CHAPTER V

INFLUENCE OF POE'S POETICS ON THE FRENCH SYMBOLISTS AND THE NEW CRITICS

By 1855, Poe had assumed the legendary role he was to play in France; a New School declared itself and based its programme on Poe's Poetics. Symbolism in France developed between 1850 to 1920 i.e. the date when Charles Baudeláire first published his translations of Edgar Allan Poe's works in French, and the year 1920 when Surrealism was born. During this period it passed through various stages of development, and at each new stage new tendencies grew with various new experiments in the symbolists technique. The symbolist poets e.g. Baudeláire, Mallarmé and Verlaine did not make any conscious effort to form any school and simply expressed their views in the form of literary theories published independently. Still they had many points in common regarding the subject matter or technique of writing the new kind of poetry, and produced a kind or literature due to which symbolism, as a term assumed the virtue of being both a philosophy and a technique. However, each of them made his own reflections on life, the soul and the universe and brought about innovations in the methods of expression lending
freshness and novelty to the art of writing poetry. Symbolism developed into what C. M. Bowra calls a mystical form of aestheticism.

The emergence of Poe in his new position was not sudden. In the time between Baudelaire’s death and the ascendancy of the Symbolists, Mallarmé had been continuously translating Poe and talking of him in his intimate circle and Verlaine had also admired Poe, studied him and followed his tradition. The Symbolists were drawing idealist and mystic ideas from other sources, notably Carlyle and Schopenhauer, but because Poe satisfied the symbolist inclination both as theorist and artist he was a more impressive influence. “In the notes to his translations of Poe’s Poems,” Mallarmé speaks of the “new poetic theory that suddenly arrived from distant America” and caused a crisis in French aesthetics. The crisis, he is apparently referring to,—revealed itself in the exchange of articles among the traditionalists and the new poets in 1855 or 1856. Sulter Laumann and Anatole France had attacked the new “decadent” school of poetry; Paul Adams, Jean Moréas and Gustave Kahn had asserted their identity as “symbolists” and had drawn much of their theory and support from Baudelaire and Poe.”

By and large, from the first stirrings of the

Symbolist movement in France, Poe has been praised greatly and
the French response to Poe has been markedly affirmative in
character; many examples of lavish praise can be cited e.g. Andre
Faure says that Poe was always noble, pure, and fine...... In his
era there were few souls more beautiful than his. Mme Suzanne
Jackowskii says that Poe was the most unusual, the most original
and the most marvelous writer who ever enriched English
literature with gems of purest ray and so forth.

For the Symbolists, it was the poetry and
the critical ideas of Poe that were of major interest, and in these
areas they freely acknowledged him as their ancestor. Jean Moréas
answering an attack made against him and his colleagues as
obscure and extremist Decadent writers chose to quote the
paraphrase of Poe’s literary theory as he assumed that the
authority of Poe’s name would quell all doubts. Thus in the poetic
revolution that was the Symbolist movement Poe, even more than
Baudelaire, was looked to as the source of inspiration and
guidance and fortunately with the triumph of Symbolism he
regained the stature that of a great classic that Baudeláire had
given him.

Poe’s two essays on poetics “The Poetic
Principle” and “The Philosophy of Composition” were not equally
well known or completely adopted. When Mallarmé speaks of the
new poetic theory he is referring to the key concepts of “The Poetic Principle” and the idea behind “Philosophy of Composition.” In the first essay, the Symbolists ignored certain elaborations and examples of the major ideas— the poetic inducement, for example, of “the bright orbs that shine in Heaven” “and the sighing of the night wind”........... and they gave little attention to the question of length. They pointedly ignored one idea in “The Poetic Principle:” Poe has commented on naturalness of style saying, “the tone, in composition, should always be that which the mass of mankind would adopt.” Poe’s own style does not obey his edict, and the Symbolists were far from entertaining this attitude.2

The symbolists limited their acceptance of Poe’s theory in its essence and followed Baudeláire’s ideas that beauty, not truth, is the province of poetry, and that true poetic effect is an exaltation of spirit through the creation of beauty. Baudeláire in the process of interpretation emphasized the major ideas of Poe’s Poetic Principle. The philosophy of composition underwent an even greater change, Baudeláire had merely translated large passages from the Poetic Principle, but he interpreted Philosophy of Composition thoroughly, explaining Poe’s motives and the implications of the essay. Having drawn from it the principle that the poet works in full and deliberate

2. Ibid.: p.52.
consciousness, he ignored such details as—the death of a beautiful woman is the most poetic subject. The Symbolists therefore had the advantage of Baudelaire’s interpretations of Poe’s essays, as well as the original statements.

The Symbolist doctrine was presented in various manifestoes, but the most important and probably the earliest was that of Jean Moreas who emphasized the poetry for poetry’s sake doctrine, the use of suggestion as a technique instead of direct statements and advocated metrical liberation. According to him, “the Symbolists accepted Baudelaire, with his poetry for poetry’s sake,” as their master sought “the pure concept and the eternal Symbol” with Poe’s limitation or poetry to Beauty, attempted to use suggestion as a technique replacing direct statement and worked for metrical liberation beyond that of Romanticism. The first three ideas bear unmistakably the mark of Poe.”

The declaration, of the independence of art was a formal and necessary statement for the basis of other principles. Poe rejected Morality and Truth as the concern of the poet. Poe was advocating independence rather that refusing all morality and all truth. If the artist was to claim a position above the society and become the spiritual, intellectual and

3. Ibid.: p.53.
transcendental seer, he has to stop being a public servant and celebrating social values. As the artist became progressively more dissatisfied with his society, and as the distance between commonly accepted ideas and the artist's ideas widened, the poets detached themselves from the limitations of public concepts. The Symbolists for this reason found Poe's "Poetic Principle" new and prophetic.

"Having thrown out the most venerable literary standards—the social and moral end of literature—Poe had replaced it with the statement that the esthetic experience has no other end than itself. Although Moréas spoke of "poetry for its own sake" in his manifesto, such terms suggest a false interpretation of the theory. Poe no more worshipped art than a religious man worships images. He made it clear that the experience of true poetry is the closest possible approximation to a total religious and philosophic experience that man can have. Poetry is the creation of beauty, which in turn is the gate to the supernal. The last two propositions that Moréas makes—"the pure concept and the eternal Symbol," are techniques for fulfilling this poetic ideal........ If the beautiful object becomes a means of a transcendent experience, it follows, that one task of the poet is to find and represent the essence of that object. Since it is a transcendental experience that he must convey, and not a lesson that he must teach, no direct statement will
serve."  

This is the basic principle of the Symbolists, and it is Poe's. Once we leave broad general statements, however, and consider specific applications, we find a great deal of variety in the temperament and inclinations of the Symbolists and consequent modifications by them of Poe's theory.

