesture of female exorcism, Hoffman identifies with Poe and dismisses his female contemporaries on the basis of his "poetic principles" as distinct from his book reviews.

In forgetting the women, Hoffman and others have divested the canonical male writer of his ties to a market-based dynamics of literary exchange in order to render him an impermeable critic of those forces. That external vantage point, as Poe more than his followers might readily acknowledge, is a fiction constructed by the writers themselves. In order to cast Poe as "great," critics have needed to forget that Emerson called him "the jingle man," thus aligning him with "the female poetasters," those "anti-poetic influences of Massachusetts" that the great writer must struggle against.[18] Often, critics have needed to forget Poe's poetry entirely in order to make of him "a brilliant analyst of a market he was never able fully to exploit"; generally speaking, the canonical (and masculine) Poe is the prose Poe of fiction and criticism (Douglas 84).

Although some scholars have located the systematic dismissal of female literary achievement in the antebellum period, in truth antebellum writers, as we see from the case of Poe, were more open to considerations of the literary merit (not simply the saleability) of women's poetry, than later generations of critics. And while writing was obsessively categorized according to supposedly gendered qualities, cross-gendered literary interactions were pervasive among writers who considered themselves peers. Poe's struggles (and those of his critics) testify that women poets played a formative role in the creation of literary tastes in the antebellum period, rather than serving as a repulsive force that impels great writers to create works of art in sheer resistance to mass mediocrity.[19] Later critics have tended to accept as accurate the dismissive characterization of the antebellum female poet promulgated in the period

by literary competitors. When looking for the reasons why women poets of the nineteenth century have been forgotten, we should consider the lyric voice of the critical essay as much as its aesthetic pronouncements, and reconsider the impact of the "poetess" in an often recognizably reactive rhetoric. Rather than peripheral, trivial, or obviously frivolous, women poets in the antebellum period posed a truly central aesthetic challenge. This case study of Poe's work helps to indicate that their work profoundly influenced canonical as well as forgotten literary movements, and any historical understanding of the poetic practices of the period requires a thorough re-evaluation of the significance and influence of the female poets and poetry of America.

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NOTES

1. Publisher N. P. Willis voices a common sentiment: "It is the women who read. . . . It is the women who give or withhold a literary reputation. . . . It is the women who exercise the ultimate control over the Press" (qtd. in Douglas 103). Baym notes that at least eighty women published books of poems between 1800 and 1850; over double that number published poems in newspapers and magazines (297). Pattee claims that "the American literary 'female' as seen in the 1830s and the 1840s, was a writer of verse" (50), while Ostriker notes that poetry and the poetess were associated with moral uplift in the early nineteenth century (30).

2. Arguing that writing is "a public gesture, not a private act," Railton defines "literary performance" as "how writers conceive of and address themselves to an audience" (4, 12). Because authors are important members of each other's audience in the antebellum period, I suggest that these categories overlap. Moreover, I find that the "drama of literary creation" is a drama of collaboration among writers rather than a one-man show, as Railton suggests (4).

3. Recent studies have reproduced elements of canonical structure in their challenges to it by positing discrete men's and women's literary traditions, with the men's dominant (e.g., Walker 57 and Ostriker 28–37). This circumscription model curtails the possibility of women's influence on larger literary and cultural movements. Some recent works have begun exploring cross-gender literary exchanges; see Marchalonis.

4. For one example of a dismissal, see Hoffman (93–94). In his edition of Poe's works, Harrison includes a number of reviews of women poets, but his introductions refer only to reviews of male poets such as Lowell, Bryant, and Longfellow (introductions, *Complete*, vols. 8–13). In "Amorous Bondage," Dayan notes "Poe's serious attention to women writers," including Elizabeth Barrett, yet dismisses his reviews of Frances Sargent Osgood and Lydia Sigourney as "cloying and sentimental" without explaining why we should pay attention to some reviews and ignore

others (199). See also Dayan's "Poe's Women" (3). Countering the critical dismissal of Osgood, DeJong has argued convincingly for a "literary alliance" between Osgood and Poe ("Lines").

5. Ellison explores the association of the feminine with the male romantic. Her chapters on Margaret Fuller treat the female romantic critic's attempts to reconfigure the gendered paradigms of romanticism (pt. III).

6. Wendorff's dissertation explores the legacy of the "Poetess Ideal" for late-nineteenth-century women poets. See also Walker (27). Wendorff's study de-links that ideal from female writerly identity by arguing that women poets adapted the convention to their expressive needs. Indeed, whether the poetess is more than an ideal for any poet or critic of the time is unclear. On this point I differ with DeJong who asserts that Poe shares "the prevalent view" that Osgood (as well as women poets in general) was "a natural 'singer'—not a creative artist" ("Fair" 269).

