Contextual materials for "The Raven"

A. First publication of "The Raven," editor's note *Evening Mirror* (New York), January 29, 1845

We are permitted to copy (in advance of publication) from the 2d No. of the American Review, the following remarkable poem by EDGAR POE. In our opinion, it is the most effective single example of "fugitive poetry" ever published in this country; and unsurpassed in English poetry for subtle conception, masterly ingenuity of versification, and consistent, sustaining of imaginative lift and "pokerishness." It is one of these "dainties bred in a book" which we *feed* on. It will stick to the memory of everybody who reads it.

B. From first book publication, *The Raven and Other Poems* (New York: Wiley and Putnam, 1845)

Dedication:

TO THE NOBLEST OF HER SEX —
TO THE AUTHOR OF
"THE DRAMA OF EXILE" —
TO MISS ELIZABETH BARRETT BARRETT,
OF ENGLAND,
I DEDICATE THIS VOLUME,
WITH THE MOST ENTHUSIASTIC ADMIRATION
AND WITH THE MOST SINCERE ESTEEM.

E. A. P.

Background on dedication: Elizabeth Barrett Barrett became Elizabeth Barrett Browning after her marriage to Robert Browning. She was a highly popular and acclaimed English poet in Poe's time. Poe reviewed Barrett's "Drama of Exile" in his *Broadway Journal* for January 4, 1845, just before he published "The Raven." Her poem "Lady Geraldine's Courtship," included in the collection mentioned, served as the model for the meter of Poe's "The Raven."

From Poe's Review of Barrett's *Drama of Exile*, published in January 1845:

> 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.

From Tennyson's "Locksley Hall" (1838):

O my cousin, shallow hearted! O my Amy, mine no more!
O the dreary, dreary moorland! O the Barren, barren shore!

From Elizabeth Barrett's "Lady Geraldine's Courtship" (1844) (American first edition):

"Eyes," he said, "now throbbing through me! Are ye eyes that did undo me?
Shining eyes, like antique jewels set in Parian statue stone!
Underneath that calm white forehead, are ye ever burning torrid,
O'er the desolate sand-desert of my heart and life undone?"
With a rushing stir, uncertain, in the air, the purple curtain
Swelleth in and swelleth out around her motionless pale brows;
While the gliding of the river sends a rippling noise forever
Through the open casement whitened by the moonlight's slant repose.

PREFACE TO THE 1845 EDITION

THESE trifles are collected and republished chiefly with a view to their redemption from the many improvements to which they have been subjected while going "the rounds of the press." I am naturally anxious that if what I have written is to circulate at all, it should circulate as I wrote it. In defence of my own taste, nevertheless, it is incumbent on me to say that I think nothing in this volume of much value to the public, or very creditable to myself. Events not to be controlled have prevented me from making, at any time, any serious effort in what, under happier circumstances, would have been the field of my choice. With me poetry has been not a purpose, but a passion; and the passions should be held in reverence; they must not -- they cannot at will be excited, with an eye to the paltry compensations, or the more paltry commendations, of mankind. E.A.P

C. Reception of The Raven (The Poe Log)

EARLY FEBRUARY, 1845. Elizabeth Oakes Smith, a popular poet and friend of Poe's, recalls:

The *Raven* was first published in the *New York Review.* I had not yet seen it, when one evening Charles Fenno Hoffman called with the *Review,* and read it to me. He was a fine reader, and read the poem with great feeling. His reading affected me so much I arose and walked the floor, and said to him, "It is Edgar Poe himself." He had not told me who the author was; indeed, it was published anonymously. "Well," said I, "every production of genius has an internal life as well as its external. Now, how do you interpret this, Mr. Hoffman?" The latter, who had had many disappointments and griefs in life, replied, "It is despair brooding over wisdom."

The next evening who should call but Mr. Poe. I told him what Mr. Hoffman had said. Poe folded his arms and looked down, saying, "That is a recognition." Soon the Raven became known everywhere, and everyone was saying 'Nevermore.'

One afternoon Poe called on me and said, "I find my Raven is really being talked about a great deal. I was at the theatre last night, and the actor interpolated the word

'Nevermore,' and it did add force to the sentiment that was given, and the audience immediately (he looked so pleased when he said this), evidently took the allusion" (Oakes-Smith quoted by Derby, pp. 547-48).

15 FEBRUARY. The *New World*'s editor Charles Eames comments:

> Edgar A. Poe, we believe under the '*nom de plume*' of Quarles, gives a wild and *shivery* poem, which he calls the Raven. It is written in a Stanza unknown before to gods, men, and booksellers, but it fills and delights the ear strangely with its wild and clashing music. Everybody reads the Poem and praises it — justly we think, for it seems to us full of originality and power.

21 NOVEMBER 1845. In the *Evening Mirror* George P. Morris reviews *The Raven and Other Poems:*

> In spite of Mr. Poe's majestic disclaimer of any great interest in this book, we must venture to think it contains a good deal of that which we call poetry-an element too *rare* in these days of frigid verse-making to be treated with disregard." He describes the effect of Poe's poems on the reader:
>
> Tall shadows and a sighing silence seem to close around us as we read. We feel dream land to be more real and more touching than the actual life we have left .... The Raven, for instance, which we have been surprised to hear called, in spite of its exquisite versification, somewhat aimless and unsatisfactory, leaves with us no such impression; but on the contrary, the shadowy and indistinct implied resemblance of the material and immaterial throughout, gives an indescribable charm to the poem .... The reader who cannot feel some of the poet's "fantastic terrors," hear the "whisper'd word, LENORE," perceive the air grow denser "perfum'd from an unseen censer," and at least catch some dim vanishing glimpse of the deathly beauty of "The rare and radiant maiden" mourned so agonizingly, can have pondered but little over those "quaint and curious volumes of forgotten lore" which so well introduce this "stately raven of the saintly days of yore." We recommend to him a year's regimen of monkish legends, and chronicles with which Warton and Scott fed the poetic fire ....