For Baudelaire he was "one of the greatest of literary heroes," for Mallarmé "the spiritual Prince of this age," for Valéry an "achieved mind:" the Symbolists that stand at the beginning, middle, and end of a lineage were constant in their fidelity to Poe."  

Jean Richepin in a series of lectures on American Literature said that "It was in France that Poe was soonest and most fully understood."

"Edgar Poe, who isn't much in America, must become a great man in France— at least that is what I want." When Baudelaire wrote those words to Sainte Beuve in 1856, he had already given nine years to a task that was to preoccupy him for seven years more."

Poe's career in France began in August 1845 when the translation of "The Purloined Letter" appeared in a

4. Ibid.: p.54.
Paris journal. Later in that year “The Gold Bug” was also printed. Baudeláire did not become aware of this new writer immediately. It was sometime in 1846 or 1847 that he discovered him, and was greatly influenced, and experienced a strange commotion in first reading Poe. He wrote to London for a copy of Poe’s works, and collected “Southern Literary Messenger” during the period of Poe’s editorship. The more he investigated the more his original feeling about Poe was confirmed, he felt that Poe was his “alter ego,” his brother. “The first time I opened one of his books I saw, to my amazement and delight, not simply certain subjects which I had dreamed of, but sentences which I had thought out, written by him twenty years ago.” This experience of the shock of recognition is unparalleled in literature.

Baudeláire wrote three long essays on this subject, which very clearly express what Poe meant to Baudeláire — ‘a literary hero’. He even made repeated requests to Sainte Beuve to write some critical article on Poe. “You, who so love profundities why not investigate the profundities of Edgar Poe?” But Sainte Beuve never fulfilled this request or any other, which Baudeláire made regarding Poe. And so those “profundities” which Baudeláire was sure existed in Poe’s work, but which he himself did not explore and could only point to, remained unsounded for many years, until in our own time, Baudeláire’s invitation to Sainte

Beuve was accepted by other writers.”

Baudeláire wrote, “Do you know why I translated Poe so patiently? Because he was like me......” The unique homage stated several times, was more than an influence as other contemporaries quickened Baudeláire’s interest, and his common sensibility and common pursuit of a new kind of beauty: “un genre de beauté nouvelle”

The basic text or the main text for Baudeláire as for Mallarmé and Valéry, was “The Philosophy of Composition” and he followed his principles in earnest its recommendations concerning brevity, intensity and technical appropriateness. These Romantics spoke of soul and inspiration while Poe of means and ends and Baudeláire was captivated by a deductive approach that treats writing as an act of will. Each line, image, and thought must lead to the next. The reader will not escape once he gives himself over to a method governed by logic, a premeditated plan —— this minute scientific manner believed, Baudeláire is bound to create the desired effect. So Baudeláire sees poetics as a combinatory art that is called forth, guided and sustained by the intellect. In 1857 he sums up Poe’s teachings in the following words, “Not one single word must appear in the whole composition that is not an intention and does not help, directly or

8. Ibid.: p. 16.
indirectly, to realize the preconceived design."  

According to Baudelaire Edgar Poe, dividing the world of the mind into pure intellect, taste and moral Sense applied criticism in accordance with the category to which the object of his analysis belonged. He was above all sensitive to perfection of plan and to correctness of execution, carefully noting the flaws of workmanship or style examining meticulously the faults of prosody and grammatical errors. For him imagination is the queen of faculties—a divine faculty, which perceives immediately the inner secret relations of things. He says that a scholar without imagination appears only as a pseudo-scholar, or at least as an incomplete scholar.

Poe believed that the artist if he is skillful, will not adapt his thoughts to the incidents, but having conceived deliberately and at leisure an effect to be produced, will invent the incidents, will combine the events most suitable to bring about the desired effect. If the first sentence is not written with the idea of preparing this final impression, the work has failed from the start. There must not creep into the entire composition a single word, which is not intentional which does not tend, directly or indirectly, to complete the premeditated design.

One cannot gauge the exact importance

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of Poe in Baudeláire's artistic growth, other writers—Theophile Gautier, Joseph de Maistre had their influence on him, but Poe, was the determinative influence. Baudeláire planned 'Les Fleurs du mal' a long poem, made of a collection of short intense poems, according to the principles laid down by Poe such as—a capacious architecture with beginning; middle and an end, a rigorous argument based on a hidden mathematical variation. The first of Baudeláire's essay speaks of the coherence of Poe's thought. In Poe there is a meeting of science and meditation, his scientific curiosity being linked to philosophical inquiry. Baudeláire saw Poe's work as a kind of experiment, in Poe he says we contemplate the glorification of the will as applied to induction and analysis.

It is observed that Poe and Baudeláire exchanged values. Poe today would have been completely forgotten if Baudeláire had not taken up the task of introducing him into European literature says Valéry. Poe's contribution to literature cannot be underestimated, though he could not draw the appreciation of many of his contemporaries, yet the distinction Poe has achieved as a symbolist and a force that shaped and influenced the symbolist movement in France can in no way be diminished. When Baudeláire brought out Poe's works, the general atmosphere in France was suited to welcome these translations. Intellectualism had long established itself. Classicism
in literature had grown too much to be appreciated any more. Hence both readers and writers were looking forward to something which could please the spirit and lend them the opportunity to let their imaginations work. When the translations of Poe's works by Baudelaire came out they proved just the thing the French wanted.

The French Symbolists were deeply influenced, and the budding poets namely Baudelaire, Mallarme and Rimbaud wrote symbolist literature accepting Poe as their master. Though they were all psychologically prepared, Poe brought out what was dormant in them. In the words of Baudelaire, Poe will always be remembered for his "Love of the Beautiful—his knowledge of the harmonic conditions of Beauty—his profound plausible poetry, and above all for his pure and crystal style, and originality of thought and technique. He will always remain the god father of Symbolist Poetry in France."

If we consider specific applications, and leave broad general statements, we find a great deal of variety in the temperament and inclination of the Symbolists, and consequent modifications by them of Poe's theory. "Gustave Kahn, who placed more emphasis on revolutionary metrics than Moreas suggests another area of Poe's influence. Kahn thought the poets united by "denial" of the old monotonous techniques of verse and by the
desire to vary rhythm and to give the diagram of a sensation in
the design of a stanza." Kahn also declared the intention of the
group to renovate and restore the French language. The group
included many other Symbolists e.g. Mallarmé, Adam, Laforgue
etc.

