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A Musicology for Literary Language

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FLORIDA INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY

Miami, Florida

A MUSICOLOGY FOR LITERARY LANGUAGE

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

in

ENGLISH

by

James Gray Kane

2002

To: Dean Arthur W. Herriott
College of Arts and Sciences

This thesis, written by James Gray Kane, and entitled A Musicology for Literary Language, having been approved in respect to style and intellectual content, is referred to you for judgment.

We have read this thesis and recommend that it be approved.

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ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS
A MUSICOLOGY FOR LITERARY LANGUAGE

by

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Professor Alfred Lopez, Major Professor

This study analyzed the reader's relationship to the sounds embedded in a written text for the purpose of identifying those sounds' contribution to the reader's interpretation of that text. To achieve this objective, this study negotiated Heideggerian phenomenology, Freudian and Lacanian psychoanalysis, linguistics, and musicology into a reader response theory, which was then applied to Edgar Allen Poe's "The Raven."

This study argued that the orchestration of sounds in "The Raven" forces its reader into a regression, which the reader then represses, only to carry the resulting sound-image /ɹ/ away from the poem as a psychic scar.

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Introduction

In order to analyze the reader's relationship to the implied ("implied" because unspoken) sounds embedded in any given text, we need to negotiate (Heideggerian) phenomenological, (Freudian and Lacanian) psychoanalytic, linguistic, and musicological methods to develop a reader response criticism suited to identify the reader's relationship to written phonological constructions. Through the application of this method, we intend to discover the musical phenomenon by which Poe's "The Raven" achieves its significance, namely through the forced regression¹ of the reader, the reader's subsequent repression of the regression, and the resulting sound image upon which the reader then fixates² and transcribes to the semantic plane of the text, which sound image the reader then carries as psychic scar.

Implied sound forms an essential function in any written text. Those who appreciate a writer's use of language *hear* that writer's use of language. A great composer of sounds herself, Eudora Welty explains her experience as a reader:

Ever since I was first read to, then started reading to myself, there has never been a line read that I didn't *hear*. As my eyes followed the sentence, a voice was saying it silently to me. It isn't my mother's voice, or the voice of any person I can identify, certainly not my own. It is human, but inward, and it is inwardly that I listen to it. It is the voice of the story or the poem itself. The cadence, whatever it is that

¹ By "regression" we mean "a return to an earlier psychic state."

² "To fixate" here signifies "to become attached to an object or a person in a neurotic way."

asks you to believe, the feeling that resides in the printed word,
reaches me through the reader-voice. (11-12)

However, “cadence” is a musical term. This inclination to associate a written text’s “poetics” with music likewise leads John Gardner to explain Melville’s maturation in terms of music, even formulating a musical notation for his illustration.

Melville, we may be sure, did not sit down and score his rhythms like a composer, but his ear found them—found brilliantly subtle rhythmic variations, poetically functional alliteration (compare “broke the broad expanse of the ocean,” in *Omoo*, with “watery part of the world. It is a way I have,” in *Moby Dick*).... (68)

Yet, “alliteration” hardly seems adequate to explain how such phonetic manipulation affects the reader. Meanwhile, a linguistic analysis, while better suited for identifying the aesthetic construction, likewise falls short of interpreting the aesthetic response. For example, in “Linguistics and Poetics,” Jakobson linguistically analyzes the sound constructions in Poe’s “The Raven” (86-87)³. While Jakobson’s identification of the poem’s various phonetic repetitions, reversals, and variations explains much about the construction of the poem, it does very little to clarify a reader’s relationship to that construction.

The closest Jakobson comes to identifying the reader’s relationship to those sounds appears in “Musicology and Linguistics.” The focus of his essay centers on the similarities between these two fields: “Musicology teaches us that neighboring peoples and tribes often form singular ‘musical bonds’.... It is highly interesting that

³ See pages 14-15 below.

the same people create a ‘phonological alliance,’ characterized by tonal inflections in the phonological system” (457). Here, while identifying a relationship between musical and phonetic perceptions, Jakobson’s use of musicology serves as a metaphor in his essay rather than as an actual method of phonetic interpretation.

However, one’s relationship to organized sounds is one’s relationship to music, which is nothing more than sound addressed as form. Nevertheless, if musicology were to be used as a method of phonetic interpretation, it, too, would require help from other fields to identify the reader’s response to phonetically musical constructions. As explained by Zuckerkandl, one of the developers of musicology, the field was formed as a method of “preparation” for a response to music (4), not a method for the interpretation of that response.

To bridge the gap, we must borrow from Freudian and Lacanian psychoanalysis and Heideggerian phenomenology. Western music functions on a system of tonality, the tendency for a given music to gravitate towards a specific tone, the *tonic*; since the “tonic” is the *tone of desired return*, I translate this tonic into an object cathexis (that is, object of desire)—or more specifically, a *tonic cathexis*, to emphasize its relationship to desire. Meanwhile, music functions based on its audience’s expectations. According to Heidegger’s phenomenology, in order to conceive of its Being—in this case, the Reader’s Being-with-the-music—an entity (in Heideggerian terms, *Dasein* or Being-in-the-world) places one’s own Being in the future to understand its potentiality. The perceived limits of that Being becomes essential to the establishment of one’s musical expectations since one participates

with a Being of music *in* the larger dialectical Being of “audience,” or in this case, “reader.”

The result of this methodological combination allows the analyst to identify changes within a reader resulting from the reader’s participation in a specific site. In which case, the text manifests not merely as an object but rather as an entity with which the reader conjoins and then exists as a mutual musical Being, or Being-in-the-music. As a result of which Being the reader then functions, as seen in the above description of “expectations.”

Meanwhile, the Freudian and Lacanian psychoanalytic concept of objects, in this case musical objects, does not become eradicated. While the reader exists *with* the text’s musical developments in terms of a shared Being, the reader responds *to* specific tones as objects cathexes and obstacles to those cathexes. In this way, psychoanalysis allows us to follow the developments of the reader’s emotive response within the greater Being of the reader’s existence.

We shall apply these methods to analyze the reader’s participation in Poe’s “The Raven,” chosen both for its pedagogical predisposition and its academic neglect. “The Raven” finds itself in nearly every anthology and, more importantly, remembered for its “musicality.” However, we need to rescue it from Huxley’s *Vulgarity in Literature*⁴. Despite the poem’s obvious symbolism on the semantic plane, “The Raven” haunts the reader—destined never to be forgotten in that reader’s mind. This analysis attempts to understand why.

⁴ See page 23 below.

Part I Theory

1. Phenomenology and Reader Response Theory.

From a Heideggerian perspective, to formulate a reader response theory would be to construct an interpretation of *Dasein*, or “Being-in-the-world” (78), where “the world” consists of the text, the accumulative constitution of the reader’s social contexts, and the greater body of literature as disclosed to the reader; “Being” signifies the entity currently engaged in the reading; and “Being-in” manifests as the resulting mode of Being. Obviously, a comprehensive Heideggerian reader-response theory would require a specific test subject (a theory of Reader Bob) and thereby lies outside the capabilities of this study. Nevertheless, even a less inclusive attempt at a Heideggerian reader-response theory still proves fruitful—and in this case essential—to an understanding of the reader’s relationship to the text, because we cannot identify a reader’s response without first comprehending the corporal formation of what we’re calling “reader.”

2. Phenomenology and Psychoanalysis.

As exemplified by the expression “time flies when having fun,” changes in pace denote changes in desire, at least in terms of its intensity. Pleasure derives from the satisfaction of a desire, and desire informs the entity’s primary mode of Being while engaging a literary text. Shifts in the reader’s mode of Being arise from

developments in the reader's desire as well as from transferences between objects of desire (objects cathexes).

Traditionally, however, "desire" does not fit within the Heideggerian construct. If we were to translate "desire" to mean "want," then Heidegger sees desire as an act that reduces Dasein (73). In terms of its being a functional necessity, "desire" as a term confines itself to psychoanalytic interpretations. However, we have said that a reader-response theory is a Heideggerian study of Being-in-the-text, and we also have said that shifts in the reader's Being derive from developments and transformations of the reader's desire. In which case, we need to understand and negotiate Heideggerian phenomenology with the Freudian and Lacanian psychoanalysis from which we borrow the principle function of desire. In order to bridge these two methods, first we need to detail our understanding of Heideggerian phenomenology.

According to Heidegger, *Dasein* or Being-in-the-world concerns itself with its own Being. Even in its fear for another, this fear manifests as "being-afraid-for-oneself," because one's Being in that context consists of "one's Being-with with the Other" (181). In other words, if I fear for your well-being, then in that particular moment I am defining myself in relation to you; who I am manifests as *I-with-you*. In this way, whatever concerns Dasein reflects the contextual formation of Dasein. "[A]s Being-in-the-world, Dasein is in every case concerned Being-alongside" (180). In this quote, the translator's footnote accompanying "Being-alongside" provides a helpful insight into the composite of Dasein: "'Sein bei.' Here our usual translation, 'Being-alongside', fails to bring out the connection. A German reader would recall at

once that 'bei' may mean 'at the home of'..." (ibid, tr. fn). As we can see through the association with "home," Being-in-the-world comprises a spatial-psychical-contextual positing of Self with *care* (*Sorgen*) as its primordial contingency.

Meanwhile, the equally primordial phenomenon of anxiety perpetually threatens this Being. According to Heidegger, anxiety proves to be that which causes Being to turn towards other entities alongside it (230, 233-234), because anxiety derives from the perceived indefiniteness of the world, which in turn transforms the corresponding Being-in into the same indefiniteness and likewise threatens the definiteness of Being-in-the-world (231).

