

Poe: The Concept of Poetry and Poetic Practice
With Reference to the Relationship between
The Poetic Principle and *Annabel Lee*

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ABSTRACT

This paper begins with the acknowledgment, on the 150th anniversary of his death, of Poe's significance as a great poetic theorist: whatever aesthetic and artistic evaluation the Bostonian Poe's work (1809-1849) may give rise to in the present-day reader, we must agree that his critical judgements of artistic works in themselves and his poetic theories have had far-reaching subsequent repercussions. Starting from this evaluation of Poe as an author of great intellectual lucidity, as the main aim of this work is to make an in-depth study of Poe as a poetic theorist, in order to ascertain to what extent his aesthetic theories are reflected in one of his poems. In order to define the area of reference, I have employed an analytical method which will contrast the basic ideas that appear in *The Poetic Principle* of 1850, with an earlier poem *Annabel Lee* written in 1849. Finally, this paper stresses the importance of the creative act as the actual origin, rather than the consequence, of his poetic theses, although Poe's merit lies, above all, in his determination to assign a *method* to literary creation, that is to say, Poe challenges the Romantic criteria regarding freedom of inspiration, calling for an intellectual and analytical study which would contribute to the rigour of poetic composition.

In fact, one can consider Poe as a latter-day follower of Romanticism in so far as his basic range of themes, language and images explores the domain of the irrational and unconscious. Including him as a Southern writer, some critics classify his literature within the tendency designated as the Dark Tradition: in opposition to the realm of optimism,

progress and the quest of happiness is set another of fear, sorrow and despair. Peter B. High considers Poe as "another writer interested in psychology and the darker side of human nature. His fiction belongs to the Southern, rather than the New England, writing tradition. It is far more romantic in language and imagery" (1986: 55). However, and paradoxically, within Romanticism itself we witness a powerful intellectualist movement that rejects the birth of the poem as an outpouring of feelings and sets out to identify the poetic act with mental clarity, rigour and a critical spirit. In this respect, Poe exercised a great influence on modern lyrical poetry "which conceives of poetic creation as closely tied to the intellectual faculties and set apart from any spiritual state that identifies with or approaches ecstatic experiences" (Aguar e Silva, 1975: 153). And thus we find in Poe a critical and lucid writer who watchfully attends the gestation of the poem itself, since every genuine poet has also to be a critic, able to judge, accept or reject the constituent elements of the poem.

Several of the ideas expounded in *The Poetic Principle* appear, repeated or extended, in other of the writer's essays, but we will go on to highlight for commentary those that Poe considered the essential elements of poetic style: brevity, the value of the poem "per se"; the main purpose of the poem; the creation of supernatural beauty; the themes and tone of poetic style and poetic structure: the rhythmical creation of beauty.

The poem *Annabel Lee* will serve as touchstone and proof of the technique practised by the author, and will demonstrate how he applied his theoretical hypotheses in artistic creation. This poem, one of his most beautiful, was composed when his wife Virginia was very ill and at the point of death, and in it Poe conveys a poetic vision of his life at her side. The technique here is imbued with deeply-felt emotion and musicality.

At the beginning of *The Poetic Principle* Poe speaks of a particular principle that has always influenced his critical evaluation of the poem: "I hold that a long poem does not exist. I maintain that the phrase 'a long poem' is simply a flat contradiction in terms". Therefore, he considers brevity to be a positive characteristic: "poems of little length". However, the aim of the poem is to excite, to transport the reader's soul and "the value of the poem is in the ratio of this elevating excitement"; but an elementary psychological principle demonstrates that this state of exaltation cannot be sustained for long, and, on the other hand, an excessively brief poem will not succeed in exalting the reader's feelings, nor produce either a lasting or profound effect, therefore one has to mould the poem to render it capable of producing such exaltation, and the theme and form must be submitted to this principle. Poe tries to reconcile this thesis with the existence of great epic poems, for example Milton's *Paradise Lost*; according to him, it can only be considered poetic if we see it as a series of small poems, whereby one of the most vital requisites of any work of art, unity, is forfeited. If we try to maintain the overall effect and "we read it ... at a single sitting, the result is but a constant alternation of excitement and depression" (1979: 499-500).