AFTER 1 MARCH. Mrs. Frances S. Osgood, an popular American poet, meets Poe. She recalls:

> My first meeting with the poet was at the Astor House. A few days previous, Mr. Willis had handed me, at the *table d'hôte*, that strange and thrilling poem entitled "The Raven;" saying that the author wanted my opinion of it. Its effect upon me was so singular, so like that of "wierd, unearthly music;" that it was with a feeling almost of dread, I heard he desired an introduction. Yet I could not refuse without seeming ungrateful, because I had just heard of his enthusiastic and partial eulogy of my writings, in his lecture on American Literature. I shall never forget the morning when I was summoned to the drawing-room by Mr. Willis to receive him. With his proud and beautiful head erect, his dark eyes flashing with the elective light of feeling and of thought, a peculiar, an inimitable blending of sweetness and hauteur in his expression and

manner, he greeted me, calmly, gravely, almost coldly; yet with so marked an earnestness that I could not help being deeply impressed by it. From that moment until his death we were friends; although we met only during the first year of our acquaintance. . . . .

APRIL, 1846. LONDON. Elizabeth Barrett Barrett writes Poe, thanking him for the volume containing his *Tales* and *The Raven and Other Poems.* She expresses her "sense of the high honor" Poe has done her by dedicating his poems to her: "It is too great a distinction, conferred by a hand of too liberal generosity. I wish for my own sake I were worthy of it." She also thanks him, "as another reader," for "this vivid writing, this power which is felt! Your 'Raven' has produced a sensation, a 'fit horror,' here in England. Some of my friends are taken by the fear of it and some by the music. I hear of persons haunted by the 'Nevermore,' and one acquaintance of mine who has the misfortune of possessing a 'bust of Pallas' never can bear to look at it in the twilight." Poe's "Valdemar" is now "going the round of the newspapers, about mesmerism, throwing us all into 'most admired disorder,' and dreadful doubts as to whether 'it can be true,' as the children say of ghost stories"

D. Parodies of "The Raven": Dozens of parodies and versions of "The Raven" started appearing almost immediately upon the poem's publication. Here are a few of them.

1. **17 FEBRUARY. NEW YORK.** The *Evening Mirror* publishes "The Owl: A Capital Parody on Mr. Poe's Raven" by "Sarles."

   But the owl he looked so lonely, saying that word and that only,
   That a thimble-full of whiskey I did speedily outpour
   In a tea-cup on the table, which, as well as I was able,
   I invited him to drink of, saying there was plenty more
   But the owl he shook his head, and threw the whiskey on the floor,
   Plainly saying, "nevermore!"
   "What? a temperance owl, by thunder! Well, indeed 'tis no great wonder;
   He has doubtless just now come from out the 'Tabernacle' door,
   Where he's heard a temperance lecture, and has seen a fearful picture
   Of the consequences of running up a whiskey-toddy score
   Of the evils brought by sixpence worth inside the pothouse door —
   That it is, and nothing more.

2. **22 FEBRUARY.** The *New World* reprints "THE RAVEN: By Quarles" from the *American Review*. In an adjoining column it publishes "THE VETO": By Snarles, a satire on municipal politicians; each of the eighteen stanzas parodies the adjacent stanza in Poe's poem:

   Once upon an evening dreary, the Council pondered weak and weary,
   Over many a long petition which was voted down a bore.
   While they nodded, mostly napping, suddenly there came a tapping,

As of some one gently rapping at the Corporation's door —
"'Tis some petition," then they muttered, "come to ask for something more —
Only this and nothing more:"

3. **25 MARCH.** The *Evening Mirror* contains "The Craven: BY POH!" — an advertisement:

Once upon a midnight dreary, while with toil and care quite weary,
I was pondering on man's proneness to deceitfulness and guile,
Soon I fell into a seeming state 'twixt wakefulness and dreaming,
When my mind's eye saw a scheming fellow counterfeiting Soap —
Yes! counterfeiting GOURAUD's matchless *Medicated Soap;*
Twisting sand into a rope! . . . .
I said — "thou man of evil (I will not call thee devil,)
Get thee back into the darkness and the night's Plutonian shore!
By *my fame* thou hast a token, that the spells which thou hast spoken,
Are scattered all, and broken! Craven, wilt thou now give o'er,
And never counterfeit my *Soap* or *Poudres* any more?"
Quoth the craven — "Never more!"

Dr. F. FELIX GOURAUD, of 67 Walker street, again deems it necessary to caution the public against purchasing any *imitations* of his matchless *Italian Medicated Soap*, incomparable *Poudres Subtiles* and marvellous *Grecian Hair Dye*.

4. **19 APRIL.** The *New World* publishes "A Vision" by "Snarles," a parody of "The Raven" satirizing "all the City's Press,' in which "Each paper seemed personified, by goblins strange and tall." The narrator's description of the *Broadway Journal* refers to Poe's fearless criticism:

Then with step sedate and stately, as if thrones had borne him lately,
Came a bold and daring warrior up the distant echoing floor;
As he passed the COURIER's Colonel, then I saw THE BROADWAY JOURNAL,
In a character supernal, on his gallant front he bore,
And with stately step and solemn marched he proudly through the door,
As if he pondered, evermore.

With his keen sardonic smiling, every other care beguiling,
Right and left he bravely wielded a double — edged and broad claymore,
And with gallant presence dashing, 'mid his confreres stoutly clashing,
He unpityingly went slashing, as he keenly scanned them o'er,
While with eye and mien undaunted, such a gallant presence bore,
As might awe them, evermore.

Neither rank nor station heeding, with his foes around him bleeding,

Sternly, singly, and alone, his course he kept upon that floor;
While the countless foes attacking, neither strength nor valor lacking,
On his goodly armor hacking, wrought no change his visage o'er,
As with high and honest aim, he still his falchion proudly bore,
Resisting error, evermore.

5. **18 MARCH 1848**. The *Home journal* publishes Sarah Helen Whitman's "To Edgar A. Poe," prefacing it with this editorial explanation: "The following Valentine, by one of America's most justly distinguished poetesses, was among the number received at the Valentine *soiree,* commemorated in our paper of the 4th instant. A *poem,* however, whose intrinsic beauty takes it quite out of the category of ordinary Valentines, seemed to demand the honor of separate publication." Here is the first stanza:

Oh, thou grim and ancient Raven,
From the Night's Plutonian shore,
Oft, in dreams, thy ghastly pinions
Wave and flutter round my door
Oft thy shadow dims the moonlight
Sleeping on my chamber floor!

E. Poems of Poe's time that show similarities in theme and form; possible sources for and influences on "The Raven"

1. Poems about lost, loved women are common in romantic poetry. See one of Wordsworth's "Lucy" poems, for example:

SHE dwelt among the untrodden ways
Beside the springs of Dove,
A Maid whom there were none to praise
And very few to love:

A violet by a mossy stone
Half hidden from the eye!
--Fair as a star, when only one
Is shining in the sky.