In anxiety one feels 'uncanny'. ["While 'unheimlich' is here translated as 'uncanny', it means more literally 'unhomelike', as the author proceeds to point out" (233, tr. fn).]But here "uncanniness" also means "not-being-at-home".... Being-in was defined as "residing alongside...", "Being-familiar with..." This character of Being-in was then brought to view more concretely through the everyday publicness of the "they", which brings tranquillized self-assurance.... On the other hand, as Dasein falls, anxiety brings it back from its absorption in the 'world'. Everyday familiarity collapses.... Being-in enters into the existential 'mode' of the "not-at-home".... [Dasein] does not flee *in the face of* entities within-the-world; these are precisely what it flees *towards*—as entities alongside which our concern, lost in the "they", can dwell in tranquillized familiarity.... Yet the everydayness of this fleeing shows phenomenally that anxiety, as a basic state-of-mind,

belongs to Dasein's essential state of Being-in-the-world, which, as one that is existential, is never present-at-hand but *is* itself always in a mode of factual Being-there—that is, in the mode of a state-of-mind. That kind of Being-in-the-world which is tranquilized and familiar is a mode of Dasein's uncanniness, not the reverse. *From an existential-ontological point of view, the “not-at-home” must be considered as the more primordial phenomenon.* (233-234, Heidegger's emphasis.)

By being thrown into the world, Dasein primordially finds itself in uncertainty, confused about the world and thus confused about its corresponding existence. Anxiety-ridden, Dasein runs away from the uncertainty of the world by running towards the certainty of entities within the world.

However, prior to this running away, Dasein encounters “one's ownmost potentiality-for-Being” (236).

In each case Dasein has already compared itself, in its Being, with a possibility of itself. Being-free *for* one's ownmost potentiality-for-Being... is shown... in anxiety. Being towards one's ownmost potentiality-for-Being means that in each case Dasein is already *ahead* of itself... in its Being. Dasein is always ‘beyond itself’..., not as a way of behaving towards other entities which it is *not*, but as Being towards the potentiality-for-Being which it is itself. This structure of Being... we shall denote as Dasein's “*Being-ahead-of-itself*.” (236, emphasis Heidegger's.)

In anxiety, by not being confined to the specificity of Other and thereby the definiteness of Self, Dasein exists as the utmost possibility for Being and likewise cares for that Being and thereby establishes a perception and thus formation of the future potentiality for that Being. In the case of music, one participates *with* a particular music, and the resulting interaction becomes Dasein or Being-in-the-music. In which case, the expectations one experiences with this particular music correspond to Dasein's Being-ahead-of-itself toward its potentiality-for-Being. In other words, one's expectations for a particular music manifest as one's expectations for a specific musical Self.

For example, the "goosebumps" experienced in a particular music arise from an unexpected development in (i.e., a potential threat to one's unification with) that music. That unexpected development renders the music's entity as indeterminable and thus indefinite, which instills anxiety. The Listener then posits one's listening Self (since a "listening" Self, the music incorporates part of that Self) in the future to conceive of its potentiality. To comprehend that potentiality, the listener reconfigures one's understanding of the music to accommodate that unexpected development as now probable in one's future expectations.

Comprehending Heideggerian phenomenology in this way, now we may observe the discrepancies between Heideggerian phenomenology and psychoanalysis. Heideggerian phenomenology analyzes Being-in-the-world. In phenomenological terms, Freudian psychoanalysis studies Being-in with a focus on the "Being" part of it. Meanwhile, Lacan interprets Being-in with a focus on "in" part of it.

However, Heidegger formulates his ideas in opposition to the concept of object-relations brought about by “desire” as “want.” In other words, he presents his philosophy against the organizing principles of psychoanalysis. We can see this conflict between the two fields in their mutually exclusive descriptions of anxiety.

Both fields use anxiety as a primary motivating force. However, psychoanalysis centers on separation anxiety and castration anxiety. As expressed, these anxieties transform the entity of “mother” into an object and the entity of Self into a composite of objects. Meanwhile, Heidegger focuses on the anxiety caused by the indefiniteness of Being-in-the-world during Dasein’s primordial care for its own Being, and according to Heidegger, “...subject and Object do not coincide with Dasein” (87).

Heidegger’s interests lie in entity-relations brought about by care. However, we must bear in mind that while Heidegger presents most of *Being and Time* as if it were descriptive, his philosophy engages its subject prescriptively: “The person is not a Thing, not a substance, not an object.... Any psychical Objectification of acts, and hence any way of taking them as something psychical, is tantamount to depersonalization” (73). Nevertheless, in human existence sometimes things (people or otherwise) are depersonalized, reduced to objects around which we maneuver rather than entities with which we concern ourselves. In which case, perhaps we can qualify Heidegger’s rejection of the psychoanalytic reduction of entity-interactions to subject-object relations and “care” to “desire” as being based on prescriptive judgments, not on descriptive understandings.

Therefore, ignoring Heidegger's prescriptive proclamations, perhaps we can consistently comprehend Freudian and Lacanian psychoanalysis as a subset⁵ of phenomenology. We have already identified that psychoanalysis concerns itself with Being-in, as opposed to the entirety of Being-in-the-world. Furthermore, there is no reason not to assume objects to be subsets of entities. In other words, amidst dealing with the entity of a given music—its Being, which includes non-manifestly-present characteristics, such as the corresponding and participating idea of music in general with its potential uses, as well as the idea of *this* music both in terms of its social significance and the specific orchestration of its tonal contents—we deal with the facticity of its tonal contents merely as objects—some as objects of desired return, others as potential obstacles affecting that return.

Along the same lines, we can see “desire” function within “care.” As seen in the above example of “fear,” “care” corresponds with “concern.” “Desire” manifests as the object-relations participant in the formation of Self and thus of Being. Meanwhile, “care” concerns itself with the maintenance of that Self. Through care, that Self remains perceived as unified as an entity or more specifically as Dasein, despite the constant reconfigurations brought about by that entity's subject-object

⁵ Lacan refers to the unconscious as pre-ontological and on that basis claims that “the unconscious... does not lend itself to ontology” (“Of the Subject...” 29). However, Heidegger uses “preontological” to signify *pertaining to an entity confined to the ontic* (“ontic” means confined to a specific experience and as yet unaware of its transcendental Being beyond that specific experience) *plane and for whom its Being is a concern* (*Being* 32). Lacan clarifies his statement by claiming that “the unconscious... is neither being, nor non-being, but the unrealized” (“Of the Subject...” 30). In other words, the unconscious manifests as the hole of the latent and repressed according to and around which the ego maneuvers. The unconscious is not the ego or the *presently manifest*; it is the absent dialectical counterpart to existence. However, since the unconscious partakes not merely in the formation of Being but rather in the continued existence of Being in Being-in-the-world, the term “sub-ontological” more closely approximates the unconscious's relationship to Dasein. After all, the unconscious's absence is always present *within* the existence of Being-in-the-world.

relations. In this way, phenomenology does not render psychoanalysis useless. Quite the contrary, the two fields inform each other intimately.

Reader Bob is an entity comprised of both the text and the entity engaged with that text. Bob's desires motivate his concerns. His subject-object interactions initiate relationships that grow into entity relations. The value of this understanding lies in the ability to psychoanalyze both the text and the entity engaged with that text in terms of their being merely two aspects of the same existence.

3. *The Reader's Mode, or Being-in.*

When one sits to read, that entity engages in a mode of Being. Since one has to be taught to not move one's lips while reading, the reader transforms written language into intentionally inexistent speech sounds. Speech sounds divide into vowels (tones) and consonants (tonal bracketing). Vowel tones derive from the synthesis of two "formants," which are the subtones that form vowels. Vowels shaped in the back of the mouth—the lower tones, sometimes referred to as "dark vowels"—develop from two low formants, while front vowels arise from the blending of one low formant with one high formant. Because of the relative proximity of the two low formants, back vowels easily become mistaken for each other and thereby achieve ambiguity and thus mysterious qualities (Tsur 24).

In this sense, back vowels occupy more mental processing space and are perceived as heavier, or slower, or, at any rate, relatively marked.

This can offer one possible explanation for the relative frequency of

dark vowels in verse lines referring to slow and heavy movements.

(25)

As we can see, what transcribes into a movement for the mind likewise manifests both from and as a movement of the body, as observed through the muscular acts necessary to form each sound in the mouth. In the processing of these intentionally inexistent speech sounds, “our tacit knowing of the acoustic-linguistic message, in the course of perception, seems to proceed by attending *from* the acoustic signal *to* the combination of muscular movements and, further away, to their joint purpose, the phoneme” (9). In other words, in the attending mind, one perceives the speaker’s bodily formation and its intention behind the articulation. Ambiguous bodily formation and corresponding intention create an ambiguous mode of Being.

However, this interpretation can lead to a misunderstanding of the phenomenal experience. In the case of a reader, the entity exists as both speaker and listener and thus attends to one’s own bodily formation and its *imposed* intention, originated in the book but now embodied by the reader. While back vowels do not prove ambiguous for the reader-speaker, the reader-listener still reflects on the ambiguity—associating the sound with other phonemes, collections of phonemes with other collections, words and phrases with other words and phrases—ambiguously reconstituting the reader-speaker’s bodily self and corresponding intention. The greater the number of ambiguous phonemes (or collections of phonemes), the greater the reader-listener perceives shifts in the reader-speaker’s mode of Being. However, while this analysis proves correct, it analyzes Being in too minute of a context, because these shifts require the reader to address each sound as a separate entity.

Below, Jakobson's analysis of Poe's "The Raven" identifies potential moments of such reflection and entity-creation. Still, even in the phonetic subjects of Jakobson's analysis, one more likely contends with these minute sounds, although repeated and perpetually varied in appearance, in terms of objects.

4. *Ambiguity.*

Not merely tones but also tonal bracketing (consonants) create such ambiguity. Consonants can be voiced ([z]) or unvoiced ([s]) and otherwise identical in pronunciation. Consonants correspond to each other not only within bilabials ([p], [b], [m], [w]) or labiodentals ([f], [v]) but between them as labials. Ambiguity abounds in pronunciation.