Some critics have observed that his criterion of brevity may indeed be valid for lyrical poetry, but cannot be literally applied to dramatic or epic poetry. Only if we concede that Poe, giving in to his personal tastes, reduces poetry to solely lyrical poetry, can we

understand his affirmation that *The Iliad* is based on an imperfect sense of art and that, according to him, the age of such artistic anomalies has ended. Poe did not take into account the continuation of the romancist oral tradition and of ballads which, even today, remain alive in folk memory.¹ In any case, Poe remained faithful to the principle of brevity, and the majority of his lyrical compositions are of brief duration: "Sonnet to Science": 18 lines, "Fairyland": 46, "To Helen": 15, "Israfel": 51, "The City in the Sea": 33, "The Sleeper": 61, "Dream-land": 68, etc. In "The Philosophy of Composition", the essay composed in 1846, considered by Poe as his "best specimen of analysis", he speaks specifically about the length he considered suitable for a poem: "a length of about one hundred lines" (1979: 483). "The Raven" in fact has 108 lines and "To...Ulalume: A Ballad", 104 lines.

Annabel Lee is made up of a total of 41 lines distributed in six stanzas in the following pattern: 6/6/8/6/7/8. The number of lines in each stanza varies and, in this case Poe consciously extends the characteristic quatrain of the traditional ballad. But we will deal with the rhythmic structure of this type of poetic composition further on. For now we will only mention that the brevity provides condensation of meaning and we can appraise *Annabel Lee* in this sense by making ours the words Poe dedicated to Willis' poem in *The Poetic Principle*: "The lines are not only richly ideal, but full of energy; while they breathe an earnestness, an evident sincerity of sentiment" (1979: 503).

On the other hand, Poe is clearly in favour of the evaluation of artistic production according to aesthetic principles and outside any utilitarian notion: for him, art represents an end in itself, not a means. He is critical of the didactic aim, "the heresy of the Didactic" that his contemporaries sought in poetry, in a clear allusion to the "Genteel Tradition". According to this criterion, a work would only have poetic merit if it inculcated a moral: "It has been assumed ... that the ultimate object of all Poetry is Truth.... We Americans especially have patronised this happy idea". Poe believes that no more completely dignified work exists than that of the poem "per se", "this poem which is a poem and nothing more, this poem written solely for the poem's sake" (1979: 503-4). In this aspect many critics see in Poe an aestheticist "avant la lettre", since aestheticism began as a pictorial movement in Great Britain towards 1825, but soon spread to poetry and criticism. It reached its height around 1886 and its influence reached America. However, Poe develops this concept of the artistic in an intuitive manner, owing to the fact that he had no contact with the European trend. On the other hand, in his zeal to judge literary work through its qualities of form and content, we can see the line linking this writer with the theses defended by T. S. Eliot in his article "Tradition and the Individual Talent" of 1920: "Honest criticism and sensitive appreciation are directed not upon the poet but upon the poetry" (1986: 1228) and continued later by the "New Criticism".

Poe's theories reveal deep Kantian echoes, although it appears that he only got to know of his theories on beauty and the sublime indirectly, through Coleridge. In his *Criticism of Judgement*, Kant considers the form of things so that one can derive from them a feeling of pleasure and he emphasizes the "finality without purpose" of art, the aesthetic superiority of "pure" beauty over that of "adherent" or applied beauty, the disinterested nature of the person who lives the experience (Wellek and Warren, 1979: 290). From the present-day

point of view, we cannot help but extol Poe's modern attitude as opposed to the Puritanical tendency to value literature for moral reasons. Poe restores vigorously the rights of art, raising up as a module of all poetic and literary creation the most absolute freedom of the artist, irrespective of historical rules, temporary commitments or current fashions. For that reason the poetic originality of this writer has to be sought in the effect achieved and, above all, in how it contrasts with the mediocre aesthetic standard of his time. *Annabel Lee* is therefore a poem without a didactic purpose, without a moral message, a poem which can only be evaluated for its artistic beauty and which therefore does not propose truth as its end. If that which is beautiful is naturally true, so much the better, but the fact that it is fantastic, imaginary, not only does not invalidate the message of the poem, but can grant it a higher beauty, as in this case.