She lived unknown, and few could know
When Lucy ceased to be;
But she is in her grave, and, oh,
The difference to me! (1799)

Or this poem by Poe's English contemporary, Lord Tennyson (1809-1892):

Claribel (1830)

Where Claribel low-lieth
The breezes pause and die,
Letting the rose-leaves fall:
But the solemn oak-tree sigheth,
Thick-leaved, ambrosial,
With an ancient melody
Of an inward agony,
Where Claribel low-lieth.

At eve the beetle boometh
Athwart the thicket lone:
At noon the wild bee hummeth
About the moss'd headstone:
At midnight the moon cometh,
And looketh down alone.
Her song the lintwhite swelleth,
The clear-voiced mavis dwelleth,
The callow throstle lispeth,
The slumbrous wave outwelleth,
The babbling runnel crispeth,
The hollow grot replieth
Where Claribel low-lieth.

2. "Nevermore" was an extremely common word in nineteenth-century poetry. See Percy Bysshe Shelley's (1792-1822) "A Lament," for example:

O world! O life! O time!
On whose last steps I climb,
Trembling at that where I had stood before;
When will return the glory of your prime?
No more—Oh, never more!

Out of the day and night
A joy has taken flight;
Fresh spring, and summer, and winter hoar,
Move my faint heart with grief, but with delight
No more—Oh, never more!

3. Southern poet Thomas Holley Chivers insisted his poem "To Allegra Florence in Heaven" served as a source for "The Raven." Chivers's poems were first published in *The Lost Pleiad* in 1842, which Poe reviewed in 1845, the year that "The Raven" was published. Here's a stanza from Chivers's poem:

Holy angels now are bending
To receive thy soul ascending
Up to Heaven to joys unending,
  And to bliss which is divine;
While thy pale, cold form is fading
Under death's dark wings now shading
Thee with gloom which is pervading
  This poor, broken heart of mine!

4. From Albert Pike's "Isadore" (1843):

   Thou art lost to me forever,--I have lost thee, Isadore,--
   Thy head will never rest upon my loyal bosom more.
   Thy tender eyes will never more gaze fondly into mine,
   Nor thine arms around me lovingly and trustingly entwine:
   Thou art lost to me forever, Isadore!

5. From Henry Hirst's "To a Ruined Fountain in a Grecian Picture" (1842):

   Forms of chiefs and maidens bright
   Whom the never-dying raven
   Hath forgotten, nameless even
   In the poet's lay of might.

F. Edgar Allan Poe, "The Philosophy of Composition," *Graham's Magazine*, April 1846

[In this piece, Poe builds on the recent success of "The Raven"; the essay purportedly explains how he wrote the poem, but it is not to be taken entirely seriously.]

The Philosophy of Composition

CHARLES DICKENS, in a note now lying before me, alluding to an examination I once made of the mechanism of "Barnaby Rudge," says -- "By the way, are you aware that Godwin wrote his 'Caleb Williams' backwards? He first involved his hero in a web of difficulties, forming the second volume, and then, for the first, cast about him for some model accounting for what had been done."

I cannot think this the *precise* mode of procedure on the part of Godwin -- and indeed what he himself acknowledges, is not altogether I accordance with Mr. Dickens' idea--but the author of "Caleb William' was too good an artist not to perceive the advantage derivable from a least a somewhat similar process. Nothing is more clear than that eve' plot, worth the name, must be elaborated to its *denouement* before anew thing be attempted with the pen. It is only with the *denouement* constantly in view that we can give a plot its indispensable air of consequence, or

causation, by making the incidents, and especially the tone at all points, tend to the development of the intention.

There is a radical error, I think, in the usual mode of constructing a story. Either history affords a thesis--or one is suggested by an incident of the day--or, at best, the author sets himself to work in the combination of striking events to form merely the basis of his narrative--designing, generally, to fill in with description, dialogue, or autorial comment, whatever crevices of fact, or action, may, from page to page, render themselves apparent.

I prefer commencing with the consideration of an *effect.* Keeping originality *always* in view--for he is false to himself who ventures to dispense with so obvious and so easily attainable a source of interest--I say to myself, in the first place, "Of the innumerable effects, or impressions, of which the heart, the intellect, or (more generally) the soul is susceptible, what one shall I, on the present occasion, select?" Having chosen a novel, first, and secondly a vivid effect, I consider whether it can be best wrought by incident or tone--whether by ordinary incidents and peculiar tone, or the converse, or by peculiarity both of incident and tone--afterward looking about me (or rather within) for such combinations of event, or tone, as shall best aid me in the construction of the effect.

I have often thought how interesting a magazine paper might be written by any author who would--that is to say, who could--detail, step by step, the processes by which any one of his compositions attained its ultimate point of completion. Why such a paper has never been given to the world, I am much at a loss to say--but, perhaps, the autorial vanity has had more to do with the omission than any one other cause. 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, at the elaborate and vacillating crudities of thought--at the true purposes seized only at the last moment--at the innumerable glimpses of idea that arrived not at the maturity of full view--at the fully-matured fancies discarded in despair as unmanageable--at the cautious selections and rejections--at the painful erasures and interpolations--in a word, 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 a hundred, constitute the properties of the literary *histrio.*

I am aware, on the other hand, that the case is by no means common, in which an author is at all in condition to retrace the steps by which his conclusions have been attained. In general, suggestions, having arisen pell-mell, are pursued and forgotten in a similar manner.
For my own part, I have neither sympathy with the repugnance alluded to, nor, at any time, the least difficulty in recalling to mind the progressive steps of any of my compositions, and, since the interest of an analysis or reconstruction, such as I have considered a *desideratum, is* quite independent of any real or fancied interest in the thing analysed, it will not be regarded as a breach of decorum on my part to show the *modus operandi* by which some one of my own works was put together. I select 'The Raven' as most generally known. It is my design to render it manifest that no one point in its composition is referable either to accident or intuition--that the work proceeded step by step, to its completion with the precision and rigid consequence of a mathematical problem.

Let us dismiss, as irrelevant to the poem, *per se,* the circumstance-- or say the necessity--which, in the first place, gave rise to the intention of composing *a* poem that should suit at once the popular and the critical taste.