For example, Jakobson linguistically analyzes the sound constructions in Poe's "The Raven."

The never-ending stay of the grim guest is expressed by a chain of ingenious paronomasias, partly inversive, as we would expect from such a deliberate experimenter in anticipatory, regressive modus operandi, such as a master in "writing backwards" as Edgar Allen Poe. In the introductory line of this concluding stanza, "raven" contiguous to the bleak refrain word "never," appears once more as an embodied mirror image of this "never": /n.v.r/—/r.v.n/. Salient paronomasias interconnect both emblems of the everlasting despair, first "the Raven, never flitting," at the beginning of the very last stanza, and second, in its very last lines the "shadow that lies floating on the floor," and

“shall be lifted—nevermore”: /névər flítɪŋ/—/flótɪŋ/.../flɔːr/.../lɪftəd
névər/.... (“Linguistics...” 86-87)

Jakobson’s identification of the poem’s various phonetic repetitions, reversals, and variations explains semantic associations drawn by the phonetic parallels.

In a similar analysis, Kenneth Burke describes Coleridge’s exploitation of such phonetic cognates in terms of musical “themes”⁶ (369).

If... we inspect the underlying consonantal structure of “bathed by the mist,” we find that it is composed of two concealed alliterations: one, “b— b— —m—”; the other, “—thd — th— —t.” And I would suggest that the quality of musicality is got here by this use of cognate sounds. (370)

Burke then proceeds to redefine chiasmic relationships between phonetic cognates—such as those identified in Jakobson’s analysis of Poe—in musical terms. “This reversal, however, is quite common in music (where the artist quite regularly varies the sequence of notes in his theme by repeating it upside down or backwards)” (372). Finally, “[f]rom music Burke borrows the terms augmentation and diminution” (Tsur 39). For augmentation, he portrays the motion from “sleep” to “slid” to “soul” in terms of “*sl, sl, s—l*” (40), and for diminution, Burke describes the “collaps[ing]” of “temporal space between the *s* and initial *l* in ‘silently’” to “‘slow’: *s—l, sl*. (299)” (ibid).

⁶ I discovered this analysis in Tsur’s *What Makes Sound Patterns Expressive?* (39-40) but here cite directly from Burke, except where indicated otherwise.

Both of the above analyses identify these phonetic repetitions with variations as a source of the reader's aesthetic enjoyment. Jakobson connects the gratification with the resulting semantic associations, although evades discussion of the inherent value of the sounds in and of themselves. Meanwhile, Burke identifies the pleasure with the mechanics of music, yet avoids explaining the reason behind one's fulfillment from that music.

5. *Pleasure.*

Based on Jakobson's observations, Tsur associates the musicality of a text with phonological regression. "[W]ith Jakobson... in child language there are two distinct uses of sound: *referential*, which is non-emotional, and *expressive*, making use of sounds that are not yet used for 'arbitrary, linguistic signs'" (55). In which case, non-referential use of sounds functions as a regression to this phase of language acquisition. "Jakobson noted... that regression to a less differentiated phonological system is often charged with emotion and occurs in coquettish, precious love language" (61), such as lovers' baby talk. In this sense, one can see regression as potentially pleasurable.

However, Tsur differentiates between such baby talk and poetics. According to Tsur, "...poetic value can be attributed, in general, only to structured regression and not to mere deliberate infantilism" (56). Elaborating on poetic "structured regression," Tsur says:

Parallel, nonreferential sound clusters, perceived by way of, and in addition to, their referential syntagmatic combination, may be either

convergent or *divergent*. These words by Poe is an outstanding example of the former:

...chilling

And killing my Annabel Lee.

Such instances consist in repeated prominent sound clusters that converge with the stress patterns of words as well as with the poem's metric pattern; they tend to be perceived as witty or playful punning (here, *in spite of* the sad event conveyed). Divergent sound patterns, in contrast, form interwoven threads, move crisscross over relatively large areas of text, and are diffused in an unpredictable order. These sound patterns tend to be perceived more or less *unawares* and to fuse in an undifferentiated but intense musical texture characterized by an emotional quality. (57, emphasis Tsur's.)

By "undifferentiated," Tsur refers to the unacknowledged difference between cognate phonemes, such as /b/ and /p/.

An explanation for the emotive quality of this "musical texture" stems from an earlier chapter in Tsur's phonetic analysis. The left hemisphere of the brain interprets speech sounds, the right hemisphere processes non-speech sounds, which include music, and the enjoyment of poetry consists of either the synthesis or the immediate succession of the two modes (12).

Considering that such global activities as emotions... are intimately associated with the right hemisphere, one might surmise that in poetic and rhetorical practice [musicality] may be a preferred instrument to

transfer part of the processing of the verbal message to the right hemisphere. (19)⁷

In which case, the regression is not merely to a phase of language acquisition for the reader-speaker but also to an earlier phase of the experience of speech-sound cognition for the reader-listener. After all, speech sounds reach the listener as an integrated part of their non-speech environment. Interestingly enough, for the reader-listener, the earlier phase of the speech-sound apprehension never actually transpires, and thus the regression exists as fantasy—not as regression but as progression into imagined extra-textual sensory experience.

In which case, the external world, aided by the transcription into music, becomes, through imagination, internalized by and thus partially unified with the reader-listener. I say “partially” because the process always remains incomplete. One’s primary mode of Being acts/manifests as a consequence of the instinctual drive for unity, which informs the desire that participates in Heideggerian care. Since the realization of Self and Other in infancy, one spends the rest of one’s life attempting to reunite (and thus to destroy the separate existences of) Self and Other into One or None. This motivates continual attempts at internalizations. Successful internalizations, although inherently incomplete, always prove pleasurable.

⁷ The actual quote reads as follows:

Considering that such global activities as emotions and spatial orientation are intimately associated with the right hemisphere, one might surmise that in poetic and rhetorical practice spatial orientation may be a preferred instrument to transfer part of the processing of the verbal message to the right hemisphere. (Tsur 19)

However, Tsur also says “When the acoustic signal is processed in the nonspeech mode (by the right hemisphere of the brain), we hear it as if we heard music sounds or natural noises” (18). In which case, the above replacement of “spatial orientation” with “musicality” follows the same logic and, furthermore, helps in the clarification of the emotive value of a “musical texture.”

Music *is* internalized sound. It functions solely on the basis of expectations, which cannot exist without logic, which in turn is merely a strategy for *establishing*⁸ truth. Following Griemas in his semiotic approach, the musicologist Tarasti redefines “beauty” as “truth”⁹ (43) and proceeds to transcribe musical objects and themes into an algebraic notation through which one can see logical transitions. However, “beauty” is not “truth” but rather the *understanding* of that truth, because “truth” exists merely as facticity. “Understanding” is “acting as a consequence of,” which participatory *act* unifies an entity with this collection of facts. In which case, “logic” is the *Being* of the act of unification between an entity and a collection of facts. Music establishes *expectations of logical returns*, which function as expectations of continued unity with external sound, or factual phonetic objects orchestrated into an entity. Meanwhile, “surprises” in music function as potential threats to that unity, these “obstacles” thereby establishing and developing desire for the musical Other by reinforcing the notion of Other. As long as the expectation for unity remains

⁸ By “establishing,” I here mean “creating” in the sense of “formulating,” which, as we shall see, leads to participating *in* that form.

⁹ See Theodor W. Adorno’s *Beethoven* in which Adorno explains Beethoven’s music as a Hegelian dialectic:

The ‘play’ of music is a play with logical forms as such: those of statement, identity, similarity, contradiction, the whole and the part; and the concreteness of music is essentially the force with which these forms imprint themselves on the material, the musical sounds. They, the logical elements, are largely unambiguous that they have a dialectic of their own. The theory of musical forms is the theory of such unambiguity, and of its sublation. The boundary between music and logic is not, therefore, located within the logical elements, but in their specifically logical synthesis of a different kind, constituted solely by the constellation of its elements, not their predication, subordination, subsumption. This synthesis, too, is related to truth, but to one which is quite unlike apophantic truth, and this non-apophantic truth will probably be definable as the aspect through which music coincides with dialectics. This discussion should terminate in a definition such as: *Music is the logic of the judgement-less synthesis.* (11)

Through Adorno, we achieve a better understanding of Tarasti’s definition for “beauty” as “truth.” According to Adorno, music is non-referential logic. In this sense, music is “truth.” However, “beauty” requires a participant with that truth.

strong—that is, unity remains eminent but as yet unachieved—the force of desire remains strong. The more eminent the unity, the more enhanced the desire.

A given music’s “surprises,” therefore, must become logical—that is, integrated—for the music to satisfy the listener. Chaotic surprises can become pleasurable through repetition and thus incorporation into the logical Being of the music and its listener. Of course, this requires a performance on the side of the listener in the mode of care—as initiated and informed by the above-described desire—and therefore, an educated listener can always participate in a given music’s complexities with more agility and thus with greater satisfaction than a novice. In other words, the educated listener achieves greater unity with the musical Other.

In which case, the development and transformations of desire are somewhat subjective. Again, our analysis has been reduced to a theory of Reader Bob. Nevertheless, an identification of potential logical developments and transformations (“potential” because not yet realized by a specific reader), as we shall see, will reveal potential developments and transitions in desire and thus meaning.

Part II “The Raven”

6. *Why Poe’s “The Raven”?*

On January 29, 1845, the *New York Evening Mirror* published a new poem that N. P. Willis, the *Mirror*’s editor, claimed was “unsurpassed in English poetry for subtle conception, masterly ingenuity of versification, and consistent, sustaining of imaginative lift and ‘pokerishness’” [i.e., spookiness]; he concluded his introduction by promising, “It will stick to the memory of everybody who reads it” (quoted in *CW*, 1:361). The poem Willis referred to was “The Raven,” and if he overstated its artistic merits somewhat, he accurately assessed its impact on readers.... It remains the one work by Poe that most Americans can quote or at least recognize when quoted....