Thus it is, as we have seen, that the world of art can only be judged according to aesthetic suppositions. Poe considers that the field of poetry is beauty and its judge is taste: "Dividing the world of mind into its three most immediately obvious distinctions, we have the Pure Intellect, Taste, and the Moral Sense... Just as the Intellect concerns itself with Truth, so Taste informs us of the Beautiful while the Moral Sense is regardful of Duty" (*The Poetic Principle*, 1979: 504). However, many are the smells, shapes, sounds, colours and feelings that can give rise to pleasure, and, nevertheless, that beauty that surrounds us does not satisfy the human yearning for the eternal: "it is no mere appreciation of the Beauty before us but a wild effort to reach the Beauty above" (*The Poetic Principle*, 1979: 505). The artist attempts to achieve through the different arts "the Creation of supernal Beauty", although he may only attain brief and shadowy glimpses of eternal Beauty, always unsatisfactory. This same purpose is present, to the same extent, the work of the idealist German poets (Novalis, Hölderlin...) and the English Romantics (Coleridge, Wordsworth, Keats). According to the critic Antoni Martí what interested Valéry about Poe was precisely the fact of considering composition a conscious and deliberate act, and how the poet had to observe himself in the act of creation. Moreover, when poetry occurs, Poe is in essence saying, it is not only the presence of eternity in us, but also the best way to gain access to that eternal part in us. Poetry is in itself a means, not an end (Llovet, 1995: 579).

This quest for purification, for the absolute and the essential, this struggle to apprehend supernal loveliness, as Poe says, is what is understood and felt as poetic feeling, and this is shown especially through music and poetry. In such a way that, according to the author, in the union of Poetry with Music in its popular sense, we shall find the widest field for the Poetical development. In fact, Poe reminds us of the original acoustic and oral character of all poetry, in such a manner that without rhythmic elements, whatever kind these may be, poetry would not exist, and this is how it maintains its "absolute essentiality". The fact that *Annabel Lee* is a literary ballad demonstrates the author's taste for compositions that, when orally transmitted, were usually accompanied by music, albeit monotone, because the priority in the traditional ballad was the story: the music only played a mnemonic role (Bold, 1979: 23). But Poe had also tried to salvage the traditional musical values of the refrain: whereby, in this case, nothing is added to the narrative development of the story although, if one of the general principles which characterize poetry is that of repetition, the

rhythmic effect provides unity to the poem. Moreover, the refrain is wont to generally contain the emotional nucleus from which the composition springs. In "Of the Philosophy of Composition" Poe says: "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"(1979: 484). Poe's artistic sensibility has also been brought to bear this time on the refrain in the same way that he modified the "ballad stanza" of four lines (a b c b), increasing their number.

In *Annabel Lee* two lines can be found which, separately, act as a refrain on being repeated (although not always in an identical way) and variably situated in the stanza, but never at the end (except in one case) of it. "In a kingdom by the sea" appears in the four first ones, with a slight variation after the first by changing the definite article into a demonstrative adjective: once known by the reader the "kingdom" can now be spoken of as "In *this* kingdom by the sea".² This line is the second of the three first stanzas and the fourth in the fourth. However, the second line has the most variable form, its final "... Annabel Lee", the title of the poem itself, remaining unchangeable. In this case it is placed at the end of the penultimate stanza and twice in the last. That repetitive accumulation is to do with the climatic tension which characterizes the end of the composition.

If Poe praised bards and troubadours because they had the advantage of perfecting their poems by singing them to music, there can be no doubt that a simple reading aloud of *Annabel Lee* (as of any other of the author's poems) reveals straight away its musicality, an objective fully achieved by the poet. In *Annabel Lee* we find "Beauty which is the atmosphere and the real essence of the poem" which implies "the excitement of the soul". But in the face of the author's insistence that poetic sentiment is something elevated and pure that cannot be confused with "Passion which is the excitement of the heart" (*The Poetic Principle*, 1979: 507), there are some very critical opinions, such as those voiced by Julio Cortázar in his introduction to Poe's essays and criticism: "on banishing passion as a demiurgic element of the poem, Poe impoverishes beyond salvation the field of poetry, mutilates it, submits it to a tyrannical elaboration based on formulae and verbal effects, or reduces it to the evocation of shadows, memories, an inevitably restrained elegiac tone, where verbal music would be the only support for the creation of a lasting resonance" (1987: 28-29). This quotation, though long, has seemed appropriate because it sums up many of the most controversial aspects of the author's poetry. However, we believe that what Poe wanted to express with this rejection of passion had to do, above all, with that exuberant emotional outpouring represented by Romantic poetry, with which he did not agree. He called for conscious creation and, therefore, poetic purification. It is impossible to think that *Annabel Lee* has not sprung from a deep passion, but it is first and foremost an artistic work, submitted to a conscious and deliberate creative process. We could conclude with T.S. Eliot's own words in his essay "Tradition and the Individual Talent": "Poetry is not a turning loose of emotion, but an escape from personality. But of course, only those who have personality and emotions know what it means to want to escape from these things" (1986: 1231).