We commence, then, with this intention.

The initial consideration was that of extent. If any literary work is too long to be read at one sitting, we must be content to dispense with the immensely important effect derivable from unity of impression--for, if two sittings be required, the affairs of the world interfere, and everything like totality is at once destroyed. But since, *ceteris Paribas,* no poet can afford to dispense with *anything* that may advance his design, it but remains to be seen whether there is, in extent, any advantage to counterbalance the loss of unity which attends it. Here I say no, at once. What we term a long poem is, in fact, merely a succession of brief ones-- that is to say, of brief poetical effects. It is needless to demonstrate that a poem is such only inasmuch as it intensely excites, by elevating the soul; and all intense excitements are, through a psychal necessity, brief. For this reason, at least, one-half of the "Paradise Lost" is essentially prose--a succession of poetical excitements interspersed, *inevitably,* with corresponding depressions--the whole being deprived, through the extremeness of its length, of the vastly important artistic element, totality, or unity of effect.

It appears evident, then, that there is a distinct limit, as regards length, to all works of literary art--the limit of a single sitting--and that, although in certain classes of prose composition, such as "Robinson Crusoe" (demanding no unity), this limit may be advantageously overpassed, it can never properly be overpassed in a poem. Within this limit, the extent of a poem may be made to bear mathematical relation to its merit--in other words, to the excitement or elevation--again, in other words, to the degree of the true poetical effect which it is capable of inducing; for it is clear that the brevity must be in direct ratio of the intensity of the intended effect--this, with one proviso that a certain degree of duration is absolutely requisite for the production of any effect at all.

Holding in view these considerations, as well as that degree of excitement which I deemed not above the popular, while not below the critical taste, I reached at once what I conceived the proper *length* for my intended poem--a length of about one hundred lines. It is, in fact, a hundred and eight.

My next thought concerned the choice of an impression, or effect, to be conveyed: and here I may as well observe that, throughout the construction, I kept steadily in view the design of rendering the work uni*versally* appreciable. I should be carried too far out of my immediate topic were I to demonstrate a point upon which I have repeatedly insisted, and which, with the poetical, stands not in the slightest need of demonstration--the point, I mean, that Beauty is the sole legitimate province of the poem. A few words, however, in elucidation of my real meaning, which some of my friends have evinced a disposition to misrepresent. That pleasure which is at once the most intense, the most elevating, and the most pure is, I believe, found in the contemplation of the beautiful. When, indeed, men speak of Beauty, they mean, precisely, not a quality, as is supposed, but an effect--they refer, in short, just to that intense and pure elevation of *soul--not* of intellect, or of heart--upon which I have commented, and which is experienced in consequence of contemplating the "beautiful." Now I designate Beauty as the province of the poem, merely because it is an obvious rule of Art that effects should be made to spring from direct causes--that objects should be attained through means best adapted for their attainment--no

one as yet having been weak enough to deny that the peculiar elevation alluded to is *most readily* attained in the poem. Now the object Truth, or the satisfaction of the intellect, and the object Passion, or the excitement of the heart, are, although attainable to a certain extent in poetry, far more readily attainable in prose. Truth, in fact, demands a precision, and Passion, a *homeliness* (the truly passionate will comprehend me), which are absolutely antagonistic to that Beauty which, I maintain, is the excitement, or pleasurable elevation of the soul. It by no means follows, from anything here said, that passion, or even truth, may not be introduced, and even profitably introduced, into a poem for they may serve in elucidation, or aid the general effect, as do discords in music, by contrast--but the true artist will always contrive, first, to tone them into proper subservience to the predominant aim, and, secondly, to enveil them, as far as possible, in that Beauty which is the atmosphere and the essence of the poem.

Regarding, then, Beauty as my province, my next question referred to the *tone* of its highest manifestation--and all experience has shown that this tone is one of *sadness.* Beauty of whatever kind, in its supreme development, invariably excites the sensitive soul to tears. Melancholy is thus the most legitimate of all the poetical tones.

The length, the province, and the tone, being thus determined, I betook myself to ordinary induction, with the view of obtaining some artistic piquancy which might serve me as a key-note in the construction of the poem--some pivot upon which the whole structure might turn. In carefully thinking over all the usual artistic effects--or more properly *points,* in the theatrical sense--I did not fail to perceive immediately that no one had been so universally employed as that of the *refrain.* The universality of its employment sufficed to assure me of its intrinsic value, and spared me the necessity of submitting it to analysis. I considered it, however, with regard to its susceptibility of improvement, and soon saw it to be in a primitive condition. As commonly used, the *refrain,* or burden, not only is limited to lyric verse, but depends for its impression upon the force of monotone--both in sound and thought. The pleasure is deduced solely from the sense of identity--of repetition. I resolved to diversify, and so heighten the effect, by adhering in general to the monotone of sound, while I continually varied that of thought: that is to say, I determined to produce continuously novel effects, by the variation *of the application* of the *refrain*--the *refrain* itself remaining, for the most part, unvaried.

These points being settled, I next bethought me of the *nature* of my *refrain.* Since its application was to be repeatedly varied it was clear that the *refrain* itself must be brief, for there would have been an insurmountable difficulty in frequent variations of application in any sentence of length. In proportion to the brevity of the sentence would, of course, be the facility of the variation. This led me at once to a single word as the best *refrain.*

The question now arose as to the character of the word. Having made up my mind to a *refrain,* the division of the poem into stanzas was of course a corollary, the *refrain* forming the close to each stanza. That such a close, to have force, must be sonorous and susceptible of protracted emphasis, admitted no doubt, and these considerations inevitably led me to the long o as the most sonorous vowel in connection with r as the most producible consonant.

The sound of the *refrain* being thus determined, it became necessary to select a word embodying this sound, and at the same time in the fullest possible keeping with that melancholy which I had

pre-determined as the tone of the poem. In such a search it would have been absolutely impossible to overlook the word "Nevermore." In fact it was the very first which presented itself. The next *desideratum* was a pretext for the continuous use of the one word "nevermore." In observing the difficulty which I had at once found in inventing a sufficiently plausible reason for its continuous repetition, I did not fail to perceive that this difficulty arose solely from the preassumption that the word was to be so continuously or monotonously spoken by a *human* being--I did not fail to perceive, in short, that the difficulty lay in the reconciliation of this monotony with the exercise of reason on the part of the creature repeating the word. Here, then, immediately arose the idea of a non-reasoning creature capable of speech, and very naturally, a parrot, in the first instance, suggested itself, but was superseded forthwith by a Raven as equally capable of speech, and infinitely more in keeping with the intended tone.