(Walker 133)

Poe’s “The Raven” is a “strange” phenomenon. A psychoanalytic interpretation of Poe’s “The Raven” in terms of its musical composition inevitably suggests an analysis of the poem’s impact on the minds of those who read it. Few other poems’ sound-constructions have imprinted society’s psyche so deeply for so long.

To this day, the poem remains perpetually anthologized, and yet ironically, few such anthologized poems receive the academic resistance met by Poe’s poem. Take for example this following excerpt from a college textbook:

The heightening of language by musicality, however, is not always expressive. Sometimes musicality may, even, be the enemy of poetry.

Let us look at a stanza from Poe's most famous poem, "The Raven":

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

The question is: Do the very obvious verbal effects, including the assertive meter and emphatic rhyming, overwhelm the other aspects? The image presented is of a man, bereaved of his beloved, sitting late into the night and trying to forget his grief in study, but does the "feel" of such a situation survive the demanding musicality? Does the effect seem, in the end, just a little ludicrous? Poe was enormously skillful in a certain kind of technique, and could, on occasion, create very haunting effects, but.... (Brooks 544-545)

Although an "enemy to poetry," the poem's "haunting effects" remain unexplained, and meanwhile, the poem finds itself readily dismissed in the academic community, although equally readily recalled—in fact, permanently imprinted on the minds of all

who read it. Aldous Huxley even parodies Poe's "musicality" in his *Vulgarity in Literature*.

It was noon in the fair field of Enna,
When Proserpina gathering flowers—
Herself the most fragrant of flowers,
Was gathered away to Gehenna
By the Prince of Plutonian powers;
Was borne down the windings of Brenner
To the gloom of his amorous bowers—
Down the tortuous highway of Brenner
To the god's agapemonous bowers.

The parody is not too outrageous to be critically beside the point; and anyhow the music is genuine Poe. That permanent wave is unquestionably an *ondulation de chez Edgar*. The much too musical meter is (to change the metaphor once more) like a rich chasuble, so stiff with gold and gems that it stands unsupported, a carapace of jeweled sound, into which the sense, like some snotty little seminarist, irrelevantly creeps and is lost. This music of Poe's—how much less really musical than that which, out of his nearly neutral decasyllables, Milton fashioned on purpose to fit the slender beauty of Proserpine, the strength and swiftness of the ravisher and her mother's heavy despairing sorrow! (ibid, 546)

One explanation for the poem's almost unilateral academic rejection pertains to the poem's lack of intellectual content.

Like most hit songs, "The Raven" is rather light on ideas; painstaking analysis seems inappropriate to a work whose appeal relies so much on its catchy sound. But "The Raven" succeeds on its own terms, which are the terms of the popular song (or poem); it works largely *because* it is clever rather than ponderous or obscure. Poe relies on such conventions as sentimental grief (arising from idealized love) and obvious symbolism, as well as persistent rhyme and refrain and strict adherence to rhythm, but he shapes them into something original enough to demand the public's attention. One can easily fault Poe for straining his rhythm and rhyme—for instance, rhyming "that is," "lattice," and "thereat is" in stanza 6; or the ludicrous "Followed fast and followed faster" in line 64—but the fact remains that, as in many of his stories, he manages to weld the spare parts of popular literature into a surprisingly powerful reading experience. (Walker 133-134)

Perhaps the poem meets such resistance because analysts have yet to find an adequate method by which to interpret this "surprisingly powerful reading experience."

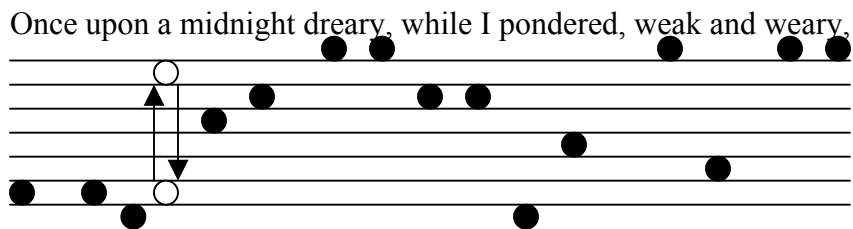
Jakobson, with his phonetic analysis, did not seem to find "The Raven" "light on ideas." Quite the contrary, Jakobson referred to the "ingenious paronomasias" (86).

Obviously, the poem's brilliance lies not on the semantic plane.

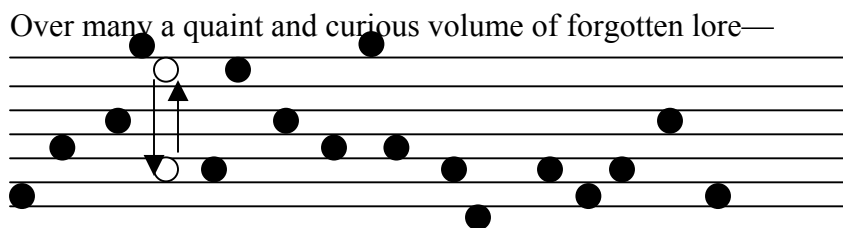
7. *A Musicological Analysis of Poe's "The Raven."*

"The Raven" reallocates the reader's access from the expectation of one tone to the expectation of another, specifically from /i/ to /ɔr/. As we shall see, this regresses the reader into a separation anxiety. In response, the reader represses this symbolic loss, which act of repression reassigns the reader's cathexis from the symbolic /i/ to the sound image /ɔr/. Meanwhile, since the reader associates /ɔr/ with "Lenore" and "nevermore," this transference of cathexis perpetuates the neurosis on the semantic plane. In other words, through this transference, the reader desires the *loss* of Lenore over the lost Lenore.

While the first line of "The Raven" swings upward in pitch¹⁰,



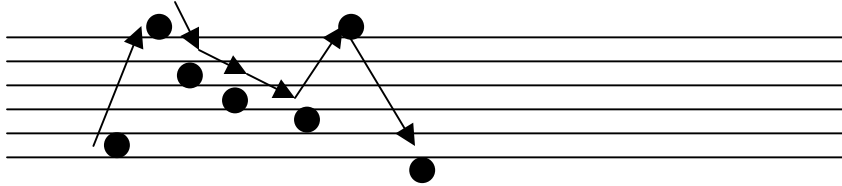
the second line descends in pitch,



¹⁰ In the following graphs, vertical differences refer to differences in pitch, while horizontal differences correspond to differences in time. Meanwhile, the notes correspond to their relationships to each other and not to their relationships to the twelve-tone or any other scale. Open circles indicate ambiguous pitches. Arrows clarify the chronological movement from each tone to the next where the movement is not obvious.

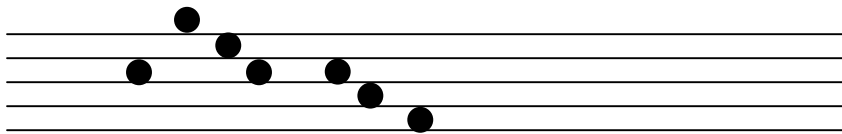
that grows into the even more exaggerated downward movement of line 6,

Only this and nothing more.”



which leads into the general movement of the poem: initial sharp rises followed by more gradual accentuated tonal declines. Ultimately, by beginning with so many high tones (five high pitches: “dreary,” “weak,” “weary”) in the first line, maintaining a general downward movement throughout the rest of the poem, and ending on such a descent,

Shall be lifted—nevermore!



structurally the poem reflects a downward spiral, with the final resolution resulting from the uninterrupted decline from the /i/ in “be” (semantically, an appropriate choice for the high tone) to the /ɔʹr/ in “nevermore.”¹¹

11 Meanwhile, the phonetic repetitions, reversals, and intermediary variations identified by Jakobson reveal consonantal themes not unlike Beethoven’s *Fifth*’s variations of *da-da-da-dum*, frequently interpreted to signify fate knocking at the door—one possible parallel between the poem’s phonetic and semantic constructions. However, since consonants function not as individual sounds but rather as tonal bracketing—i.e., addendums to tones—to identify the reader’s true movements of desire, we must revisit the movements between these tones. (See Appendix A for an explanation of transference of desire from vowels to consonants.)

By dividing the reader's attention between two tonal foci (/i/ and /ɔr/), Poe splits the reader's desire for either, which decreases the potential pace for the poem¹². Meanwhile, between these two tones, the reader views the other, complimentary tones as either leading to or away from these objects cathexes. The more logical each tone's return, the greater the reader perceives the pace during that movement, and this pace provides a veritable indicator for the development of the reader's desire.

Since Poe begins "The Raven" with a focus on /i/, the reader initially prioritizes a desire for /i/. In which case, on a first reading, /ɔr/ manifests as an obstacle rather than as an object cathexis. (For the following analysis, refer to the graphs in Appendix C.) Line 2 appears to the reader as a deceleration as the tones decrease in pitch from the /i/ in "many" and "curious" (the latter of the two registering as a random unmediated return to the object cathexis during a movement that otherwise emerges as a tonal descent) to the /ɔ'r/ in "lore." /ɔr/ having appeared only once in the first two lines, as opposed to the seven manifestations of /i/, /i/

¹² For example, consider the pace of "I am what I am" (five syllables) with that of "Mimi Maternity" (six syllables). Despite containing more syllables, "Mimi Maternity" maintains a far more rapid pace than "I am what I am" and through that pace creates the illusion of shorter duration.

First of all, "I am what I am" undergoes a tonic (the tone of desired return) modulation from the /I/ to the /æ/ of "am." In other words, the musical phrase transforms its object cathexis rather than develops it. The development of a tonic functions in terms of establishing the obstacles to and thus the desire for that tonic. In which case, "I am what I am," in comparison with "Mimi Maternity," transforms rather than develops the reader's desire and thus the reader's attention.