7. Cushman's useful notion of poetic "fictions of form" has informed this essay throughout. In "Amorous Bondage," Dayan argues that Poe "repeats, exaggerates, and transforms the immutable, romanticized attributes white women are granted by men. He dramatizes the fact of appropriation, and thereby undefines the definitions that mattered to civilized society" (190). If one grants that women writers were not entirely circumscribed by men's idealization, then one may also grant that Poe uses these definitions to appropriate female achievement. In "Poe's Women," Dayan argues that Poe's inhabitance of women's place is "no mere appropriation: the 'possession' is reciprocal" (9). While I agree on this point, I do not agree that "Poe is after nothing less than an exhumation of the lived, but disavowed or suppressed experiences of women in his society" (10). It is not women's place in patriarchy, but more specifically the intimacy with lyric (and art more broadly) which that place enables that concerns Poe. Imagining women as literary competitors, Poe imitates women's poetry in order to gain access to their poetic power. For an exploration of woman as medium for conversions, see Dayan's *Fables of Mind* (ch. 3). For a psycholinguistic reading of Poe's dead women, see Bronfen. For a related argument on female absorption in Victorian men's artwork, see Christ (144, 146).

8. See Mabbott's comments on the relationship between the two poems (*Collected Works* 411). My argument draws upon Bloom's notion of the "anxiety of influence," a generational psychodrama between men in which the younger poet wrests power from the older by repeating his practices in an altered manner while denying his influence. By emphasizing gender and audience factors in systems of poetic influence, I offer a system of contemporaneous, cross-gendered poetic influence and exchange.

9. Kennedy notes that the speaker "wishes both to forget and to remember" and attributes the dilemma to "a conflict between memory and denial" at the center of the logic of bereavement and writing (68).

10. Brown argues that Poe's fiction relies upon a "single-minded prohibition of female generativity in order to produce evidence of a particular instance" of "individual consciousness" (341–42). I argue, to the contrary, that Poe's work enacts a male indebtedness to a female intellectual productivity imagined to be superior.

11. See Mabbott's comments on "The Summons Answered" (*Collected Works*

411) and Reilly's rebuttal of Jones and Ljungquist. The idea that Poe embeds identifiable fragments of others' works within his poems evokes Riffaterre's notion of the hypogram. In Poe's work, however, one does not have to go hunting for the source, for it is identifiable within the poem which "steals" it.

12. The image of Poe as an isolated, tortured artist underpins much of the finest Poe criticism, which follows in the psychoanalytic tradition (Baudelaire, Blasing, Bonaparte, Hoffman, and Silverman). While recent studies place Poe in his cultural context, his exceptionalism survives. Elmer's provocative study explains Poe's "double history" in literary studies as the originator of many mass cultural genres and as the hermetically sealed high artist. While this work powerfully demonstrates Poe's engagement with certain "cultural logics" of his day, it minimizes the collaborative aspects of Poe's work and their gender logic (aspects which challenge a mass-individual dichotomy, even as it is played out within one author's opus) that I emphasize here. See also Allen, Fisher, and Rosenheim and Rachman.

13. Cameron argues that Emerson advances a model of sincere affect based upon the evacuation of identifiably elegiac feeling: he mentions his son's death at the outset of "Experience," and then drops the subject. This model, in which profound mourning is defined by personal reticence, is especially comprehensible as a reaction to contemporary elegiac modes that identify sincere mourning with an outpouring of grief.

14. A number of critics have noted that Poe's critical essays, particularly "The Philosophy of Composition," serve as extensions of his poetic endeavor, though the characterizations of that continuous model differ (Elmer 210–13; Pease 184).

15. One review called "The Raven" "wild and shivery," and an observer noted that readers were "electrified by the weird cry of Nevermore" (Silverman 237; also 237–38, 278–79).

16. Sarah Helen Whitman, Sarah Anna Lewis, and Elmira Shelton. Whitman and Lewis were poets. Others have suggested that Frances Osgood, Virginia Poe, or Nancy Richmond were the objects of tribute. See Mabbott (Poe, *Collected Works* 468–77).

17. Elmer posits a related formulation of Poe's critico-poetical affect in "The Philosophy of Composition": Poe "acts out *and* reflects, he both repeats *and* critiques the workings of his poem" (211). I argue that this combination is a quality of criticism as a poetic genre, which Poe helped to found, rather than a resistance to criticism as a genre, as Elmer claims.

18. Pearce echoes Emerson's characterization approvingly (139).

19. A recent example of this distinction appears in Gilmore: "The split between elite and mass culture . . . appears to be confirmed in the actual literary market. While the romantics were still producing the masterpieces still read today, domestic novels written by women commanded the enthusiasm of the antebellum public" (7). Elmer complicates this distinction in provocative ways by defining it as a dynamic of ambivalence that goes on within the individual artist (and also within the social body); still, the dichotomy remains.

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