Poe himself clarifies further on in *The Poetic Principle* the reason for his rejection of passion; as something impure, earthly and opposed to the love which is pure, elevated and divine. This extremely clear dichotomy reveals an idealistic and Platonic Poe who dwells in a world of absolutes. Many critics have explained his obsession with an almost ethereal ideal of feminine beauty as a literary release from his unsatisfactory relationships with women (for physiological reasons or due to psychic disturbances). Hence also the constant presence of death and reincarnation that looms large in many of his stories: it can be considered as a cult of the eternally feminine, which never dies, as Pérez Gallego believes (1982: 53). Therefore, although he may speak in a Romantic way of the natural elements; of birds, clouds, trees, flowers, rivers, lakes... which produce a poetic effect, for the author "love, the true, the divine Eros, ... is unquestionably the purest and truest of all poetical themes" (*The Poetic Principle*, 1979: 511). Love, of course, always refers to feminine beauty.

But what, according to Poe, is the tone that best suits this theme? In the reply we see, once more, the limitations that personal tastes impose on an essay that endeavours to deliver objective aesthetic judgements. If melancholy and sadness are the most appropriate tone for poetry, this is because they constitute his main state of mind. But if the lyrical implies the showing of emotions, Poe does not take into account the possibility of odes, hymns or epithalamies, for example, which can express happier, more positive feelings, and not any the less "poetic" for that. In any case, Poe is loyal to his thesis in *Annabel Lee*; the setting of the poem has very Romantic characteristics and as M. Minor asserts, a Poe setting, atmosphere or situation are instantly recognizable: "specific poems of his have so passed into the common literary heritage that readers with only the slightest acquaintance with his work can quote lines and phrases from such poems as 'Annabel Lee' and 'The Raven'" (1982: 2240). Both of them have a distant kingdom situated by the sea and in a far-off time is spoken of. This vagueness and lack of definition is very typical also of folkloric narration; the poem begins as if it was a fairy tale: "It was many and many a year ago / In a kingdom by the sea". The theme is developed very much to the poet's taste: a feeling of sadness and melancholy about the death of a beautiful young woman: "this certain taint of sadness is inseparably connected with all the higher manifestations of true Beauty" he says in *The Poetic Principle* (1979: 510). The idealism of a sublimated love is revealed in its continuation after death. The lover-poet will never forget his beloved: "And so, all the night-tide, I lie down by the side / Of my darling -my darling- my life and my bride, / In the sepulchre there by the sea- / In her tomb by the sounding sea" (*Annabel Lee*, 1979: 90). It is, moreover, a pure Platonic love, not passionate, unconsummated: "I was a child and she was a child" (1979: 89).

The fact that it is a ballad, a genre that allowed the inclusion of supernatural elements and tragic death, only attributable to the fatalism of destiny, enables Poe to idealize death as having been caused by the envy of celestial beings: "The angel, not half so happy in heaven, / Went envying her and me-" (*Annabel Lee*). Concerning the popular ballads, Bold explains the popular preference for these themes: "We must never forget that the folk who most prized the ballads lived in impoverished circumstances, so it should come as no

surprise that they enjoyed stories in which the rich come to grief" (1979: 49). Moreover, this metaphorical use of language, the concreative metaphor, and the use of the metonymy of the abstract by the concrete; "Can ever dissever the soul from the soul" (*Annabel Lee*), redound to his sublimation of reality. And, of course, the beloved damsel was delicate and of noble ancestry, which explains the use of a cultured and elevated language, sometimes of Latin origin ("seraphs", "sepulchre", "demons"...) and in other cases archaic terms with poetic value: "kinsmen", "night-tide", "maiden". The delicacy of expression, which allowed Poe to admire the poem "Waif" by the (at other times so reviled by Poe) poet Longfellow (*The Poetic Principle*, 1979: 507-9), also characterizes *Annabel Lee*. However, we have left to the end of this article the discussion of the main features of Poe's poetry; its rhythmic elements.