There is possibility of the Symbolists language
being influenced by Poe’s use of the jargon of science and of rare
and archaic words. He may have influenced indirectly also through
his translators. Baudelâire was accused of neologism while
Mallarmé was accused of introducing foreign syntax into French.
Kahn also speaks of Poe’s verse, as if, it were freed from
traditional laws. It is uncertain as to what extent Kahn believed
that Poe was an innovator in poetic form and to what extent he
was constructing a convincing precedent for his own innovations.
Though Poe’s relation to the revolution in metrics is questionable,
yet it is clear that Moréas and Kahn are in agreement in their
fundamental concepts, and that they believed that they were
pursuing the course that Poe had outlined.

The Symbolists rejected rhetoric on the basis
that it applies personal communication. Although they were
unanimous in rejecting the old rhetoric, they were divergent on
the means of replacing rhetoric and in the extent to which they

disintegrated the old forms Mallarmé is at one extreme, with his
cult of the word and his definition of poetry which echoes Poe
and Baudelaire.

In 1862, at the age of twenty, the French poet
Stephane Mallarmé went to London and began work on his trans-
lations of the poems of Poe. He had learned English before going
to England, learned the language, he said later for one simple
reason: "the better to read Poe." Mallarmé described Poe as "one
of the most marvelous minds the world has ever known," he held
Poe in great esteem. The Poe of Mallarmé is—— Poe the poet
while Poe who meant so much to Valéry is—— Poe the critic, the
aesthete, the philosophe of literature. These French writers
had clearly seen certain features in Poes writings that have not,
been seen by critics who have written in Poe's own language.
Thus in his essay entitled "From Poe to Valéry," T.S. Eliot remarked;
"Now, we all of us like to believe that we understand our own
poets better than any foreigner can do; but I think we should be
prepared to entertain the possibility that these Frenchmen have
seen something in Poe that English-speaking readers have
missed." 12

T. S. Eliot in "From Poe to Valéry," his only major

Autumn 1949.
essay on Poe, describes the "immense" though puzzling influence of Poe on three successive generations of poets in France, especially the direct impact of Poe's poetic theory and practice on Baudelaire, Mallarmé, and Valéry. Eliot is of the opinion that by trying to look at Poe through the eyes of Baudelaire, Mallarmé, and most of all Valéry he becomes more thoroughly convinced of Poe's importance and of the importance of Poe's work as a whole. "I shall here make no attempt to explain the enigma. At most, this is a contribution to the study of his influence; and an elucidation, partial as it may, of one cause of Poe's importance in the light of that influence. I am trying to look at him, for a moment, as nearly as I can, through the eyes of three French poets, Baudelaire, Mallarmé, and especially Paul Valéry. The sequence is itself important. These three French poets represent the beginning, the middle and the end of a particular tradition in poetry. Mallarmé once told a friend of mine that he came to Paris because he wanted to know Baudelaire——. As for Valéry, we know from the first letter to Mallarmé, written when he was hardly more than a boy, of his discipleship of the older poet; and we know of his devotion to Mallarmé until Mallarmé's death."^{13}

Eliot in his lecture further says, "Here are three literary generations, representing almost exactly a century of French poetry. Of course, these are poets very different from

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13. Ibid.
each other; of course, the literary progeny of Baudeláire was numerous and important and there are other lines of descent from him. But I think we can trace the development and descent of one particular theory of the nature of poetry through these three poets and it is a theory which takes its origin in the theory, still more than in the practice of Edgar Poe. And the impression we get of the influence of Poe is the more impressive, because of the fact that Mallarmé, and Valéry in turn, did not merely derive from Poe through Baudeláire: each of them subjected himself to that influence directly, and has left convincing evidence of the value which he attached to the theory and practice of Poe himself—. “My subject, then is not simply Poe, but Poe’s effect upon three French poets, representing three successive generations; and my purpose is also to approach an understanding of a peculiar attitude towards poetry, by the poets themselves, which is perhaps the most interesting, possibly the most characteristic, and certainly the most original development of the esthetic of verse made in that period as a whole.”

The American and the English readers and critics however regarded Poe as a minor and secondary follower of the Romantic Movement,—a follower of Byron and Shelley in verse and a follower of the Gothic novelists in his fiction. But he does not belong either to the Romantic or to the American

14. Ibid.
tradition of his age or to the earlier generation, T. S. Eliot says that, "There is a certain flavour of Provinciality about his work, — it is a provinciality of a person who is not at home where he belongs, but can not get to any where else. Poe is a kind of displaced European; he is attracted to Paris, to Italy and to Spain, to places which he could endow with romantic gloom and grandeur."\textsuperscript{15}

T. S. Eliot in "Note sur Mallarmé et Poe," published in Nouvelle Revue Française (1926) says that Metaphysical Poetry as a genre was not limited to England or to the seventeenth century but had in fact been a major part of the greatest European poetry of the Middle Ages and Renaissance as well as of the later nineteenth century. Eliot says, that Donne, Poe, and Mallarmé love metaphysical speculation and they use their theories in order to arrive at a more limited, more exclusive goal: to refine and develop their powers of sensibility and emotion. Their work was an expansion of their sensibility beyond the limits of the normal world, a discovery of new objects that could inspire new emotions. Unlike other critics Eliot saw little of the hallucinatory in either Poe or Mallarmé: in contrast to Rimbaud and Blake, who force us to submit to a complete reorganization of the real world, Mallarmé, Donne, Baudelaïre, and Poe take us into a world which is entirely familiar. These poets expand and

\textsuperscript{15} Ibid.
prolong our sensibility in such a way that the development of associations, "being continuous, remain perfectly real." Thus according to Eliot their poetry is a transmutation of the accidental in to the real.

"When Mallarmé’s first translations of the poems of Poe began to appear in 1875, the partial eclipse of Poe in France, as Lemonnier describes it, was almost ended. He became the name to reckon with so far as the Symbolist writers were concerned; and for the past seventy-five years Poe’s French reputation has had all the appearance of solidity and permanence."\(^{16}\)

Poe followed his own theory in a perfect manner and eliminated Reason from poetry, and his followers found it easier to use his dogma them his poems as the pattern for their work. In the complete symbolism of his better poems Poe was thoroughly understood by only the most subtle of the Symbolists—Mallarmé. The other Symbolists approached Poe’s poetic originality primarily through his theory and secondarily through the partial symbolism of tales such as "Shadow" and "Eleonora." However since they saw many of Poe’s tales as poems of a new kind, the distinction between the two influences is blurred.

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Poe as a poet has received most attention from the French critics studying Mallarmé, because he was the Frenchman most impressed by Poe's verse. For Mallarmé, Poe was a writer altogether unique. For him as for Baudeláire the stature of Poe was evidently that of a literary deity. For Valéry in the next generation Poe was also to be great master: "Poe is the only impeccable writer. He was never mistaken." In the first letter he wrote to Mallarmé in 1890, Valéry was careful to underline their common admiration of Poe; and fifty years later he was to specify Poe, along with Leonardo Da Vinci, as the major influences in his literary and philosophical career.