Second of all, the consonants in "I am what I am" also fail to develop a logical return of and thus desire for its specific type of tonal bracketing (or consonantal theme, as illustrated by Burke)—the *m*, which the movement from *wh* to *t* does not imply within the consonantal construction. "Mimi Maternity" may modulate its consonant cathexis from a bilabial explosive (*m*) to an alveolar dental flap (*t*), but these sub-objects cathexes likewise create obstacles to—and thus heighten the reader's desire for—the resolving tonic *y*, meanwhile manifesting desire for themselves during the processes. Furthermore, both the vowels and the consonants establish *logical* returns (See Appendix B). In other words, in "Mimi Maternity," the reader desires more, which means that the reader's id intensifies its drives which then constitute the reader's energy and thereby affect the reader's sense of time.

remains the keynote in line 3. Thus, the five more occurrences of /i/ in line 3 use the reader's desire to excite the line into an accelerated pace, especially at the end of the line with the expectation of the final /i/ that comes to fruition in "tapping." Line 4 preserves this pace with three successive /i/'s, each followed by an /æ/, which substantiates the logic of the third /i/'s return. However, the third /æ/ that follows the third /i/ misguides the reader into the unfulfilled expectation of another /i/, and the note that follows indeed does rise, however only to the /I/ in "my" and then again to the /e/ in "chamber," only to descend to the /ʌr/ in "chamber" and then to the /ɔr/ in "door."

This begins the tonal modulation from /i/ to /ɔr/. Starting to lose sight of the original object cathexis, the reader begins the next stanza at a slow pace. While /i/ appears three times in the first line (line 7) of this next stanza, the tones move *chromatically*, i.e. twisting through what we can call half-steps, in such a way as to distract the reader from any expectations of /i/, for chromatics appear as a sort of wandering (Bernstein 43). Furthermore, this specific line's central tone manifests as neither /i/ nor /ɔr/ but as the /ε/ in "December," which establishes a midway point between /i/ and /ɔr/—a degeneration from even the previous midway point of /æ/ in lines 4 and 5—the validity of this downward slope obvious in the next line, in line 8, with its three descents, each one ending in a lower tone, the final descent concluding in /ɔr/. In this fashion, this process of transference of desire from /i/ to /ɔr/ becomes concrete (though, incomplete) by the last line of this second stanza (line 12), in which both /i/ and /ɔr/ and the descent between them appear—the greater emotive value still

on the /i/ in “*here*” (even italicized by Poe, which emphasizes the tonal focus), but a developing emotive value now registering with the /ɔɪ/ in “evermore.” In other words, /ɔɪ/ is losing its status as an obstacle.

In the end, the poem resolves in the reader as a realization that the poem cannot end in /i/, for /ɔɪ/ has become the object cathexis. The transference is past the halfway mark. There is no conclusion—no resolution—in /i/, for the primary object of desire has become /ɔɪ/.

By ending with this /ɔɪ/, the poem’s conclusion satisfies the reader’s desire. According to Lacan, “the pleasure principle is a principle of homeostasis. Desire, on the other hand, finds its boundary, its strict relation, its limit...” (“Of the Subject...” 31). The poem’s conclusion surpasses this limit, this inability to achieve unity, by ending in the only place it can—the only place where the reader will desire to stay—with the object cathexis; the reader’s desire stretches beyond the limit into limitlessness, which is static pleasure, resolution: understanding—not merely of the completed transference to /ɔɪ/ but—of the completed musical object of the poem as a whole.

Needless to say, until this point, this has been a strictly musicological analysis using psychoanalysis as merely an organizing principle. The emotive value ascribed to the poem’s orchestration of sounds as yet reflects nothing of the poem’s semantic signification. Since a reader response theory is ultimately a Heideggerian study of *Being-in-the-text*, it proves valuable to note *in what* the reader participates. In other words, through our awareness of the reader as both the reading entity and the poem’s

music, we can psychoanalyze Poe's expression in terms of the reader's psychic appropriation of that expression, because the reader *is* Being-with-this-expression¹³.

Musically, what we have observed expressed in this poem appears as a loss of the primary object of desire and an acceptance of the obstacle to that object as its replacement. This musical expression appears not unlike the "*fort*"/"*da*" game Freud observes played by a one-and-a-half year old child ("Beyond..." 14-17). The boy's father had died at war, and the boy appeared very attached to his mother, but meanwhile, the boy never cried when his mother left him. Instead, the boy devised a game of throwing his toys beyond his sight and shouting "o-o-o-o" (the child's pronunciation of "*fort*" or "gone") with delight. When he encountered a wooden reel with a string tied to it, the boy held the string and tossed the reel over a cot, where the reel then disappeared, only to verbalize "o-o-o-o" as soon as it was gone. Then, with the string in his hand, the boy jerked the reel back into sight—screaming "*da*" or "there" with pleasure. According to Freud, the child recreated his mother's disappearance with this game not only to experience the pleasure of her reenacted return (15) but also to transform his participation in this disappearance from a passive role into an active one (16), for as Freud notes, the staged disappearance of the child's toys reoccurred "far more frequently than the episode in its entirety, with its pleasurable ending" (ibid).

Likewise, in "The Raven," Poe stages the disappearance and return of an object of desire, its disappearance—not merely more prevalent than but—overpowering its return. Poe was no stranger to loss. His father disappeared shortly

¹³ See page 19 above for a clarification of the dialectical Being of the-reader-with-the-music.

after his birth (Untermeyer *ix*). His mother died when he was three (*ix-x*). Although they remained in contact with each other, he and his two siblings separated soon thereafter from the resulting adoption proceedings (*ibid*). His brother died while Poe was in his twenties (*xii*). Poe published *The Raven and Other Poems* when he was thirty-six (100).

Although the reader needs not know Poe's physical participations with loss, the reading entity exists *in* this site-specific phonetic (and semantic) expression of it. While to psychoanalysis the author's expression appears irrelevant to an analysis of the reader, psychoanalysis analyzes only a subset of the total ontological experience, in which the reading entity posits its Being alongside with and according to the disclosed Being of this expression. As we shall see, the reading entity acquires this loss through this dialectical existence.

Here, the fact that the poem is a *linguistic* expression of loss becomes relevant. According to Lacan, after reflecting on Freud's observation that "the ego is first and foremost a bodily ego... a projection of a surface"¹⁴ ("The See-Saw..." 170), "[e]ach time the subject apprehends himself as form and as ego, ...his desire is projected outside. From whence arises the impossibility of all human coexistence" (171). In other words, one remains impotent to one's surroundings so long as one exists confined to physical form, which is the primary state of the ego. One's instinctual desires still exist, but they exist predominantly without connection to their intended objects. "Inversely, each time that, in the phenomenon of the other,

¹⁴ As presented here, this quote comes—not from Lacan but—directly from Freud (*The Ego...* 16). In which case, the above citation refers not to Lacan's words but rather to his reference to them.

something appears which once again allows the subject to reproject... the image of the *Idealich* [ideal ego], ...the desire revives in the subject. But it is revived verbally” (ibid). That is, when one sees an other, one desires that other, as well as desires to be desired by that other, and acknowledges whatever the other desires as the same desire in oneself¹⁵, but this final act of acknowledgement requires language. According to Lacan, by being a linguistic phenomenon, it becomes an act of consciousness or rather a movement from bodily ego to consciousness where one exists in a more ideal state, where one reconstitutes one’s surroundings psychically as opposed to forcefully becoming constituted by them physically (ibid). Likewise, by the language act of reading Poe’s verbal expression, the reader shares in this act of “*introjection*” (168), this replacement of the real with the imaginary, this reconstitution of the Self from an incapable bodily ego void of connection with external objects of desire into a potent consciousness with a material language to which one can redirect that desire.

Ironically, however, the reading entity’s participation *with* the writer’s material language still forcefully reconstitutes the reader, only now both physically and psychically, and it is through this reconstitution that the entity engaged in reading acquires the loss in Poe’s expression. The writing deceives the reader into an active self-perception. In this sense, through the reading entity’s connection with the material sounds of Poe’s language, “The Raven” manifests very similarly to Freud’s

¹⁵ The other is constituted in one’s consciousness in the imaginary (i.e., the construction of an image). Therefore, as imagined by the subject, the other’s desire is ultimately the subject’s desire.

description of *Hamlet* as a psychopathological drama, with similar results on its reader.

[*Hamlet*] has as its subject the way in which a man who has so far been normal becomes neurotic owing to the peculiar nature of the task by which he is faced, a man, in whom an impulse that has hitherto been successfully suppressed endeavours to make its way into action.... (1) The hero is not psychopathic, but only *becomes* psychopathic in the course of the action of the play. (2) The repressed impulse is one of those which are similarly repressed in all of us, and the repression of which is part and parcel of the foundations of our personal evolution. It is this repression which is shaken up by the situation in the play. As a result of these two characteristics it is easy for us to recognize ourselves in the hero: we are susceptible to the same conflict as he is.... (3) It appears as a necessary precondition of this form of art that the impulse that is struggling into consciousness, however clearly it is recognizable, is never given a definite name; so that in the spectator too the process is carried through with his attention averted, and he is in the grip of his emotions instead of taking stock of what is happening. (“Psychopathic...” 309)

Like with Prince Hamlet, the reader presumes Poe’s narrator to be “normal” at the onset of the poem. Since the poem begins with this presumption, the narrator is not neurotic but rather *becomes* neurotic. According to Freud, “in neurotics the

repression is on the brink of failing; it is unstable and needs a constant renewal of expenditure...” (ibid) in order to maintain the repression.