In fact, Poe had already stated in *The Poetic Principle* the "absolute essentiality of rhythm" and the importance of musicality in the poem. He subsequently finishes by defining poetry as "The Rhythmical Creation of Beauty" and praises the different authors' compositions in which he underlines the rhythmical flow, the harmony between the metre and the nature of the sentiments expressed, the melodic value, and the expression in verse of the theme treated. In many other writings and essays Poe reiterates this idea. For example, in 1831 it had already appeared in "Letter to B...": "A poem, in my opinion, is opposed ... to romance, by having for its object an indefinite instead of a definite pleasure, being a poem only so far as this object is attained: romance presenting perceptible images with definite, poetry with indefinite sensations which end music is an essential, since the comprehension of sweet sound is our most indefinite conception" (1979: 385). This extraordinary value granted by Poe to the rhythmic is what has motivated from his contemporaries and later scholars of his work their most extensive criticism. Whitman, in an essay written in 1880 and entitled "Edgar Poe's Significance" is of the opinion from the start that "Poe's verses illustrate an intense faculty for technical and abstract beauty, with the rhyming art to excess ... and by final judgement, probably belong among the electric lights of imagination literature, brilliant and dazzling, but with no heat" (1979: 2133). Michael J. Colarcurcio recalls that Emerson rejected him explicitly, calling him "the jingle man" and that "probably he intended to discredit him still more in *The Poet*, 1844, simply as one more of those men of talent who sing" (Elliot, 1991: 219). And Marcus Cunliffe says "to current taste, Poe's choice of names is singularly unfortunate. *Eulalie* seems excessively melodious, while *Ligeia* and *Porphyrogene* might be proprietary medicines" (1970: 72). Also A. Gibson comments that "in choosing words, he was inclined to pay more regard to their associations and overtones than their actual meaning" (1982: 490).

Some critics are of the opinion that the hammering monotony of his rhythms is obsessive and that they are the dynamic outward manifestation, without real movement, of feverish delusion. For Carlo Izzo, for example, Poe was skilled at formulating theories which responded to the demands and limitations of his mental state and "as regards metre it is difficult to determine to what point his hiccupping rhythms respond to a physiological rhythm, so to speak, and on the other hand, from what point these rhythms lead them to the limit of, correctly speaking, mechanical processes" (1971: 191). However, and although

it may not be able to avoid the general validity of these statements, we observe that in this author's best poems rhythm acquires expressive qualities, becoming part of the content it transmits; nor is it a mere decoration or a simple game as in "The Bells". David Galloway thinks that Poe could also produce memorable lines like those of "To Helen": "with their subtle overlaying of internal rhymes and assonance and richly evocative language" (1979: 18). Even Whitman himself came to admit that in spite of the displeasure some aspects of his literature gave rise to in him, "Poe's genius has yet conquer'd a special recognition for itself, and I too have come to fully admit it, and appreciate it and him" (1979: 2134).

Let us now look at the different forms that the rhythm in *Annabel Lee* takes, for which we will first define as rhythmic every fact that is repeated at equal or similar intervals of time. As it is said, in poetry the repetition of the number of accents per line, the repetition of Latin feet, the repetition of sounds (different types of end and internal rhyme), the repetition of syntactical structures, line pauses (or their absence), alliterative phenomena... all of these have rhythmic value. Not all repetition is always systematic; sometimes in this form it attracts the reader's attention by having a deliberate rhetorical effect.

Let us start with the accentual metre: that of the popular ballad usually alternated tetrametres and trimetres in the four line stanza, following the 4/3/4/3 scheme. However, by increasing the number of lines per stanza, Poe modifies this pattern in order to provide variety and avoid rigidity and monotony. Its object is to produce in the reader the effect of a "defeated expectancy". As Geoffrey N. Leech explains, "The power of defeated expectancy as a poetic device depends, naturally enough, on the rigidity of the verse form as it is established in the reader's mind" (1985: 120). It ought to be specified that the lines are catalectic, that is to say, they lack unstressed syllables at the end. This is related to the fact that most of the lines end in monosyllabic words, typically Saxon, and two and three syllable words are unusual, only three in fact: "heaven", "above" and "sepulchre", the latter clearly a learned word.