Baudeláire, Mallarmé, Valéry all did not respond to Poe in exactly the same way, as, they are all great poets, very different from each other and belonging to different generations. While Mallarmé was interested in technique of verse and Baudeláire in the poet himself Valéry was concerned with Poe's theory of Poetry that engages his attention. In a letter written to Mallarmé he writes: "I prize the theories of Poe, so profound and insidiously learned; I believed in the omnipotence of rhythm, and especially in the suggestive phrase." T. S. Eliot in his lecture "From Poe Valéry" says that he is more concerned with Valéry's theory, "But I base my opinion, not primarily upon this credo of a very young man, but upon Valéry's subsequent theory and practice. In the same way that Valéry's poetry, and his essays on the art of poetry,
are two aspects of the same interest of his mind and complement each other, so for Valéry the poetry of Poe is inseparable from Poe’s poetic theories.”

T. S. Eliot says that in Valéry there is a change of attitude towards the subject matter. The subject matter becomes important in a different way, it becomes important as means only the end is the poem. The subject exists for the poem, not the poem for the subject. He further says that a poem may employ several subjects, combining them in a particular way, and from the union of several subjects there appears not another subject, but the poem. Valéry was poet who wrote very consciously and deliberately according to his aesthetic theory. He did not believe in ends but was interested only in processes. “It often seems as if he had continued to write poetry, simply because he was interested in the introspective observation of himself engaged in writing it: one has only to read the several essays some times indeed more exciting than his verse, because one suspects that he was more excited in writing them—in which he records his observations. There in a revealing remark in Vari’ete’ V, the last of his books of collected papers: “As for myself, who am I, confess, much more concerned with the formation or the fabrication of works (of art) than with the works themselves,” and a little later in

the same volume: "In my opinion the most authentic philosophy is not in the objects of reflection, so much as in the very act of thought and its manipulation."

Here we have brought to their culmination by Valéry, two notions which can be traced back to Poe. There is first the doctrine, elicited from Poe by Baudelaire, which I have already quoted: "A poem should have nothing in view but itself:" second the notion that the composition of a poem should be as conscious and deliberate as possible, that the poet should observe himself in the act of composition— and this, in a mind as sceptical as Valéry's, leads to the conclusion, so paradoxically inconsistent with the other, that the act of composition is more interesting than the poem which results from it." 18

In the above statement T.S. Eliot makes in clear that Valéry's admiration for Poe was acknowledged by him time and again. Eliot speaking on the purity of Poe's poetry further says, "......But in the sense of la poésie pure that kind of purity came easily to Poe. The subject is little the treatment is everything. He did not have to achieve purity by a process of purification, for his material was already tenuous. Second there is that defect in Poe to which I alluded when I said that he did not appear to believe, but rather to entertain, theories. And here

again, with Poe and Valéry, extremes meet, the immature mind playing with ideas because it had not developed to the point of convictions, and the very adult mind playing with ideas because it was too sceptical to hold conviction. It is by this contrast, I think that we can account for Valéry's admiration for Eureka............. ..........., ...........- which Valéry, after Baudeláire, esteemed highly as a "prose poem." Finally there is the astonishing result of Poe's analysis of the composition of The Raven. It does not matter whether The Philosophy of Composition is a hoax, or a piece of self-deception, or a more or less accurate record of Poe's calculations in writing the poem; what matters in that it suggested to Valéry a method and an occupation—- that of observing himself write. Of Course, a greater than Poe had already studied the poetic process. In the Biographia Literaria Coleridge is concerned primarily, of course with the poetry of Wordsworth; and he did not pursue his philosophical enquiries concurrently with the writing of his poetry; but he does anticipate the question which fascinated Valéry. "What am I doing when I write a poem?" "Yet Poe's Philosophy of composition is a mise au point of the question which gives it capital importance in relation to this process which ends with Valéry. For the penetration of the poetic by the introspective critical activity is carried to the limit by Valéry, the limit at which the latter begins to destroy the former- M. Louis Bolle, in his admirable study of this poet,
observes pertinently: "This intellectual narcissism is not alien to the poet, even though he does not explain the whole of his work: 'why not conceive as a work of art the production of a work of art?'" 19

Eliot in the end of his lecture again asserts that Poe occupies an important place, and he is convinced of the importance of his work as a whole. He says, "Now, as I think I have already hinted, I believe that the art poetique of which we find the germ in Poe, and which bore fruit in the work of Valéry, has gone as far as it can go. I do not believe that this esthetic can be of any help to later poets. What will take its place I do not know. An esthetic, which merely contradicted it, would not do. To insist on the all-importance of subject-matter, to insist that the poet should be spontaneous and irreflective, that he should depend upon inspiration and neglect technique, would be a lapse from what is in any case a highly civilized attitude to a barbarous one. We should have to have an esthetic, which somehow transcended that of Poe and Valéry. This question does not greatly exercise my mind, since I think that the poet's theories should arise out of his practice rather than his practice out of his theories. But I recognize first that within this tradition from Poe to Valéry are some of those modern poems which I most admire and enjoy; second, I think that the tradition itself represents the most

interesting development of poetic consciousness anywhere in that same hundred years; and finally I value this exploration of certain poetic possibilities for its own sake, as we believe that all possibilities should be explored. And I find that by trying to look at Poe through, the eyes of Baudelaire, Mallarme, and most of all Valéry, I become more thoroughly convinced of his importance, of the importance of his work as a whole."20

Auden says that through its influence on the French, Poe's general aesthetic is well known. The bulk of his critical writing, and perhaps the most important is concerned with poetic technique and practical criticism of details. No one in his time put so much energy and insight into trying to make his contemporary poets take their craft seriously. The influence of Poe on Valéry was not, as T. S. Eliot has already mentioned, a matter of poetic technique alone, in 1892 Paul Valéry in a letter to André Gide expressed unbounded admiration for Poe and when he discovered 'Eureka,' it impressed him deeply as an original epic of intellectual speculation, without parallel in his scientific, philosophical or literary experience. In his essay "Au sujet d'Eureka" which appeared as a preface to Baudelaire's translation of that work he describes it as an "abstract poem" and later in 1924 he describes it as, a "poème: cosmogonique moderne," belonging to cosmogony as one of the oldest of literatures, a

20 Ibid. p.219.
literature of myth and fable. Considering it as science, Valéry accepts Poe's fundamental conception of matter as "profound and sovereign," neither proved nor disproved by discoveries since 1847. Valéry associates Poe's coherence theory of truth with Einstein's theory of relativity, and draws significant distinctions between classical notions of cause, category, and determinism, on the one hand, and Poe's views of causality and of consciousness and potentiality as inherent in matter.