I had now gone so far as the conception of a Raven, the bird of ill omen, monotonously repeating the one word "Nevermore" at the conclusion of each stanza in a poem of melancholy tone, and in length about one hundred lines. Now, never losing sight of the object--supremeness or perfection at all points, I asked myself--"Of all melancholy topics what, according to the *universal* understanding of mankind, is the *most* melancholy?" Death, was the obvious reply. "And when," I said, "is this most melancholy of topics most poetical?" From what I have already explained at some length the answer here also is obvious--"When it most closely allies itself to *Beauty:* the death then 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 topic are those of a bereaved lover."

I had now to combine the two ideas of a lover lamenting his deceased mistress and a Raven continuously repeating the word "Nevermore." I had to combine these, bearing in mind my design of varying at every turn the *application* of the word repeated, but the only intelligible mode of such combination is that of imagining the Raven employing the word in answer to the queries of the lover. And here it was that I saw at once the opportunity afforded for the effect on which I had been depending, that is to say, the effect of the *variation of application. I* saw that I could make the first query propounded by the lover--the first query to which the Raven should reply "Nevermore"--that I could make this first query a commonplace one, the second less so, the third still less, and so on, until at length the lover, startled from his original *nonchalance* by the melancholy character of the word itself, by its frequent repetition, and by a consideration of the ominous reputation of the fowl that uttered it, is at length excited to superstition, and wildly propounds queries of a far different character--queries whose solution he has passionately at heart--propounds them half in superstition and half in that species of despair which delights in self-torture--propounds them not altogether because he believes in the prophetic or demoniac character of the bird (which reason assures him is merely repeating a lesson learned by rote), but because he experiences a frenzied pleasure in so modelling his questions as to receive from the expected "Nevermore" the most delicious because the most intolerable of sorrows. Perceiving the opportunity thus afforded me, or, more strictly, thus forced upon me in the progress of the construction, I first established in my mind the climax or concluding query--that query to which "Nevermore" should be in the last place an answer--that query in reply to which this word "Nevermore" should involve the utmost conceivable amount of sorrow and despair.

Here then the poem may be said to have had its beginning--at the end where all works of art should begin--for it was here at this point of my Reconsiderations that I first put pen to paper in the composition of the stanza:

> "Prophet!" said I, "thing of evil! prophet still if bird or devil!
> By that Heaven that bends above us--by that God we both adore,
> Tell this soul with sorrow laden, if, within the distant Aidenn,
> It shall clasp a sainted maiden whom the angels name Lenore--
> Clasp a rare and radiant maiden whom the angels name Lenore."
> Quoth the Raven--"Nevermore."

I composed this stanza, at this point, first that, by establishing the climax, I might the better vary and graduate, as regards seriousness and importance, the preceding queries of the lover, and secondly, that I might definitely settle the rhythm, the metre, and the length and general arrangement of the stanza, as well as graduate the stanzas which were to precede, so that none of them might surpass this in rhythmical effect. Had I been able in the subsequent composition to construct more vigorous stanzas I should without scruple have purposely enfeebled them so as not to interfere with the climacteric effect

And here I may as well say a few words of the versification. My first object (as usual) was originality. The extent to which this has been neglected in versification is one of the most unaccountable things in the world. Admitting that there is little possibility of variety in mere *rhythm,* it is still clear that the possible varieties of metre and stanza are absolutely infinite, and yet, *for centuries, no man, in verse, has ever done, or ever seemed to think of doing, an original thing.* The fact is that originality (unless in minds of very unusual force) is by no means a matter, as some suppose, of impulse or intuition. In general, to be found, it must be elaborately sought, and although a positive merit of the highest class, demands in its attainment less of invention than negation.

Of course I pretend to no originality in either the rhythm or metre of the "Raven." The former is trochaic--the latter is octametre acatalectic, alternating with heptametre catalectic repeated in the *refrain* of the fifth verse, and terminating with tetrametre catalectic. Less pedantically-- the feet employed throughout (trochees) consist of a long syllable followed by a short; the first line of the stanza consists of eight of these feet, the second of seven and a half (in effect two-thirds), the third of eight, the fourth of seven and a half, the fifth the same, the sixth three and a half. Now, each of these lines taken individually has been employed before, and what originality the "Raven" has, is in their *combination into stanza;* nothing even remotely approaching this combination has ever been attempted. The effect of this originality of combination is aided by other unusual and some altogether novel effects, arising from an extension of the application of the principles of rhyme and alliteration.

The next point to be considered was the mode of bringing together the lover and the Raven--and the first branch of this consideration was the *locale***.** For this the most natural suggestion might seem to be a forest, or the fields--but it has always appeared to me that a close *circumscription of space is* absolutely necessary to the effect of insulated incident-- it has the force of a frame to a picture. It has an indisputable moral power in keeping concentrated the attention, and, of course, must not be confounded with mere unity of place.

I determined, then, to place the lover in his chamber--in a chamber rendered sacred to him by memories of her who had frequented it. The room is represented as richly furnished--this in mere pursuance of the ideas I have already explained on the subject of Beauty, as the sole true poetical thesis.

The *locale* being thus determined, I had now to introduce the bird-- and the thought of introducing him through the window was inevitable. The idea of making the lover suppose, in the first instance, that the flapping of the wings of the bird against the shutter, is a "tapping" at the door, originated in a wish to increase, by prolonging, the reader's curiosity, and in a desire to admit the incidental effect arising from the lover's throwing open the door, finding all dark, and thence adopting the half-fancy that it was the spirit of his mistress that knocked.

I made the night tempestuous, first to account for the Raven's seeking admission, and secondly, for the effect of contrast with the (physical) serenity within the chamber.

I made the bird alight on the bust of Pallas, also for the effect of contrast between the marble and the plumage--it being understood that the bust was absolutely *suggested* by the bird--the bust of *Pallas* being chosen, first, as most in keeping with the scholarship of the lover, and secondly, for the sonorousness of the word, Pallas, itself.

About the middle of the poem, also, I have availed myself of the force of contrast, with a view of deepening the ultimate impression. For example, an air of the fantastic--approaching as nearly to the ludicrous as was admissible--is given to the Raven's entrance. He comes in "with many a flirt and flutter."