As for the compulsory end pauses at the end of each line, these do not at times coincide with syntactical units: in this case, an imbalance or disadjustment is produced, known as enjambement. The rhythmic value of this device is notable, since it sets up a tension that speeds up the elocution. Leech defines it thus: "Enjambement is therefore like metrical variation in setting up a tension between the expected pattern and the pattern actually occurring" (1985: 123). In *Annabel Lee* (although in the traditional ballad form enjambements do not usually appear) the enjambements that appear are of the N-Adj type, that is to say, the end pause separates the nuclear element from that which performs an adjacent function: lines 27 and 28: "...The love / Of those who were older..."; lines 27 and 29: "...the love / Of many far wiser..."; lines 34 and 35: "...dreams / Of the beautiful..."; lines 36 and 37: "...eyes / Of the beautiful..."; lines 38 and 39: "...side / Of my darling...". And another of the V-DO type: lines 15 and 16: "...chilling / My beautiful...". The enjambements are produced precisely in those stanzas which are the most important from the point of view of significance, and in which the greatest tension is produced: the third and the last two. We will see shortly which other rhythmic devices used in these stanzas to emphasize their interest.

If we apply division into traditional prosodic feet to the poem we observe some interesting facts: although there is not a rigid pattern that is repeated in an identical manner throughout the composition, we can observe the reiteration of what is known as "rising rhythm", that is to say, iambic feet (short, long) and anapaestic feet (short, short, long). Only on four occasions does the line begin with a tonic syllable giving rise to a dactylic stress (long, short, short); two of them are situated in the second stanza: lines 7, 10 and 12; this is the moment when the first "I" of the poet appears and the motive that causes the death: "coveted her and me". Further on, in line 26, the specific cause of the actual "Chilling and killing my Annabel Lee" is mentioned. It is also necessary to point out that the rhythm of dactyls and trochaics in these lines is what imprints the characteristic sonorousness onto the title of the composition: *Annabel Lee* (long, short, short / long). On the other hand, it is also clear, merely on observing the rhyme scheme, that the anapaestic rhythm is almost completely applied in the last two stanzas. It is obvious that if the execution of the lines tends to be isochronous, or rather to appear so, the poetry reader can slow down by lengthening the stressed syllables in a line with a lower number of syllables, while he will tend to go faster in those lines which, with the same number of accents, may have fewer syllables, that is to say, the impression of speed will increase with the proportional number of syllables. That is the reason why the third stanza exhibits a slower rhythm, very much in accordance with the appearance of the lady's death and burial, while the climatic tension speeds up the last two stanzas in which the lover, almost in a state of paroxysm, re-asserts his eternal love, which goes beyond death.

Of course, Poe's importance as a theorist of rhythmic devices and their structural function within the poem has not gone unnoticed by the Russian formalists, nor by the scholars of the Prague Linguistic Circle. Jakobson recognises that "it was Edgar Allan Poe, poet and theorist of frustrated anticipation, who evaluated, with a metric and psychological focus, the human feeling of satisfaction before the unexpected which arises from the expected, neither of which can be thought of without its opposite" (1975: 370). In *Marginalia* Poe devotes Essay N^o VII to discussing the importance of rhyme: a poem should have equidistant rhymes which are repeated regularly in such a way that on varying the rhyme scheme the unexpected is produced. According to the author, the perfection of rhyme can only be achieved by combining both elements: regularity and the unexpected. In the case of *Annabel Lee* the rhyme is very simple and is repeated, generally, in the even lines, leaving the odd lines blank. In this he is following the archetypal pattern of the popular ballad, although yet again Poe's artistic sensibility introduces some changes. In the first place, the rhyme is kept identical throughout the poem, giving greater cohesion between the stanzas (in the popular ballad the rhyme changed in each one). In the second place, the rhyme links up nouns and pronouns (substitutes for nouns), that is to say, the same grammatical category. The rhyming words are repeated insistently: 1st stanza: sea/Lee/me; 2nd stanza: sea/Lee/me; 3rd stanza: sea/Lee/me/sea; 4th stanza: me/sea/Lee; 5th stanza: we/sea/Lee (odd lines); 6th stanza: Lee/Lee/sea (even lines); side/bride (lines 5 and 6); sea/sea (lines 7 and 8). One may observe how the expected order is altered after the 4th stanza, the 5th introduces a new element in the rhyme "we" and surprises us by

placing the rhyming elements at odd intervals. Finally, the last stanza mixes rhymes in even and odd positions.

