CHAPTER III

POE'S POETICS AND HIS POETRY

Poe has perhaps been the subject of more discussion than any other American writer, and much of his reputation rests on his poetry. His poetry is often seen as the logical and unfortunate result of a theory of poetry, which sits uneasily as the heir to English and German Romanticism and the precursor of French Symbolism, but the precise nature of Poe's poetry can only be found by locating the contradictions in Romantic theories of poetry out of which changes and developments in the direction of Symbolism develop, since it is at the point of those contradictions that Poe's poetry most characteristically operates. The best poetry according to Poe's formulations provides an outlet from the world of deception into a realm of supernal beauty and truth. Poetry for Poe was a means of communicating the "fancies" that arise "at those mere points of time where the confines of the waking world blend with those of the "world of dreams," by transferring the "recollections" of the "impressions" of that point, "into the realm of Memory," where such "fancies" can be surveyed "with the eye of analysis. This view of creative process, as a fusion of imagination and analysis informs that, the early poems even after revision, were
dominated by the conceptual and imaginative faculty of the mind, where as the later poems reflect primarily the analytic and constructive faculty. Yet the late "Ulalume" is far more evocative poem than the early "Tamerlane," and in poems like "Ulalume" Poe goes furthest in his efforts to disperse the fabric of deception and thus justify his conception of the artist's role.

His theorization of literature was also made with an eye, primarily, to the genre of poetry, and his fictional principles were, in a sense, mere offshoots of his aesthetics of poetry. Moreover, most of Poe's stories are essentially poetic in nature, they are similar to his poems in the conception of their theme, mood, tone and even in the choice of images and metaphors. In short, the entire corpus of Poe's writings maintains a functional relationship with poetry, which, in his own estimation is the highest form of artistic expression. Poe's poetry, both in theme and technique, betrays absurdist and existentialistic tendencies. It bears striking similarities to the twentieth century writings in many ways. In his poetry he deals with only a single theme an exploration of the nature of existence. He sees absurdity both in the nature of the being and in the nature of the universe.

It is likely that Poe thought of his poetry as an organic whole, much like Walt Whitman's "Leaves of Grass." While
Poe was alive, his poetry appeared, in four editions Tamerlane and other Poems (1827), Al-Aaraaf, Tamerlane and Minor Poems (1829), Poems (1831) and The Raven and Other Poems (1845). The Poetic Principle (1848) is a summary of the theory he had been developing for twenty years. In it he asserts that the "sense of the Beautiful" is an "immortal instinct" deep within the spirit of humankind and that the "Poetic Sentiment" is an innate desire to apprehend "Supernal Loveliness." The ultimate object of all Poetry is Truth, and a poem conveys whatever truth it has through its art and nothing more dignified or supremely noble exists than "a poem written solely for the poem's sake."

Poe says, only in the contemplation of the beautiful can we attain elevation, or excitement of the soul, he gives a catalogue of elements that induce the true poetical effect, for which rhythm and song are essential. He moves from first, the stars, through indefinite objects of nature, vague sights, indistinct smells and gentle tactile sensations like wind, to the sense of the undiscovered, the distant, the unworldly, concluding with the beauty and love of woman.

Earlier Poems:

The earliest poem in the established Poe canon is "Tamerlane," first published in the volume Tamerlane And Other Poems in 1827, though considerably revised afterward. Quite
logically, the poem has been taken to be a hypertensive portrait of Poe himself, in the guise of the world conqueror Tamerlane, or the poem might be considered as forming a broader subject of Love versus Ambition. It is a confused autobiography: the hero is both there and not there as Poe chooses to make Tamerlane representative or wholly fictive. This method of simultaneous concealment and revelation became, central to Poe's art: he was always there and not there. In his youthful verse Poe was unable to obtain the necessary distance, he was always in the subject. The poem is a masquerade of a side of a Poe-self who begins with a confession to a catholic priest and ends with a very private monologue. The confession is only a device to get the reminiscence under way.

Tamerlane begins with the growing child wrapped in the wonders of nature and highly susceptible to receiving inwardly the impression made outwardly. The poem becomes a set of allegorical stances whereby the young Tamerlane bends all exterior reality to his own will: nature is only a mirror of his rapture or despair. The poem is a kind of nagging bafflement, and inability to reconcile deed and desire. When he is here, his thoughts are there; when he is there, his thoughts are here: his being slides from pole to pole. He is a man who exists where he is not.
This sense of alienation and the ensuing bafflement may account, at least in part, for the many negations in the poem, the principal means of establishing what anything is, is to suggest what it is not. To some extent this is a matter of high style a way of suggesting certain things without stooping to the vulgarity of bold statement. At the same time Poe satisfies the need for vagueness and indefiniteness, the familiar parts of his criticism. But the negatives are more than that. They are of the very essence of a poem, for Tamerlane is the history of a being that negates itself, he speaks as he lives, in terms of "not." Instead of explaining to the confessor what the confessor can do for him, the emperor explains what he cannot do. Tamerlane has not sent for him in a spirit of hope, he is not mad enough to think of an earthly power that can shrieve him; but he would not berate the priest because the priest does not have the gift of hope. The use of negatives in Tamerlane, the use of comparatives and of diction suggesting vagueness, gives an effect of deliberate withdrawal from the object, and of the difficulty of recalling a blessed time which for the poem's sake must remain indefinite. At the end of the poem the protagonist returns, like Wordsworth and others who felt the resurgence of vitality in their original inspiration, to his homeland and; he finds the maiden dead. But what he chiefly discovers is that he can never regain what once he had possessed and lost, namely, the capacity to feel and
respond; he does not even have the new and quiet sensibility of maturity when the mind is capable of living in itself and does not necessarily depend on the stimulus of natural surroundings:

"Rays of truth you cannot see
Are floating through eternity."