However, what Poe’s narrator has repressed is merely a loss, which is not only a universal experience but likewise a universal repression dating back to each infant’s first trauma of separation anxiety, and the narrator not only does not identify this universal experience but instead names a very personal loss (the loss of Lenore) symbolic of this universal experience. Furthermore, on the level of individual sounds, there is no name at all—just the loss relived. The simple, easily interpreted high front vowel /i/ of origin becomes obscured and overcome by the ambiguous proximal low formants of the “mysterious” dark back vowel /ɔr/. According to Freud, “[i]t would seem to be the dramatist’s business to induce the same illness in *us*; and this can best be achieved if we are made to follow the development of the illness along with the sufferer” (310; Freud’s emphasis).¹⁶

Since the reader’s primary mode of Being manifests as one of desire, and since according to Lacan desire is the desire of an other, the reader acquires the narrator’s desire firstly for the lost Lenore and secondly for the loss of Lenore, as identified in the corresponding transference of desire in the material language of the poem’s music (the loss of desire for /i/ for its obstacle /ɔr/, which becomes associated with “Lenore” and “nevermore”). The obstacle (the loss) replaces the object (the lost)

¹⁶ This explains the creepy, uncanny feeling instilled in the reader. According to Freud, the “uncanny” (“*unheimlich*”) derives from two classes: from a manifestation that confirms an infantile belief system overcome in maturation and from the revisitation of something familiar that has been repressed (“The ‘Uncanny’” 251). Musically, the transference of desire between the original tone to its primary obstacle causes the latter to occur in the reader: the revisitation of the repressed original trauma of separation anxiety. Meanwhile, the personification of the raven in the poem’s semantic plane corresponds to the infantile belief system overcome by the reader in maturation.

as the cathexis. This desire for the loss of Lenore perpetuates the neurosis in the reader.

More specifically, when we reflect on Freud and Lacan's analyses together, we can see that the material language to which the reader redirects one's desire in Poe's poem causes a forced regression, which functions as an unnatural neurotic failure of repression. In order to bring about the reader's regression to this initial separation, the poem's music develops both a desire for and a separation from /i/. The repetition of /i/ in the first line establishes this desire through expectation: since the initial tones ascend to /i/ and since /i/ appears five times, the reader expects /i/ to return. Meanwhile, the musical composition causes the separation from /i/ by occluding the reader from it; by making the expectation of the return of /i/ inaccessible to the reader through the replacement of ascents with descents as well as by diminishing /i/'s reappearance, the poem prevents the reader from predicting the tone's return.

However, to displace this desire from /i/ to /ɔr/, the poem's music must take advantage of the reader's tendency to repress the loss, which tendency is informed by the reader not naturally being neurotic. According to Freud, "[i]n anyone who is *not* neurotic this recognition will meet only with aversion and will call up a readiness to repeat the act of repression" ("Psychopathic..." 309; Freud's emphasis). In which case, the reader undergoes a re-repression of this initial, universal loss.

The very same phenomenon of this loss, as symbolically defined by the denied access to the expectation of the return of /i/, establishes the reciprocal access to the expectation of its tonal substitute. In other words, the loss of the expectation of

/i/ and the discovery of the expectation of /ɔr/ are one and the same. Furthermore, the loss of the desire for /i/ (detectable in the last line of the poem with the lack of emphasis on “be”) likewise equates the completed transference of that desire to /ɔr/, the final sound in the poem. We have already identified /i/ to be symbolic, but we find no such counter-significance for /ɔr/. Musically, despite the poem’s fixation on absence in place of presence in the semantic plane, /ɔr/ does not register as an absence, despite its correspondence to the absence of /i/. In which case, the reader seems to experience an exchange of cathexis from the symbolic to the non-symbolic.

Richard Boothby—in a compelling essay in which he attempts to negotiate psychoanalysis with phenomenology through Freudian energetics, the Lacanian concepts of the imaginary and the symbolic, and Gestalt psychology—reflects upon “the mechanism of repression as a disturbance in the relation between *thing-presentations* and *word-presentations*,” in Freudian terms (408; emphasis Boothby’s), or as “a shift of valence from the symbolic to the imaginary axis,” in Lacanian terms (410).

That “the unconscious presentation is the presentation of the thing alone” means that a psychical process that might otherwise pass along the circuits of the signifying system has become caught up in an imaginary formation.

This view [...] explains... why the processes of resistance and repression characteristically leave behind an unusually intense

image¹⁷. The presence of the image is not merely a by-product of the process but rather represents an essential aspect of its operation. In repression, the unfolding of a symbolic process has been submitted to the force of an imaginary effect.... The psychical process has become bound to a particular representation. In the language of Freud's concepts, we may say, thought has come under the influence of a "fixation." (ibid.)

In the case of Poe's "The Raven," the image upon which the reader fixates in the imaginary in order to repress the symbolic /i/ manifests as the sound image /ɔr/. This explains the haunting memory of the sound encapsulated in everyone who has ever read the poem. Everyone remembers "nevermore."

To clarify the significance of this transference, we can reflect on Lacan's seminar on Poe's "The Purloined Letter." Through Lacan's analysis, we can see how the cathexis for /i/ becomes transferred to /ɔr/ without the reader's conscious awareness of the exchange. In Poe's story, in the presence of the King and Queen, a presumably well-to-do high-ranking minister observes the Queen's awkward disposition in relation to the King and an exposed letter to which the King obviously remains oblivious. The minister ascertains that the letter, though exposed, exists as some sort of secret withheld from the King by the Queen. In understanding this, the

¹⁷ Boothby reviews several acts of repression discussed by Freud (400, 404, 406-408) and one discussed by Lacan (399-400) in which the repression corresponded to the extreme recollection of an intense image. In one of the Freudian examples, the exchange of the symbolic for an image created the foundation for a fetish (404).

minister exchanges the letter for one of his own during an indiscrete distraction. The King remains unaware. The Queen witnesses the act helplessly.

After the police fail to recover the letter from the minister's apartment, the police solicit the aid of a detective. The police inform the detective that he may not open the letter if he should find it. In the minister's apartment, the detective encounters the letter exactly as the minister found the letter amidst discussion with the King and Queen: out in the open. Like the minister before him, the detective stages a distraction and replaces the letter with one of his own.

According to Lacan, the letter holds a certain power over its observer:

...[O]ne cannot come into contact [with the letter] without being immediately caught in its play.... One can say that, when the characters get a hold of this letter, something gets a hold of them and carries them along and this something clearly has dominion over their individual idiosyncrasies. Whoever they might be, at this stage of the symbolic transformation of the letter, they will be defined solely by their position in relation to this radical subject.... This position isn't fixed. In so far as they have entered into the necessity, into the movement peculiar to the letter, they each become, in the course of successive scenes, functionally different in relation to the essential reality which it constitutes. In other words, ...for each of them the letter is his unconscious. It is his unconsciousness with all its consequences, that is to say that at each point in the symbolic circuit, each of them becomes someone else. ("Purloined..." 196-197)

In other words, the external object—although empty of each viewer’s understanding (for nobody has opened the letter)—forms an integral part of the imaginary in each observer.

The external object controls each viewer through that person’s desire. Lacan questions the Queen’s incentive for her desperate attempts to retrieve the letter: “These fears of the Queen, if you look at them closely, are quite out of proportion. For, as noted in the tale, this letter may well be a terrible weapon, but all that is needed for it to be destroyed is for it to be put to use” (200). If, as a motive, “fear” proves unsubstantiated, then her only remaining incentive correlates with her desire for the object.

Meanwhile, “...there’s nothing to indicate that the minister has ever said anything, ever asked anything of the Queen. On the contrary, he has the letter and he remains silent” (ibid). As Lacan relates, to hide the letter from the police, the minister transforms the letter. “...[I]t is now addressed in [a] sophisticated feminine hand, and bears his own seal. It’s a sort of love-letter he’s sent himself” (199). The implication concerns the minister’s desire, which Lacan suspects because of the minister’s otherwise lack of motive.

In the end, the intolerable nature of the pressure constituted by the letter is due to the fact that the minister has the same attitude as the Queen in relation to the letter—he doesn’t speak of it. And he doesn’t speak of it because he can no more speak of it than she can. And simply from the fact that he cannot speak of it, he finds himself in the course of the second scene in the same position as the Queen, and he

won't be able to do anything other than let himself be dispossessed of it. This is not due to the ingenuity of [the detective], but to the structure of things. (201)

This “structure of things” corresponds to the structure of desire in relation to objects and Others. The Queen desires the letter. In the first scene in the royal bedroom, the minister saw this desire in the Other of the Queen. Since for the minister the Queen exists solely in the imaginary, not merely the Queen but also her desire manifest in his psyche. Her desire is his desire.

However, since the minister does not open the letter, he fails to recognize or perhaps even to know how to recognize that the detective has exchanged the desired letter for the undesired letter. In this way, the “undesired” letter acquires the cathexis previously designated for the “desired” letter. The story ends without the minister's knowledge of the swap.

Likewise, Poe makes an equivalent swap in “The Raven.” Since Poe plays with /i/, the reader assumes that Poe desires /i/, and then Poe takes advantage of the reader (of every reader) becoming caught in /i/'s play, for the reader constructs Poe's /i/ in the imaginary where Poe's /i/ manifests as the reader's /i/, and that is when Poe takes the /i/ away, replaces it with /ɔr/. /i/ had symbolic meaning. /ɔr/ is just a sound—yet another empty letter passed around.

As we have seen, “The Raven” shifts its tonal access from /i/ to /ɔr/ to force a regression in its reader to the point of separation anxiety, which induces a neurosis in the reader. The reader resolves this neurosis by repressing the symbolic loss, which

act of repression transfers the cathexis to the sound image /ɔr/. This transference perpetuates the neurosis on the semantic plane, since the reader associates /ɔr/ with “Lenore” and “nevermore.” Through this transference, the reader desires the loss over the lost in the same way that the minister in Poe’s “The Purloined Letter” desires replacement letter—i.e., the loss of the original letter—over the lost letter.