Valéry in his essay writes, "To Attain what he calls the truth, Poe invokes what he calls, consistency. It is not easy to give an exact definition of this consistency. The author has not done so, although he must have had a clear conception of its meaning. According to him, the truth, which he seeks, can only be grasped by immediate adherence to an intuition of such nature that it renders present, and in some sort perceptible to the mind, the reciprocal dependence of the parts and properties of the system under consideration. This reciprocal dependence extends to the successive phases of the system; causality becomes symmetrical. To a point of view, which embraced the totality of the universe, a cause and its effect might be taken one, for the other; they could be said to exchange their roles......... In Poe's system, consistency is both the sources of the discovery and the discovery itself. This is an admirable conception: an example and application of reciprocal adaptation. The universe is formed
on a plan the profound symmetry of which is present, as it were, in the inner structure of our minds. Hence, the poetic instinct will lead us blindly to the truth.\textsuperscript{21}

Valéry saw in Eureka, a drama of the intellect. He believed that any cosmogony is a myth, but at the same time he admired the heroic effort of the human brain as it tries to grasp the very notion of a universe and a beginning. He admired Poe for his leap of the imagination backed up by scientific explanations. He writes, "The fundamental idea of Eureka is none the less a profound and sovereign idea. It would not be exaggerating its importance to recognize, in his theory of consistency, a fairly definite attempt to describe the universe by its intrinsic properties. The following proposition can be found toward the end of Eureka: "Each law of nature depends at all points on all the other laws." This might easily be considered, if not as a formula, at least as the expression of a tendency toward generalized relativity.

That this tendency approaches recent conceptions becomes evident when one discovers, in the poem under discussion, an affirmation of the symmetrical and reciprocal relationship of matter, time, space, gravity, and light. I emphasize the word symmetrical, for it is, in reality, a formal

\textsuperscript{21} Paul Valéry : "Au sujet d’Eureka," Preface to Eureka translated by Baudelâire.
symmetry, which is the essential characteristic of Einstein's universe. Herein lies the beauty of his conception.

But Poe does not confine himself to the physical constituents of phenomena. He introduces life and consciousness into his plan. At this point how many thoughts occur to the mind! The time is past when one could distinguish easily between the material and the spiritual. Formerly all discussion was based on a complete knowledge of "matter," which it was thought could be limited by definition. In a word, everything depended on appearance.

The appearance of a matter is that of a dead substance, a potentiality which becomes activity only through the intervention of something exterior and entirely foreign to its nature. From this definition, inevitable consequences used to be drawn. But matter has changed. Our old conception of its nature was derived from pure observation; experiments have led to an opposite notion. The whole of modern physics, which has created, as it were, relays for our senses, has persuaded us that our former definition had neither an absolute nor a speculative value. We find that matter is strangely diverse and infinitely surprising; that it is formed of transformations, which continue and are lost in minuteness, even in the abysses of minuteness; we learn that perpetual motion is perhaps realized. In matter an
eternal fever rages."^{22}

Valéry did not like several features of Eureka; he was unimpressed by the pretensions of the author, did not care for the solemn tone of the preamble, and was disappointed that all the consequences were not deduced with precision. Finally Valéry says, that he was fascinated by the ideas developed in Eureka. Poe awakened in him an interest in science, which had been numbed by the dismal instructors of his school days. In Poe's discussion of the symmetrical and reciprocal relationship of matter, time, space gravity, and light, Valéry recognized a similarity with the formed symmetry of Einstein's universe. He was convinced that imagination plays an important role in science and that scientific analysis is involved in creative achievements. Valéry believed that Poe was the first writer to see these relationships. He writes, "The reader of Eureka will see how, Poe has extended the application both of the nebular hypothesis and the law of gravity. On these mathematical foundations he has built an abstract poem, one of the rare modern examples of a total explanation of the material and spiritual universe, a cosmogony. It belongs to a department of literature, remarkable for its persistence and astonishing in its variety; cosmogony is one of the oldest of all literary forms."^{23}

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22 Ibid.:
23 Ibid.
Paul Valéry's death in 1945 marks the end of the century-long Poe cult in France, initiated by Baudelaire in 1846 when he discovered Poe's stories and decided to devote himself to the task of translating them into French. Baudelaire's vow to make Poe known in France was carried out with missionary fervor by his successors Mallarmé and Valéry. Poe's effect on Valéry makes two essential points: Valéry's concept of pure poetry derives from Poe's idea that, "a poem should have nothing in view but itself;" and Valéry's interest in observing himself writing a poem comes from his reading of "the Philosophy of Composition." The material that bring to light additional aspects of Poe's effect on Valéry are reproduction of twenty-nine volumes of handwritten notebooks each containing some nine hundred pages and three volumes of correspondence. Early in his literary career Valéry was obsessed with reading Poe, which is evident from his prose works. Valéry was indeed "penetrated," as he said by the ideas of Poe and his first literary essay entitled "Sur la technique litteraire," is a mere paraphrasing of Poe's "The Philosophy of Composition," and Valéry begins the essay by declaring that the most important consideration of the poet must be to create the maximum effect on the reader.

Lois Vines in his "Paul Valéry and The Poe Legacy in France" writes, "Valéry puts forth the idea that our judgment of creative works is distorted because we are not aware
of their genesis. He goes on to explain that most authors do not have the courage to take a look at how a particular work was created; other writers, says Valéry, could not even understand the process. Like Poe, Valéry attributes this failure to the vanity of the author, who would prefer to give the impression that his work sprang forth on its own. As both authors point out, inspiration plays a role in the creative process, but conscious effort, chance, and decisions made at the last minute are also involved. Valéry was fascinated by the drama that takes place in the creative mind and believed that Poe was the first to describe it."24 Valéry believed that Poe placed the study of literature on an analytical basis and he himself aspired to achieve that goal. For him Poe was a literary innovator who applied intellectual rigor to creative work. Poe’s story served as a model for Valéry when he created his own fictional character Edmond Teste in ‘La Soirée avec Mousieur Teste’ whose analytical brain express Valéry’s obsession with intellectual rigor and self-comprehension. Valéry sometimes called Poe the “demon of lucidity.”