Not the *least obeisance made he*--not a moment stopped or stayed he, *But* with *mien of lord or lady,* perched above my chamber door.
In the two stanzas which follow, the design is more obviously carried out:--

> Then this ebony bird, beguiling my sad fancy into smiling
> By the *grave and stern decorum of the countenance it wore,*
> "Though thy *crest be shorn and shaven,* thou," I said, "art sure no craven,
> Ghastly grim and ancient Raven wandering from the Nightly shore--
> Tell me what thy lordly name is on the Night's Plutonian shore?"
> Quoth the Raven--"Nevermore."
>
> Much I marvelled *this ungainly fowl* to hear discourse so plainly,
> Though its answer little meaning--little relevancy bore;
> 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."

The effect of the *denouement* being thus provided for, I immediately drop the fantastic for a tone of the most profound seriousness--this tone commencing in the stanza directly following the one last quoted, with the line,

> But the Raven, sitting lonely on that placid bust, spoke only, etc.

From this epoch the lover no longer jests--no longer sees anything even of the fantastic in the Raven's demeanour. He speaks of him as a "grim, ungainly, ghastly, gaunt, and ominous bird of yore," and feels the "fiery eyes" burning into his "bosom's core." This revolution of thought, or fancy, on the lover's part, is intended to induce a similar one on the part of the reader--to bring the mind into a proper frame for the *denouement*--which is now brought about as rapidly and as *directly* as possible.

With the *de'nouement* proper--with the Raven's reply, "Nevermore," to the lover's final demand if he shall meet his mistress in another world--the poem, in its obvious phase, that of a simple narrative, may be said to have its completion. So far, everything is within the limits of the accountable--of the real. A raven, having learned by rote the single word "Nevermore," and having escaped from the custody of its owner, is driven at midnight, through the violence of a storm, to seek admission at a window from which a light still gleams--the chamber-window of a student, occupied half in poring over a volume, half in dreaming of a beloved mistress deceased. The casement being thrown open at the fluttering of the bird's wings, the bird itself perches on the most convenient seat out of the immediate reach of the student, who amused by the incident and the oddity of the visitor's demeanour, demands of it, in jest and without looking for a reply, its name. The raven addressed, answers with its customary word, "Nevermore"--a word which finds immediate echo in the melancholy heart of the student, who, giving utterance aloud to certain thoughts suggested by the occasion, is again startled by the fowl's repetition of "Nevermore." The student now guesses the state of the case, but is impelled, as I have before explained, by the human thirst for self-torture, and in part by superstition, to propound such queries to the bird as will bring him, the lover, the most of the luxury of sorrow, through the anticipated answer, "Nevermore." With the indulgence, to the extreme, of this self-torture, the narration, in what I have termed its first or obvious phase, has a natural termination, and so far there has been no overstepping of the limits of the real.

But in subjects so handled, however skillfully, or with however vivid an array of incident, there is always a certain hardness or nakedness which repels the artistical eye. Two things are invariably required--first, some amount of complexity, or more properly, adaptation; and, secondly, some amount of suggestiveness--some under-current, however indefinite, of meaning. It is this latter, in especial, which imparts to a work of art so much of that *richness* (to borrow from colloquy a forcible term), which we are too fond of confounding with *the ideal.* It is the *excess* of the suggested meaning--it is the rendering this the upper instead of the under-current of the theme--which turns into prose (and that of the very flattest kind), the so-called poetry of the so-called transcendentalists.

Holding these opinions, I added the two concluding stanzas of the poem--their suggestiveness being thus made to pervade all the narrative which has preceded them. The under-current of meaning is rendered first apparent in the line--

> "Take thy beak from *out my heart,* and take thy form from off my door!"
> Quoth the Raven "Nevermore!"

It will be observed that the words, "from out my heart," involve the first metaphorical expression in the poem. They, with the answer, "Nevermore," dispose the mind to seek a moral in all that has been previously narrated. The reader begins now to regard the Raven as emblematical-- but it

is not until the very last line of the very last stanza that the intention of making him emblematical of *Mournful and never ending Remembrance is* permitted distinctly to be seen:

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

G. Edgar Allan Poe, "The Poetic Principle," *Home Journal*, August 31, 1850 (excerpt)

[This is one of the most important and influential definitions of poetry that Poe offered, helpful in understanding “The Raven” and his other poems.]

> An immortal instinct deep within the spirit of man is thus plainly a sense of the Beautiful. This it is which administers to his delight in the manifold forms, and sounds, and odors and sentiments amid which he exists. And just as the lily is repeated in the lake, or the eyes of Amaryllis in the mirror, so is the mere oral or written repetition of these forms, and sounds, and colors, and odors, and sentiments a duplicate source of de" light. But this mere repetition is not poetry. He who shall simply sing, with however glowing enthusiasm, or with however vivid a truth of description, of the sights, and sounds, and odors, and colors, and sentiments which greet *him* in common with all mankind -- he, I say, has yet failed to prove his divine title. There is still a something in the distance which he has been unable to attain. We have still a thirst unquenchable, to allay which he has not shown us the crystal springs. This thirst belongs to the immortality of Man. It is at once a consequence and an indication of his perennial existence. It is the desire of the moth for the star. It is no mere appreciation of the Beauty before us, but a wild effort to reach the Beauty above. Inspired by an ecstatic prescience of the glories beyond the grave, we struggle by multiform combinations among the things and thoughts of Time to attain a portion of that Loveliness whose very elements perhaps appertain to eternity alone. And thus when by Poetry, or when by Music, the most entrancing of the poetic moods, we find ourselves melted into tears, we weep then, not as the Abbate Gravina supposes, through excess of pleasure, but through a certain petulant, impatient sorrow at our inability to grasp now, wholly, here on earth, at once and for ever, those divine and rapturous joys of which *through'* the poem, or *through* the music, we attain to but brief and indeterminate glimpses.
>
> The struggle to apprehend the supernal Loveliness -- this struggle, on the part of souls fittingly constituted -- has given to the world all *that* which it (the world) has ever been enabled at once to understand and *to feel* as poetic.
>
> The Poetic Sentiment, of course, may develop itself in various modes --in Painting, in Sculpture, in Architecture, in the Dance -- very especially in Music -- and very peculiarly, and with a wide field, in the com position of the Landscape Garden. Our