The characteristic climatic ending of the last two stanzas reveals itself again in the bringing together of numerous devices which attract our attention. If the enjambements provided a momentum because syntactical expectancy was left in suspense until the following line ended, the repetitions of rhymes in unexpected odd positions and the appearance of other new ones create surprise. The fact is that the poet has become carried away by his emotion, and the way to convey it is by breaking the rhythmic patterns. For that reason he repeats the same words in the rhyme: "man needs to express himself superabundantly on matters which affect him deeply" (1985: 84), Leech believes. As for the phenomena of sound repetition, these are so plentiful and evident that we will only quote a few examples:

Alliteration: line 3, "That a maiden there lived whom you may know" (/m/); line 31, "Nor the demons down under the sea" (/d/); line 40, "In the sepulchre there by the sea" (/s/); line 41, "In her tomb by the sounding sea" (/s/). *Assonance*: line 3, maiden/may; line 15, wind/chilling; line 25, out/cloud. What are often produced are *echoing rhymes* and several of the phenomena at the same time, assonances and alliterations: "For the moon never beams, without bringing me dreams / Of the beautiful Annabel Lee / And the stars never rise, but I feel the bright eyes". Alliteration with /b/ is observed in the first two lines; internal rhyme: beams/dreams. In the third, /ai/: rise/I/bright/ eyes; and in addition to the assonance, echoing rhyme in rise/eyes. And in these other two lines: "And so, all the night-tide, I lie down by the side / Of my darling -my darling- my life and my bride", we find the assonance /ai/: night, tide, I, lie, side, life, bride; and echoing on the same line, for example in tide/side. These examples will serve to represent the whole. As we see, one of the most striking effects is achieved not only by means of the reiteration of sounds but of the whole word, and even the repetition of syntactical structures.

Indeed, all repetition signifies an emphasis, an intensification. In accordance with this, we have to explain that the clear lexical and syntactical recurrence of *Annabel Lee* is due to the extreme emotional excitement the poem reveals. Leech says "in a way, saying the same thing over and over is a reflection of the inadequacy of language to express what you have to express in one go" (79). The repetition may be found in an immediate or intermittent form (free verbal repetition): line 1, "It was many and many a year ago"; line 32, "Can ever dissever my soul from the soul"; line 39, "Of my darling -my darling...", line 27, "But our love it was stronger by far than the love". *Anaphora*: repetition of a word at the beginning of a line, for example: "Of" lines 28 and 29, 33,35,37,39; and "In", lines 40, 41... *Epiphora*: repetition of a word at the end of a line. We have seen how the rhyme is carried out at times in identical words: "sea", lines 40 and 41; "Lee", lines 35 and 37; "we", lines 28 and 29. *Homoioteleuthon*: flexional repetition of different words, for example line 26, "chilling/killing". *Polyptothon* repetition of a word modifying its inflexion, for example line 9, "But we loved with a love..."

From the syntactical point of view, the repetition of the same structure is known as *parallelism*. The connection it establishes between elements can be one of similarity or

contrast. In *Annabel Lee* two kinds can be found: analogical and antithetical, produced between different lines and even within the same line: line 6, "I was a child and she was a child". Not only is the Subject-Verb-Complement structure repeated, but the same words reiterated, except for the antithesis I/she. Again, the greatest confluence of this type of parallelistic construction is accumulated in the last two stanzas: line 28 and 29, "...older than we / ...wiser than we"; lines 30 and 31, "And neither the angel in heaven above / Nor the demons down under the sea" (with a contrast structure between the line endings); lines 34 and 36, "For the moon never beams... / And the stars never rise..."; line 40 and 41, "In the sepulchre there by the sea / In her tomb by the sounding sea". Parallelism is a very ancient device (typical of Hebrew poetry) associated ever since then with emphasis and memorization. In the poem we are dealing with, the parallelism is reminiscent of the kind of simple and well-constructed arrangement of the popular lyric. The ballad has a narrative structure, a story that is briefly told, and the characteristic devices of oral literature appear: the poet addresses the reader directly, line 3, "you may know", and involves him, line 23, "as all men know". The atmosphere of vagueness, mystery and temporal indefiniteness is also typical; in a word, the suggestiveness that is created so well in *Annabel Lee*.