Valéry’s collection of poems entitled “Charmes” came out in 1917, and he was immediately recognized as an outstanding poet. The slender volume was published only after André Gidé somehow succeeded to convince

him to get them published. Many of the poems share a constant theme, represented symbolically—the theme is the drama of artistic creation. The poet not only observed himself while writing a poem but he even went a step further by making the creative process itself the subject of his Poetry. Valéry's interest in Poe was not simply a youthful enthusiasm, he continued to read Poe and think about him for the rest of his life, he even thought about giving a lecture on Poe, but said that he would have difficulty in doing so, as he had read him at length. There are several references to Eureka, which became the subject of Valéry's only published essay written on Poe. The admiration for Poe's Poetic Theory that Valéry expressed in his first essay did not diminish over the years. From 1937, until just a few months before his death, Valéry taught a course in poetics at the renowned "College de France," where a chair had been established in his honour Valéry's lectures at "College de France" were never published, but one of his students, recounted in her book, what he said about Poe. Like Poe, he believed that writing poetry is a conscious act calculated to arouse emotion in the reader. He explained "The Philosophy of Composition" and "The Poetic Principle" to his Students while giving examples from his own experience, gathered from many years of observing himself write. Valéry liked creating verse within the strict rules of classical French prosody. A sudden inspiration or a stroke of luck might play a role in the
creation of a poem, but for the most part, poetic composition requires a conscious, analytical approach to language. He was convinced that imagination plays an important role in science and that scientific analysis is involved in creative achievements. Valéry believed that Poe was the first writer to see these relationships, and he was the first also to recommend eliminating from poetry all subjects that can best be treated in prose—history, politics, morality, etc.

In his introduction to René Fernandat's book "Autour de Paul Valéry" (1933), Valéry, remarked that Leonardo, Poe, and Mallarmé had a deep influence on him, "He explained the particular way in which this influence operated in his case. Certain aspects of the works of these men caught his attention, and he would then imagine the mind that had created the work. This mental image, formed in his own mind, had the greatest effect on him. Valéry wrote several essays about Leonardo and Mallarmé. Since he published relatively little on Poe, it has been necessary to sift through his letters and note-books in order to recreate his mental image of Poe. There emerges from this material a striking portrait. Valéry's Poe was a literary genius, a logical thinker who attempted to place creative work on an analytical basis, and the first writer to explore the psychological aspects of literature. Several of the references to Poe in Valéry's final notebooks repeat Baudelaire's phrase describing Poe as
“Ce merveilleux cerveau toujours en éveil.” “That marvelous brain always on alert” appropriately fixes the image of Poe that became a legacy in France.25

Poe’s influence on the Symbolists has been traced on many occasions, we know that Baudeláire spent seventeen years on the tales, Mallarmé still longer on the poems,— thirty years, while Valéry, to whom Baudeláire and Mallarmé left little to translate, translated Marginalia. Poe showed different facets of himself to each of his readers who adopted him in various ways: Baudeláire focused on the “poète maudit,” Mallarmé on the “prosodist,” and Valéry on the theoretician in whom he discovered “a method and an occupation— that of observing himself write.” There is scarcely one French writer from the time of Baudeláire to the mid fifties, who has not in one way or another paid his respects to Poe. Villiers de l’Isle Adam, Verlaine and Rimbaud, Huysmans, Claudel, Gidé, Edmond Jaloux—these are names at random, but they serve to indicate the scope of interest Poe has had for France. Baudeláire made Poe a great figure in France, not only for his own time, but for the next hundred years.

The need to justify the existence of poets, and the reading of poetry, becomes acute in times of strain. The

English Romantic era was the time when theorists of poetry, surrendering up traditional definitions of poetry as a mirror of truth, or as an art for achieving effects on an audience, concurred in referring poetry to the motives, emotions and imagination of the individual poet.

Poe's theories of art have been thoroughly and systematically, presented by Margaret Aterton and by Norman Foerster in his American Criticism: Studies in Literary Theories From Poe to the Present, Eliot and Edmund Wilson have agreed upon his high claims as a critic, while George Snell's First of the New Critics Points out Poe's similarities in procedure to the New Critics. Floyd Stovall says that, "we shall understand Poe best by a direct and earnest analysis of his total work." Camille Mauclair in his work "Le Genie d' Edgar Poe" makes an exhaustive treatment of Poe, and the book remains without a rival in English, for it is concerned almost exclusively with an analysis of Poe's mind and art. He was committed whole-heartedly to the aesthetic of Symbolism and its faith in the possibility of a rigorously controlled and conscious art. Poe's the creations are "constructed objectively by a will absolutely in command of itself." Mauclair says that to know anything at all about genius is to know that "authentic genius is always sane." Poe's theory formulates the very basis of the New Critics.
It is noteworthy that from the very beginning Poe, does not reject meaning but insists merely on its subordination in poetry. The only essential advance of the later criticism over the earlier, is in the sense of authority, the deeper the penetration, the more ample emergence of implication; in fact "The Poetic Principle" is merely a comprehensive statement of his aesthetic position. Poe in all the areas in which he practiced artistically, he settled very early what he thought, he should be doing and proceed for the remainder of his life and do it. The resourcefulness and range of Poe's criticism is remarkable "The Philosophy of Composition," "The Poetic Principle" and the review of Hawthorne's "Twice-Told Tales" are justly celebrated.

In close adherence to the text, Poe's reviews (e.g. extended analysis of W.C. Bryant's poems) is anticipative of the "New Criticism" of the twentieth century. Poe's emphasis on art was again visible in the twentieth century in the total shift from Artist to Art. Poe enforced by the example of his precepts that a review should not be an essay on the subject of the item reviewed, he said, "it is only as a poem that we wish to examine The Ages." The New Critics also believed that thought or style are inseparable, there can be no content without form and no form devoid of content.

The close analysis of the text of "the counting
every tree in the forest” by the New Critics is in the fashion of Poe’s critical reviews. “New criticism” is no more, or the objective in literary criticism for which it stands was never new. Aristotle’s Poetics and Rhetoric concern themselves with the form of literature. The Roman critical approach to poetry was also formal, Horace begins his Ars Poetica by laying stress on unity and harmony of structure achieved through the coherence of the poets together, through properly and artistically arranging them. Thus in the beginning it did not concern itself with the content of poetry, or with its historical and sociological context but with its formal and technical aspect. It was with the Renaissance that thought or idea or emotive context of poetry began to be emphasized, which may be the result of the puritanical spirit and the revival of Plato.