Conclusion

Without understanding *what* Reader Bob brings to the table, we see him *at* the table and *in* “The Raven.” In any other activity at the table, one inevitably contends with objects and deals with desires for some of them and thus relates to the others as potential obstacles either denying or providing access. When participating in the poem’s musical entity, Reader Bob addresses musical objects and develops corresponding emotive responses. The entity of the orchestration of those musical objects to which Reader Bob conforms and with which he dialectically conjoins proves essential to the resulting emotive response. Being an expression of loss, the music places Reader Bob in that loss where he responds in the same way in which he naturally reacts to other losses in his life. He deals with it. To deal with the loss, he represses it. To repress it, he accepts something else, whatever else, presented to him as his desire’s replacement, even if the replacement does not have the symbolic meaning of the original object that he desired. Furthermore, he endows that replacement with value. He cherishes it and carries it with him when he leaves that table—like an honorable scar.

The activity in which Reader Bob participates at that table manifests as a logic, internalized understanding by which he acts as a consequence. The more Reader Bob understands what transpires at that table, the more he formulates expectations of what will transpire. He wants to see his potential. He cares about his existence at that table. Unexpected developments enhance his desire for understanding. Meanwhile, expectations that come to fruition satisfy that desire.

Meaning exists not merely in a semantic network but rather begins in the vocalization of that network, even if that vocalization is imagined. Phonemes function as more than semantic indicators. Reader Bob desires /ɔr/ separately from its association with “nevermore” or “Lenore.” On the contrary, the reader’s desire for that sound informs the reader’s relationship to those two words.

In which case, this understanding must lead us to new interpretive directions. How much of our phenomenal experience with written texts derives its meaning from the language’s specific musical constructions? Since “musicality” exists also in prose, can we assume that this analysis lends itself to more than a reader’s participation in poetry? Is this phenomenal experience confined to obvious moments of “musicality,” or does a written text’s omnipresent reference to speech sounds imply a consistent musical manipulation of our desires? As we can see, our understanding of literature both in terms of specific texts and as a general whole stands to benefit from continued attempts at musicological analyses.

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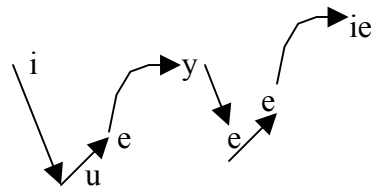
APPENDIX A

Transference of Desire from Vowels to Consonants

To exemplify this transference, I shall refer to a sentence authored by a friend of mine, Melissa Billingsly. Billingsly's sentence makes sense within its context. However, when extracted from the text, the sentence still functions as a musical phrase, despite the insignificance of the words' meanings. Below I shall diagram the sentence. (Please notice the sounds and not the graphemes.)

I pulled her by her pennies.

Vowels:



The tones fall twice and rise twice, both falls being abrupt and unmediated by an interceding tone. Both rises, on the other hand, proceed in three gradations: its initial starting place, its adjacent rising tone, and, after skipping the immediate succession, the third and final tone. However, the first two tones in each rise do not establish each rise's next logical succession to create the notion of skipping a tone. Rather, each rise requires the presence of the notes external to it as a reference point to define notes that could have been present in each rise but were not. The first rise establishes the notion of a skipped note only as an afterthought realized by the second tone in the second rise. However, the second rise reflects this gap immediately,

recalling the previous sound (*i, y*), not to mention now following the pattern initiated by the first rise.

The musical phrase misses tonality by not landing on (*i, y*) instead of on *ie*. In other words, the final tone creates dissonance.

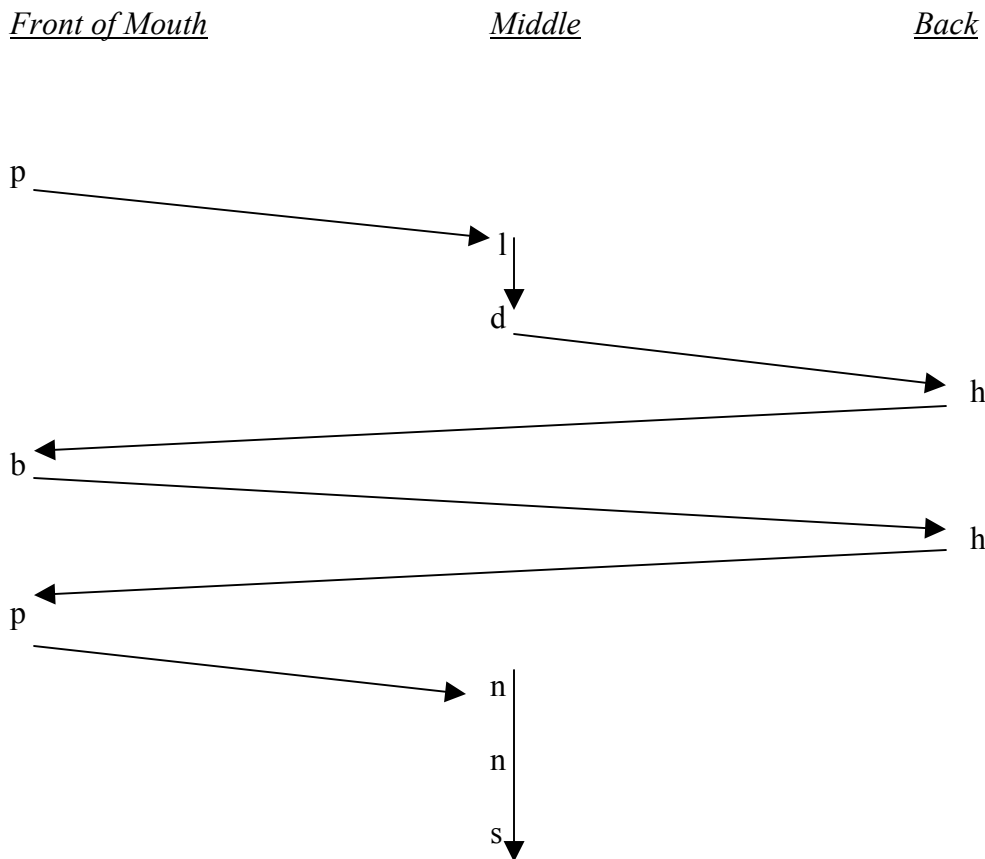
It is almost impossible to arrive at a definition of dissonant or dissonance which would satisfy all musicians... One reasonably satisfactory definition may be obtained by mentioning that dissonant chords seem to want to move on to something else (they are restless), while the opposite—consonant chords—appear to be stable and can easily provide a stopping point. (Grant 125)

Because of this dissonance, “I pulled her by her pennies,” as a musical phrase [“a natural division in a melody, clearly defined as to beginning and end; the shortest meaningful part of a composition” (Grant 312)], plays with the reader’s expectations. For if my friend had written “I pulled her by her pen-nigh,” then the phrase would have made such complete musical sense (by ending on the tonic) that it would not have amused the reader as much. However, by following the different but equally logical structure of two abrupt falls and two gradual rises that both skip a tone, the phrase ironically skips over the tonic with the last note.

Since tonality does not tie this musical phrase together, the sentence requires its unity from the rhythm. Notice that in my alternate sentence above (“I pulled her by her pen-nigh”) I omitted the final *s* that was present in “I pulled her by her pennies.” Not only does the new sentence achieve unity without the *s*, but observe the awkwardness in pronouncing the final *s* if it were inserted: “I pulled her by her

pen-nighs.” As we’ll see by diagramming the consonants, the final *s* in Billingsly’s sentence serves the specific function of reconnection to compensate for the dissonance.

Consonants:



(I exclude *r* and the second *l* because *r* functions as a compliment to the vowels and because the second *l* lacks a sound of its own.)

The final *s* overemphasizes the center of the mouth to establish a notion of centrality. In other words, without a reason to reemphasize the structure’s centrality, the final *s* is excessive. However, since tonality is not achieved but rather leaped over

to pursue the alternate logic of *ie*, the unity of the musical phrase is at stake until its structure redefines its center with the final *s*.

Furthermore, the final *s*, as seen in the diagram above, appears as a *forced* centrality. In other words, the termination of the phrase on a back consonant would have developed a more natural equilibrium and thus sense of completion, since that back consonant would offset the initiation of the phrase on the front consonant *p*. Consider, for example, the more natural (less humorous) sense of unity expressed in “I pulled her by her pennie*k*” (pronounced “PEN-NEEK”). Here, the only amusement derives from the deviation from the universal sense of tonality; otherwise, the musical phrase sounds more natural and therefore less amusing than “I pulled her by her pennies.”

Above, I mentioned that a completely balanced system would not *amuse* the reader as much. In other words, the above sound system produces an element of humor. “I pulled her by her pennies” relocates its sense of balance from the universal balance of tonality to this particular phrase’s overcompensated rhythmic centrality. In Freudian terms, this is *condensation with substitutive modification* (*Jokes* 25), condensed because a musical phrase is “the shortest meaningful part of a composition” (Grant 312) as well as because of the forced centrality of the phrase’s rhythm.

The lack of tonality registers as a failed negotiation between the (intentionally in-existent) ego and the outside world, which recognition immediately reconfigures into a successful negotiation through the realization of the rhythmic centrality established by the final *s*. This immediate succession requires the *condensation*

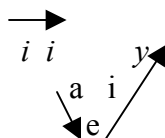
aspect of the Freudian analysis. Meanwhile, the substitution of these recognitions accounts for the *substitutive* element through which the anxiety from the failed negotiation surrenders to the pleasure derived from the successful negotiation to create the humorous response.

The same process occurs within the musical phrase “flip flop.” The consonants (*f, l, p*) are balanced within themselves (front, mid, front) but then repeat exactly to offset the tonal inequality of *i* and *o*. As seen in this example of humor, the reader experiences a separate notion of the text along with the informational (semantic) realization of it.