present theme, however, has regard only to its manifestation in words. And here let me speak briefly on the topic of rhythm. Contenting myself with the certainty that Music, in its various modes of metre, rhythm, and rhyme, is of so vast a moment in Poetry as never to be wisely rejected -- is so vitally important an adjunct, that he is simply silly who declines its assistance, I will not now pause to maintain its absolute essentiality. It is in Music perhaps that the soul most nearly attains the great end for which, when inspired by the Poetic Sentiment, it struggles -- the creation of supernal Beauty. It *may* be, indeed, that here this sublime end is, now and then, attained in *fact.* We are often made to feel, with a shivering delight, that from an earthly harp are stricken notes which *cannot* have been unfamiliar to the angels. And thus there can be little doubt that in the union of Poetry with Music in its popular sense, we shall find the widest field for the Poetic development. The old Bards and Minnesingers had advantages which we do not possess -- and Thomas Moore, singing his own songs, was, in the most legitimate manner, perfecting them as poems.

To recapitulate then: -- I would define, in brief, the Poetry of words as *The Rhythmical Creation of Beauty.* Its sole arbiter is Taste. With the Intellect or with the Conscience it has only collateral relations. Unless incidentally, it has no concern whatever either with Duty or with Truth.

A few words, however, in explanation. *That* pleasure which is at once the most pure, the most elevating, and the most intense, is derived, I maintain, from the contemplation of the Beautiful. In the contemplation of Beauty we alone find it possible to attain that pleasurable elevation, or excitement *of the soul*, which we recognise as the Poetic Sentiment, and which is so easily distinguished from Truth, which is the satisfaction of the Reason, or from Passion, which is the excitement of the heart. I make Beauty, therefore--using the word as inclusive of the sublime -- I make Beauty the province of the poem, simply because it is an obvious rule of Art that effects should be made to spring as directly as possible from their causes: -- no one as yet having been weak enough to deny that the peculiar elevation in question is at least *most readily* attainable in the poem. It by no means follows, however, that the incitements of Passion' or the precepts of Duty, or even the lessons of Truth, may not be introduced into a poem, and with advantage; for they may subserve incidentally, in various ways, the general purposes of the work: but the true artist will always contrive to tone them down in proper subjection to that *Beauty* which is the atmosphere and the real essence of the poem.

H. Other poems by Poe:

TO HELEN

Helen, thy beauty is to me
Like those Nicéan barks of yore,
That gently, o'er a perfumed sea,
The weary, way-worn wanderer bore
To his own native shore.

On desperate seas long wont to roam,
Thy hyacinth hair, thy classic face,

Thy Naiad airs have brought me home
To the glory that was Greece,
And the grandeur that was Rome.

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

First written 1831; revised through 1843.

THE SLEEPER

At midnight, in the month of June,
I stand beneath the mystic moon.
An opiate vapor, dewy, dim,
Exhales from out her golden rim,
And, softly dripping, drop by drop,
Upon the quiet mountain top,
Steals drowsily and musically
Into the universal valley.
The rosemary nods upon the grave;
The lily lolls upon the wave;
Wrapping the fog about its breast,
The ruin moulders into rest;
Looking like Lethe, see! the lake
A conscious slumber seems to take,
And would not, for the world, awake.
All Beauty sleeps! -- and lo! where lies
Irene, with her Destinies!

Oh, lady bright! can it be right --
This window open to the night?
The wanton airs, from the tree-top,
Laughingly through the lattice drop --
The bodiless airs, a wizard rout,
Flit through thy chamber in and out,
And wave the curtain canopy
So fitfully -- so fearfully --
Above the closed and fringèd lid
'Neath which thy slumb'ring soul lies hid,
That, o'er the floor and down the wall,
Like ghosts the shadows rise and fall!

Oh, lady dear, hast thou no fear?
Why and what art thou dreaming here?
Sure thou art come o'er far-off seas,
A wonder to these garden trees!
Strange is thy pallor! strange thy dress!
Strange, above all, thy length of tress,
And this all solemn silentness!

The lady sleeps! Oh, may her sleep,
Which is enduring, so be deep!
Heaven have her in its sacred keep!
This chamber changed for one more holy,
This bed for one more melancholy,
I pray to God that she may lie
Forever with unopened eye,
While the pale sheeted ghosts go by!

My love, she sleeps! Oh, may her sleep,
As it is lasting, so be deep!
Soft may the worms about her creep!
Far in the forest, dim and old,
For her may some tall vault unfold --
Some vault that oft hath flung its black
And wingèd panels fluttering back,
Triumphant, o'er the crested palls,
Of her grand family funerals --
Some sepulchre, remote, alone,
Against whose portal she hath thrown,
In childhood, many an idle stone --
Some tomb from out whose sounding door
She ne'er shall force an echo more,
Thrilling to think, poor child of sin!
It was the dead who groaned within.

Note: 1831; revised through 1845; Irene is the Greek personification of peace.

FOR ANNIE

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

Sadly, I know

I am shorn of my strength,
And no muscle I move
As I lie at full length --
But no matter! -- I feel
I am better at length.

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

The moaning and groaning,
The sighing and sobbing,
Are quieted now,
With that horrible throbbing
At heart:--Ah that horrible,
Horrible throbbing!

The sickness -- the nausea --
The pitiless pain --
Have ceased with the fever
That maddened my brain --
With the fever called "Living"
That burned in my brain.

And oh! of all tortures
That torture the worst
Has abated -- the terrible
Torture of thirst
For the napthaline river
Of Passion accurst: --
I have drank of a water
That quenches all thirst: --

Of a water that flows,
With a lullaby sound,
From a spring but a very few
Feet under ground --
From a cavern not very far
Down under ground.

But ah! let it never
Be foolishly said
That my room it is gloomy

And narrow my bed;
For man never slept
In a different bed --
And, to *sleep*, you must slumber
In just such a bed.

My tantalized spirit
Here blandly reposes,
Forgetting, or never
Regretting, its roses --
Its old agitations
Of myrtles and roses:

For now, while so quietly
Lying, it fancies
A holier odor
About it, of pansies --
A rosemary odor,
Commingled with pansies --
With rue and the beautiful
Puritan pansies.

And so it lies happily,
Bathing in many
A dream of the truth
And the beauty of Annie --
Drowned in a bath
Of the tresses of Annie.