In the beginning of the twentieth century, and at the close of the nineteenth century, literary criticism in England was impressionistic, and in America in the grip of the capitalists. Thus voices against these were raised both in England and America. Ezra Pound is an important name as he had a great influence on T.S. Eliot. Pound in his critical writings such as, ‘Retrospect or Imagism,’ ‘Preface to Active Anthology,’ ‘Prose tradition in Verse,’ in his essay ‘How to Read’ and in many other works Ezra Pound propounded critical criteria which later on proved to be the very basis of New Criticism.
Pound in his essay ‘How to Read’ points out that, in science, we recognize the importance of those discoveries and theories, only which stand on their own right as having advanced the progress of mankind, and we do not take into consideration the attempts made in that direction, and have not resulted in any discovery, or, to say which achieved nothing. We do not bother about the biographical details of the scientists. He further says that why do we do not have the same attitude in Literature? Why bother about the biographies of minor poets whose achievements have added nothing to the poetic tradition. A little later in the same essay Pound says that he wants to cut down the waste of time and energy spent on minor, insignificant poets, who according to his own analysis are not inventors and masters but only diluters and ‘Belles Lettrists’ or starters of craze.

These terms later on became the basic conditions of New Criticism. He emphatically pronounced that not all poets deserve critical attention, and only a few deserve the labours of the critic.

Like Poe, Pound also lay great emphasis on the language of poetry. To him, “Great Literature is simply language charged with meaning to the utmost possible degree.” According to him there are three kinds of poetry—the first in which the words are charged with some musical property, over and above
their plain meaning and which directs the bearing or trend of that meaning. The second kind of poetry is in which is a casting of images upon the visual imagination. And the third kind of poetry is, 'the dance of the intellect among words,' that is to say it employs words not only for their direct meaning but it takes count in a special way of habits of usage of the context we expect to find with the word, that is its usual meaning of its known acceptances, and ironical play.

According to Poe, various modes of the use of language, in a literary or poetic composition, the form, the structure of the poem are the most vital aspects and elements of poetry. This later became the controlling attitude of the critical discipline known as New Criticism. Pound also lays great importance on the choice and arrangement of words in a poetic creation, he says in his "Civilization," "An artist's technique is test of his personal validity. Honesty of words is the writer's first aim for without it he can communicate nothing efficiently............."

The most remarkable critical pieces of Pound are the product of a mind and intellect inspired by the critical theories of Poe. Pound's 'A Retrospect,' which is the collection of Pound's critical writings and most remarkable critical collection, deals exclusively with form and technique of poetry, without any

reference whatsoever to its meaning content. There are many observations in it which anticipate Eliot's criticism, which in turn, anticipates New Criticism. Pound in his 'A Retrospect' lays down certain principles which help the critic in assessment of a poem.

For example he discourages the use of superfluous words and says that no adjective which does not reveal something should be used. At the same time he also says, that the rhythmic structure of the poem should not destroy, either the shape of the words, or their natural sound or their meaning. He advises the writer not to mess up the perception of one sense by trying to define it in terms of another. This he says is only the result of being lazy to find the exact words. He emphatically asserts that technique is the test of a man's sincerity. Thus Pound's sole emphasis was on form, technique, language, rhythm and such aspects of poetry as make a statement poetic. He does not say anything about the content of poetry anywhere in his critical writings, whenever he offers his criticism of a particular poem, he confines his observations to these alone. This is what was to be the distinguishing feature of New Criticism. Ezra Pound thus not only provides hints for the technique of New Criticism, but he definitely anticipates it as a major influence in the twentieth century. Next to Pound comes T.S.Eliot, who in many of his critical writings, particularly in 'Tradition and Individual Talent' and 'The Use of Criticism', provided several hints
for New Criticism.

The technique of the French Symbolists had inspired new hopes for poetry in Eliot. According to him there was, no poet in America or in England who could “contribute to his own education.” The only recourse was to poetry of another age and to poetry of another language. Eliot regarded Ezra Pound and Laforgue as ‘technical innovators.’ It sounds paradoxical that Eliot learnt English verse technique from the French poets but the fact is that Frenchmen did teach him the craft of verse, which gives him another advantage. Obviously, Pound and Laforgue helped Eliot to “liberate himself from the manners exhausted by the Victorian poets and to introduce a new sense of rhythm” into English Poetry. Other influences which are easily discernible on Eliot’s early works, are the metaphysical poets of the seventeenth century, Baudelaiire, Dante, T.E. Hulme, F.H. Bradley and Tristan Corbiere. The symbolist group wrote poetry of a different type as compared to that of the Georgian England. It was different in its method. Its imagery was new and startling. It embraced new aspects of life and the peculiar feature of its imagery was that it worked by association and juxtaposition and contrast of opposites. It was this poetry which infused new hopes into the mind of Eliot and it was such poetry, he was looking for. It explored for him a new method, suited to his sensibility. He followed the pattern established by the French poets, but not
their multifarious theories. He perfected their technique and practiced the method of suggestion instead of statement. Eliot's contributions: "Reflections on Verse Libre"; "Tradition and Individual Talent;" and "The Functions of Criticism" are an apt answer to the poetic needs of his age. According to Eliot, the true claim of Baudelàire as an artist is as he was searching for a "form of life" i.e., the juxtaposition of the matter-of-fact or the realistic and the fantastic. His own endeavour in this respect show a close affinity with the French poet. The three common characteristics stressed by Poe, earlier and the basis of Baudelàire's creative activity are: Abundance, Amplitude and Unity which has left an apparent mark on Eliot's poetic growth, as also on his critical development.

The origin of "New Criticism" may be said to date with the first decade of the century. It was Joel Spingarn who used the term 'New Criticism' for the first time in a paper presented at the Columbia University in 1910. His famous address started a serious dialogue on the function of literature and the function of the critic, and it is said to have opened the way for new critical movement. The early beginnings of New Criticism were made in England in the late twenties. The regular and formal examples of the first neo-critical analysis were furnished by Robert Graves and the American poetess Laura Riding, in their joint work: "A Survey of Modernist Poetry." The authors adhere to
the verbal and structural analysis of a poem and insisted on the intrinsic value of a work of art. Later on William Empson contributed notably towards the popular rise of the new school of verbal analysis, adding to it the study of two additional aspects psychological and semantic. The New Criticism spread to the United States and made a great headway under the powerful patronage of Kenneth Burke John Crowe Ransom, R.P. Blackmur, Ronald Crane and Mortimer Adler. The names of I.A.Richards and F.R.Leavis needs separate mention, these critics though closely associated with the school of New Criticism, yet each of them retains the individuality of his own particular view-point. As a theorist I.A.Richards colours the new technique of Verbal and Structural analysis, with a sound philosophy based on psychology and semantics. F.R. Leavis is a new critic with a difference, he is said to be a disciple of his masters— T.S.Eliot and I.A. Richards. He makes a passionate defence of ‘values’ like Eliot, and at the same time adheres to the analytical technique of practical criticism like Richards. He is like Yvor Winters as both of them "express the traditional concern for the moral ends of literature.