APPENDIX B

“Mimi Maternity”

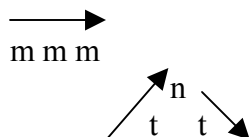
Let us observe the vowel system in terms of pitch. In the following diagram, the sequence from left to right represents the chronological progression of each sound in time. Meanwhile, the descent and ascent of the tones in physical space mark the descent and ascent of the tones in pitch (please notice the sounds and not the graphemes):



The notation reflects an equilibrium in motion completed by the last sound *y*, which pins the balanced system of the bottom three sounds (*a*, *e*, *i*) to the balanced system of the top three sounds (*i*, *i*, *y*).

This equilibrium of vowels contrasts an equilibrium of consonants. We shall structure the consonants based on where each consonant is formed in the mouth:

Front of the Mouth



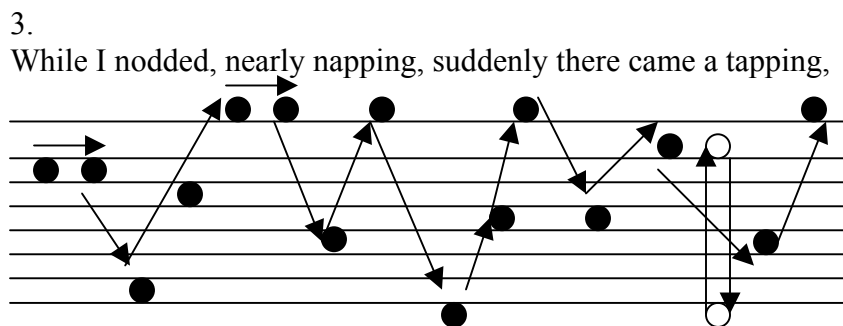
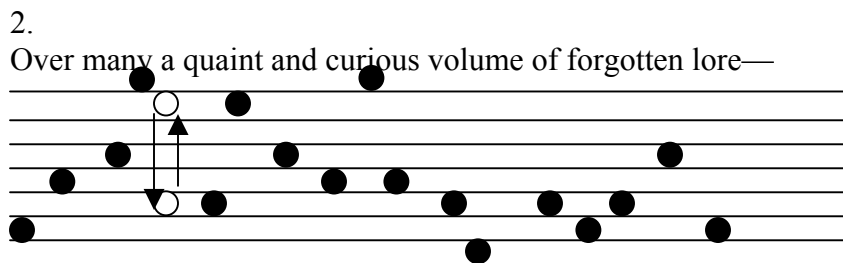
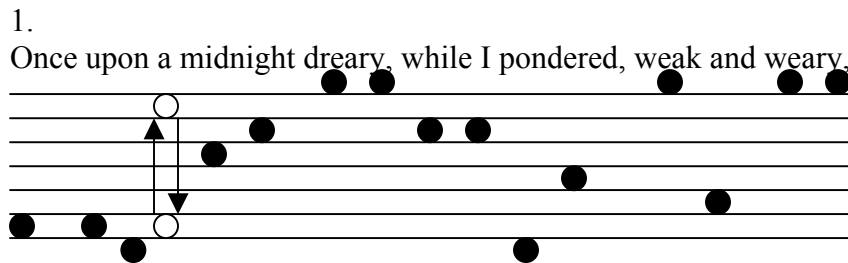
Back of the Mouth

(Because of its supplementary effects on the vowel—as opposed to possessing a distinct sound of its own—I align the *r* with the *e* rather than with the other consonants, but otherwise the *r* fits nicely next to the *n*.) Again we have two balanced systems. However, they appear as two separate systems until connected by the vowels between them, equilibrium again restored by the end *y*.

APPENDIX C

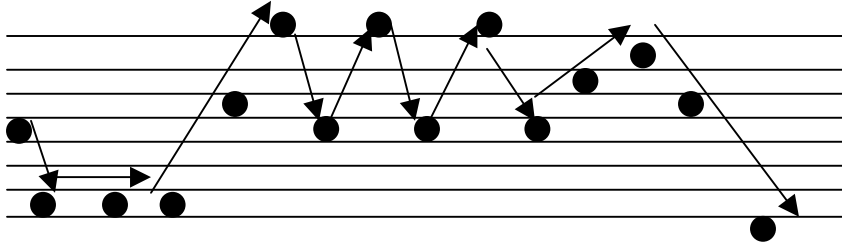
Edgar Allan Poe's "The Raven."

Each diagram below reflects the vowels' pitches relative to each other in the poetic line directly above it. Open circles indicate ambiguous pitches. Arrows clarify the movement from each vowel to the next where the movement is not obvious. The first twelve lines comprise the poem's first two stanzas. Meanwhile, the last line corresponds to the last line of the poem.



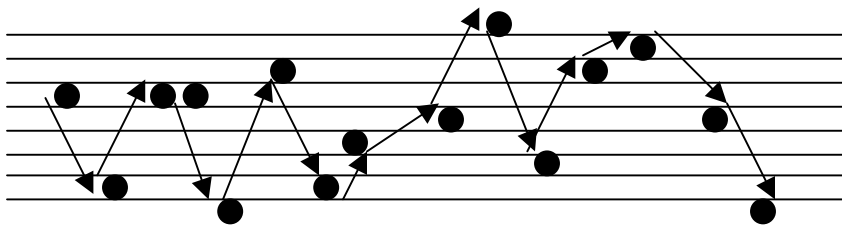
4.

As of some one gently rapping, rapping at my chamber door.



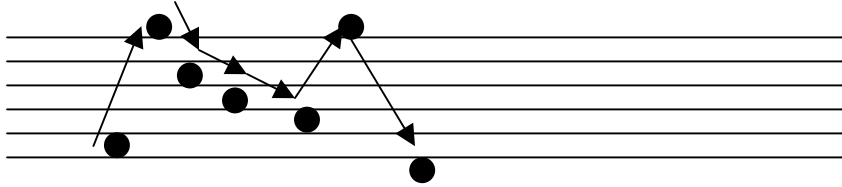
5.

“’Tis some visitor,” I muttered, “tapping at my chamber door—



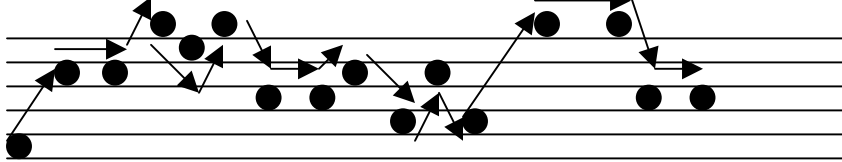
6.

Only this and nothing more.”



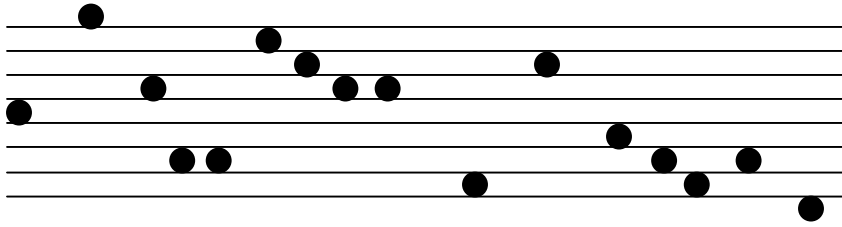
7.

Ah, distinctly I remember it was in the bleak December;



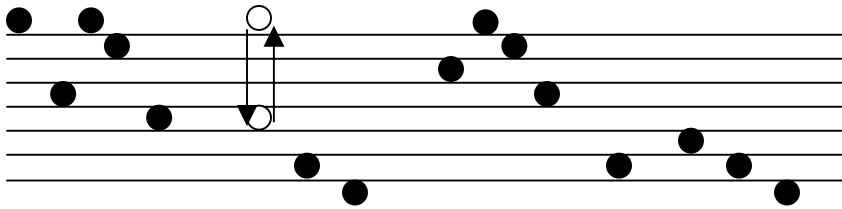
8.

And each separate dying ember wrought its ghost upon the floor.



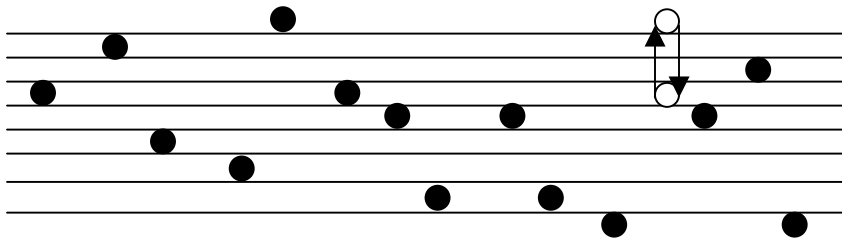
9.

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



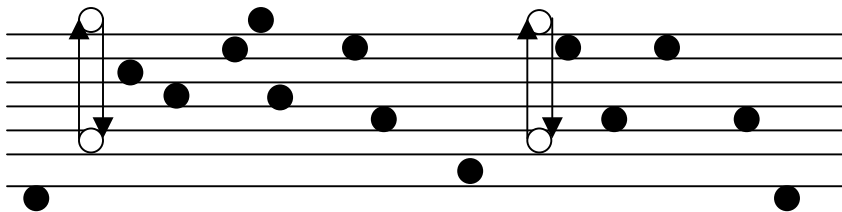
10.

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



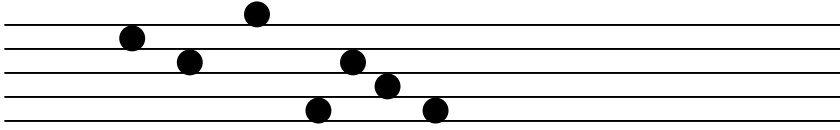
11.

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



12.

Nameless *here* for evermore.



108.

Shall be lifted—nevermore!