But if the sentence structures of the popular ballad are based on co-ordinate clauses (mainly copulative and contrast phrases), in *Annabel Lee*, in addition to these and owing to their discursive character, reason and consecutive clauses appear. The conjunctions act as links which connect the sentences between each other. Thanks to the kind of connections we can establish a clear structure based also on a parallelism made of similarities and contrasts. While the first four stanzas use past time (death of the beloved one), the last two place us in an eternal present: love transcends death.

In the first three stanzas the facts are presented to us: in the first, ideal love is spoken of; in the second, the envy of the angels as the *cause* of the death is mentioned; and in the third, the *consequence* is expounded ("This was the reason that... / So that..."): death of the beloved and separation. The fourth stanza acts as a hinge: it recapitulates and summarizes. The last two present a very significant contrast: "*But* our love...". The lover's rebellion in the face of the adverse circumstances. His declaration of eternal love. Subsequently it is structured (in a form similar to the first stanzas) by *cause*: "For the moon never beams..." and *consequence*: "And so, all the night tide...".

In conclusion, we can say that it is difficult to get away from the magic and charm of *Annabel Lee*. Only when a craftsman of poetry employs all the linguistic devices of the language, and then displays such skill that the assembly of the components is so perfect that we cannot see the separate units forming it, but only the beauty of the overall effect, can we talk of poetry. That is what happens in *Annabel Lee*. Although it is certainly true that Poe does not always manage to keep his machinery out of sight, or even prevent it from creaking. Often the author allows the rules to dominate at the cost of the poetic spirit, and in these cases it is when we echo the criticism of his mechanics with which much of his poetic output is labelled. On the other hand, it seems evident that Poe's fundamental poetic theses were worked out "*a posteriori*". That is to say, Poe understands poetry departing from his own creation. Subsequent reasoning is based on the substance of the poetic that is

informed, and takes its form, from verse. Because of that, we find great coherence between the poetic characteristics of *Annabel Lee* and the theses formulated in *The Poetic Principle*: in brief; the poem as an artistic form (without moral teachings or practical purpose); transcendent beauty; the importance of rhythm, etc. Perhaps the sincere feeling that emanates from *Annabel Lee* was induced by that excitement of the heart, the "passion" that Poe so condemned in favour of a spiritual love. In any case, that deep feeling has been decanted stylistically and artistically into the poem.

Last of all, as we have been saying throughout the work, Poe's greatest value lies in his determination to confer a *method* to poetic creation, that is to say, he stood up to Romantic criteria on inspiration and pure intuition in composition, to underline the importance of intellectual and analytical rigour. In fact, the limitations and defects we may encounter in his theories, based on personal tastes (reduction of poetry to the lyrical, without giving importance to the dramatic or epic; the sad and melancholy tone which leaves aside works born from other states of mind; the abuse of acoustic elements, without paying attention to meaning, which can produce mere jingles) are of less importance if we think about the later transcendence he had as regards other great creators and his influence on the development of a serious and firmly-based criticism.

Notes

1. As an example, we can point out that some of the traditional ballads collected by Diego Catalán and others exceed one hundred and fifty lines, and also Alan Bold states that "the popular ballad was an oral phenomenon, a narrative song that had been preserved on the lips of unlettered people" (2). However, we agree with Poe that these long narrative poems are traditional, but not popular. They were composed to be sung and recited, and we can only speak of them thanks to the fact that the oral tradition has not died.

2. This same device of approach and introduction (among others that involve the listener or reader) is characteristic of popular poetry, as can also be observed in the *Poema de Mío Cid*: the first time that the author refers to the little girl who refuses shelter to the Cid, he uses an indefinite article (line 40), yet uses the definite article when she actually speaks to him (line 49).

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