The cult of New Criticism has a variety of meanings, it includes, the Neo-Humanists; the Moralists; the Formalists; the Analysts and the Neo-Classicists it was a reaction against the nineteenth century values in art and literature. New criticism views the text as an Organic whole and aims at aesthetic
study, analysis and evaluation of a work of art by itself, ignoring the social, moral and historical considerations. But they believe that psychology being the main architect in the phenomenon of poetic creation, due importance should be attached to it and the psychological aspect should be taken into consideration while evaluating a work of art. The New Critics also suggest that the language should be analysed word for word and the meaning, rhythm, music, syntax, imagery, symbols and abstract nuances must be scanned properly to arrive at correct conclusions. In addition to this they stressed the structural analysis of a poem. In order to determine its internal growth, the New Critics feel that, its inter-relation with the various parts— structure and form has to be closely analysed. Their stress on structure is in fact, a stress on the determination of the total pattern. They believed that this pattern has to correspond to a successful communication of the whole experience and not merely any part of it. Thus, it means that a poem must be one organic whole or one organic piece in as for as its total structure, experience, thought and emotions, are concerned.

New Criticism is not new, still it has features which are fresh as it involves us in talking about the basic structure of poetry which has been anticipated long ago by Aristotle in his Poetics. Aristotle’s ‘Poetics’ has been the inspiration behind the critical and creative writings of Poe. He sees Aristotle mainly
through the eyes of Shelley and Schlegel. He trusts Mill to enlighten him about Aristotelian logic, and his preferred master Coleridge to enlighten him about Aristotelian criticism. The criticism of today in turn is indirect descent from Coleridge. His theory of imagination had perhaps the widest influence on the founders of New Criticism and its later practitioners. New Critics also made a fresh approach towards knowledge on the lines of Poe. They differentiated between poetic knowledge and scientific knowledge. Thus we find that Poe had already established all that later on came within the precincts of New Criticism. In poetic theory, the “Letter to B.,” prefaced to the Poems of 1831, expresses with wit and precision many of his basic ideas about the nature of poetry, his familiarity with Coleridge’s Biographia Literaria, his insistence upon the indefinite, upon music, and, by implication, upon symbolism.

The basic concepts of Poe’s Poetics: art’s autonomy, the poet’s control, and his essential aim became the basic aesthetics of New Criticism. His statement that the only proper test of a poem was, “its capabilities of exciting the Poetic Sentiment in others,” suggests an anticipation of I. A. Richard’s early experiments with evaluation of student responses involving an assessment of appropriate and inappropriate responses to poetry.
In Poe as a "Literary Theorist" Emerson R. Marks usefully states what is of importance in Poe's criticism for our own time. By far the most persuasive essay along these lines—or any other, for that matter—is Richard Wilbur's, which introduces his edition of Poe's Poetry; it is preferable even to Tate's essays, or Blackmur's, for the lucidity and completeness of its grasp of Poe's ideas, and for its detailed analysis of structure and texture. He is able to take Poe at his word without losing his sense of shortcoming in Poe's vision.

"E. H. Davidson's Poe: A Critical Study is an honourable and serious book that meets problems of meaning and language head-on. Although it may be felt that Davidson lacks a sense of the stories as stories, he is extremely sensitive to Poe as a Romantic and Symbolist. He sees Poe's ambitious Romantic courage in the search for order in a fragmented world, but he stresses the sense of self-destruction over the achievement that the self-destruction is supposed to make. Davidson makes a most interesting suggestion about the breaking-down of language: that Poe breaks through only to the poetic theory that led him to break down the meaning in the first place. Poe ends by talking about poetry, not creating it. The assumption implied is that talking about poetry may not produce poetry, and need not be accepted. R. H. Pearce expresses a similar point of view to Davidson's:
The egocentrism of Poe's poems achieves its greatest value by being finally, in its very agonizingly self-indulgent lyricism, an unsharable egocentrism. The poet is freed to be true to his sense of his self and his vocation, but only at the cost of cutting himself off from his vulgarly substantial world. He shares the burden of the creative act with his readers and so would force them into releasing whatever potential for creativity is in them. In this he tends to be one with his major contemporaries. He is unlike his contemporaries, however, in that he willfully pushes this conception of poetry to its extremest limits. For him the poetic act in the end signifies absolutely nothing but itself. Thus, from the perspective of those who can be only his readers, what that act means is considerably more than what it is. This perhaps is the inevitable fate of the work of a man who is more of a culture hero than an artist.

Edmund Wilson, in Axel's Castle, shares Davidson's and Pearce's sense of extremity of Poe's romantic treatment of language, but is rather less alarmed by it, and is able to show, very strikingly, the nature of Poe's influence on French poetry.

T. S. Eliot's essay, "From Poe to Valéry" also attempts to account for Poe's influence on the French Symbolists. F. O. Matthiessen's article in The Literary History of The U.S. places
him in both an international and a native setting, sharing, and contributing to, an inheritance with Ambrose Bierce, Brockden Brown, and William Faulkner. William Carlos Williams, in less measured terms, celebrates Poe's importance, in 'In the American Grain,' in giving "the sense for the first time in America, that literature is serious, not a matter of courtesy but of truth. By far the most persuasive placing of Poe in the American tradition is to be found in Paul Elmer More's 1904 essay, "The Origins of Poe and Hawthorne," in which he traces the original impulse back to Puritan beginnings."\textsuperscript{27}

For Poe criticism was an assessment of a work on the basis of its literary and nonliterary properties, that is to say the aesthetic experience of a literary construct and the technical excellence that embodies it. His rejection of the romantic subjectivism in favour of the formal objectivism was a major influence in shaping the critical sensibility of the New Critics. These influences responsible for the rise of the said genre of criticism came to dominate the literary scene through Pound, Baudeláire and T. S. Eliot. Following Poe's aesthetics that, "beauty is the sole legitimate province of poetry," the New Critics also demonstrated that in art beauty and truth are indivisible. One can substitute form for beauty and content for truth. For the New Critics

technique is everything and Criticism the study of form or technique interpreting the relationship between subject-matter and technique. A theory that concentrates on the autonomous form of a literary work. It seeks to discover what the work is, its shape and effect, and how these are achieved. American New Criticism is in fact an offshoot of the new organistic formalism which is one of the most influential approaches in Modern Criticism.

Poe's attitude seems familiar to us, as it is in fact, the attitude of the New Critics of twentieth century American literature, of those who have rebelled against sociological and other non-literary criteria, who have minimized the appeal to such things as psychoanalysis and economics, and who have placed little stock in the historical and background approach to literature. Critics like John Crowe Ransom, Allen Tate, and R.P. Blackmur, in general, take the text to be self-sufficient for critical purposes. By doing so, they hark back to their great forerunner. Poe was the first of the New Critics.