She tenderly kissed me,
She fondly caressed,
And then I fell gently
To sleep on her breast --
Deeply to sleep
From the heaven of her breast.

When the light was extinguished,
She covered me warm,
And she prayed to the angels
To keep me from harm --
To the queen of the angels
To shield me from harm.

And I lie so composedly,
Now, in my bed,
(Knowing her love)

That you fancy me dead --
And I rest so contentedly,
Now, in my bed,
(With her love at my breast)
That you fancy me dead --
That you shudder to look at me,
Thinking me dead: --

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

ANNABEL LEE

IT was many and many a year ago,
In a kingdom by the sea,
That a maiden there lived whom you may know
By the name of Annabel Lee; --
And this maiden she lived with no other thought
Than to love and be loved by me.

She was a child and *I* was a child,
In this kingdom by the sea,
But we loved with a love that was more than love --
I and my Annabel Lee --
With a love that the wingèd seraphs of Heaven
Coveted her and me.

And this was the reason that, long ago,
In this kingdom by the sea,
A wind blew out of a cloud, by night
Chilling my Annabel Lee;
So that her high-born kinsmen came
And bore her away from me,
To shut her up in a sepulchre
In this kingdom by the sea.

The angels, not half so happy in Heaven,
Went envying her and me: --
Yes! that was the reason (as all men know,
In this kingdom by the sea)
That the wind came out of the cloud, chilling

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

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

I. Terms helpful in formal analysis of "The Raven"

A. Prosody, rhythm, meter

Feet: Metrical feet are named according to where their stress appears and how many unstressed syllables they possess. The basic feet you need to know are these (u=light stress, x=heavy stress):

UX iamb(n), iambic (adj): eg, Marie, Pierre, perhaps
XU trochee, trochaic: eg, many, secret, weary
XX spondee, spondaic: eg, Four score
UU pyrrhic, pyrrhic: eg, and the, in the, of the
UUX anapest, anapestic: eg, for today, run away
XUU dactyl, dactylic: musical, eg, celery, hamburger

Poems in Counted Lines
Poems in counted lines are written in units we call **feet**. A **foot** consists of one stressed syllable (one "beat," to use the musical term), usually accompanied by one or two unstressed syllables. We represent a stressed syllable by an accent and an unstressed syllable by a symbol called a breve. Here is an example of a line with four feet:

u x u x u x u x
Whose woods / these are / I think / I know

The number of feet in a line gives the line its (Greek-derived) name, and tells you how long the line is. Natural intonation makes you stress some words and leave others unstressed, helping you to see how many beats are in the line. We characterize a line by how many stresses (beats) exist in it: the word "meter" (meaning measure) is the general name for the length of a counted line:

one beat per line = *monometer* (from Greek meaning "one," as in "monologue");
two beats per line = *dimeter* (from Greek meaning "two," as in "dialogue");
three beats per line = *trimeter* (from Greek meaning "three," as in "triangle");
four beats per line = *tetrameter* (from Greek meaning "four," as in "tetrahedron");
five beats per line = *pentameter* (from Greek meaning "five," as in "Pentagon");
six beats per line = *hexameter* (from Greek meaning "six," as in "hexagram");
seven beats per line = *heptameter* (from Greek meaning "seven," as in "heptathlon");
eight beats per line = *octameter* (from Greek meaning "eight," as in "octopus").

Most poems written in English have lines of four or five beats. Shakespeare wrote all of his plays in iambic pentameter lines (though he also inserted prose and short songs from time to time).

B. Other useful definitions

1. Lines:

Caesura: a strong pause within, rather than at the end, of a poetic line

Let me not to the marriage of true minds
Admit impediments. Love in not love,

End-stopped lines: lines that end with a strong mark of punctuation.

In *Adam's* Fall
We Sinned all.

Feminine endings: a line ending on an unaccented syllable

A lead soldier guards my windowsill
Khaki rifle, uniform, and face.
Something in me grows heavy, silvery, pliable.

Masculine ending: a line ending on an accented syllable

Thou by the Indian Ganges' side
Shouldst rubies find; I by the tide

Run-on or enjambed lines: lines in which the sense flows over the end of the line into the subsequent line:

Full in the middle of this pleasantness
There stood a marble altar, with a tress
Of flowers budded newly; and the dew…

2. Forms:

Stanzas: two lines of more that together form one of the divisions of a poem

Couplet: a stanza of two lines
Heroic couplet: rhyming lines of iambic pentameter
Tercet: stanza of 3 lines

refrain: a phrase, line, or group of lines that is repeated, especially after a stanza

elegy: a poem mourning a death or other loss

eulogy: a poem of tribute

lyric: a poem that is susceptible of being sung to the accompaniment of a musical instrument (in ancient times, usually a lyre) or that expresses intense personal emotion in a manner suggestive of a song, often in the first person. Elegies, odes, and sonnets are all important kinds of lyric poetry.

3. Sonic/linguistic/grammatical patterns:

Alliteration: a pattern of sound that includes the repetition of consonant sounds. The repetition can be located at the beginning of successive words or inside the words.

Anaphora: Repetition of a word or phrase at the beginning of several successive lines

Parallelism: repetition of similar syntactical structure

Assonance: Identity or similarity in sound between internal vowels in neighboring words. The agreement in the vowel sounds of two or more words, when the consonant sounds preceding and following these vowels do not agree.

Eye rhymes: two words that look as if they rhyme--their endings are spelled the same--but are pronounced differently

End rhyme: a rhyme between words at the end of two lines

Identical rhymes: the same word rhymed with itself

Internal rhyme: rhymes within lines

Off rhymes (partial, imperfect, slant): lines that almost rhyme:

What immortal hand or eye
Has framed thy fearful symmetry?

Perfect rhymes: words that rhyme exactly: cat/hat/bat

4. Figurative language

Anthropomorphism: attribution of human traits to nonhuman entities

Apostrophe: address of a dead or absent person or thing or idea as if it were alive and present. Figure of pathos designed to work directly on the emotions.

Metaphor: comparison between two unlike things that have something in common

Metonymy: a rhetorical figure in which an attribute of something is substituted for the thing itself (as in "the stage" for the acting profession in general)

Personification: representation of a thing or abstraction as a person

Simile: comparison of two unlike things using “like” or “as”

Trope: figure of speech that uses words in nonliteral ways (like simile or metaphor)

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