A more paradoxical type of power can hardly be imagined. The high spirit, having no freedom, cannot determine itself; it can only receive a determination from a spirit that is higher still. There is nothing left, within the authority of the receiver, but the ability to be conscious of receiving. To have power is to be in the power of another and to know it. Tamerlane is the victim not of his free will, but of his servile will.

There were ten Poems in the Tamerlane volume of 1827. Each in its way, simply restates same version of the title poem, but there is a group of poems that relate specifically to its themes. Like Tamerlane's lady, the bride in "Song" is identified with nature, with

"The world all love before thee," so that she:
"Was all on earth my aching sight
Of Loveliness could see."

Poe's voice is lyrical and the poem was written on the occasion of Sarah Royster's marriage to Mr. Shelton. The pose is that of the wronged lover; the lady's "blush.........was maiden
shame,” that she had weakly consented to marry the man she did not love. As if to vindicate the poet’s belief that his mistress cannot forget him, the heroine of “Bridal Ballad” is disturbed at having betrayed a past lover, now dead. A similar theme of forlorn lover was undertaken in “The Happiest Day, the Happiest Hour;” in life at its moments of greatest sensitivity is the promise of ultimate destruction, or to live at the top of feeling is to invite the sense of life’s loss and death. The painful memory of a happy moment is the subject of this poem, it is another poem about the loss of pride of power, is a kind of Tamerlane without Tamerlane. The dark bird of mutability, a recurring symbol in Poe’s work, is suggested in stanzas one, three and six; and the birds destructive “essence” is linked with prides “venom.” In “To One In Paradise” originally part of the “Assignation,” the object of the poet’s love, now departed by marriage or death, is “a shrine,” as in “Tamerlane.” Poe’s second “To Helen” presents Sarah Helen Whitman in role of the lady who inspires arabesque vision, whose eyes “were the world to me;” Although she has gone, her eyes, two “Venuses...........illumine and enkindle___” like those of the bride in “Song.”

The contrast between the youthful world of dreams, “when the sun was bright,” and “the dull reality of waking life” in the poem “Dreams” repeats the “sunshine”....... “white moon” antithesis in Tamerlane: In the interests of fusion
and subversion of reality, dreaming is paradoxically equated with daytime and waking reality with the night. The poet's sensations when the "chilly wind" came over his spirit, or when the moon or stars shone too coldly while he slept, are an intimation of that time when "the beam of an Eternity should bring the morrow," of the death which must intervene before he achieves the arabesque condition, while dreams provide relief.

In "A wilderden being from my birth," later Poe sets forth the "dream" not as a refuge from the world's "chiding" but as the region of understanding and "Truth" of which this known world is a mere shadow. Already Poe was attempting to use poetry as a means of exploring that further range which lay beyond ostensible reality. Most of the poems were glimpses of autobiography. Some of them, like "Visit of the Dead" later titled "Spirits of the Dead" and "Evening Star" were non-localized events which might or might not have occurred but which, in the act of poetic recall, became something different from the original moment in Poe's life. The opposition between waking reality and arabesque reality occurs in "Evening Star" with Venus, the evening star, representing the latter and the cold moon the former. The "fleecy cloud" that "passed, as a shroud" in the poem's exact center between the moon and the star indicates death, the point of transition from one world to the other. In "A Dream," waking reality and dream reality are again contrasted but in the manner
of "A Dream Within A Dream." The poets absorption with the past turns waking reality into a "dream of life and light," thus allowing for the ambiguity of "Truth's day-star" in the final line. "A Dream within a Dream" which was earlier titled "Imitation" is a good example of how Poe began with a very private self as subject, and steadily, in subsequent revisions and editions, extracted the confessional air and employed those standard generalizations which might concern Poe or any man.

The transition from love to remorse, or from dream to reality is also expressed in terms of a changing landscape, externalized in "The Valley of Unrest" and internalized in "The Haunted Palace, "originally part of the 'Fall of the House of Usher.' The poem "Stanzas" is Poe's attempt to lift certain features of Tamerlane's plight to a higher and more universal plane.

In Poe's next volume of poems, the "Al Aaraaf," published in 1829, the poems that may be viewed as revolving around Tamerlane, take as their underlying theme the displacement of dream reality in favour of waking reality. The poems circling around "Al Aaraaf" suggest a means by which the corrupting power of time may be avoided and the dream reality sustained. As Cairns and Stovall have indicated, "Al Aaraaf" even in its unfinished state in an allegory about the world of
poetry\textsuperscript{1}. In all but its length, "Al Aaraaf" with its exclusion of intellect and passion, anticipates Poe's critical pronouncements about the nature of true poetry.

Al Aaraaf, "a medium between Heaven and Hell" among the Arabians, is identified with the nova discovered by Tycho Brahe but converted by Poe into a wandering planet. Its inhabitants, lesser angels and exceptional mortals, are charged with the business of mediating heaven and the many worlds of God's universe. Poe conceived of poetry in similar terms. Since Al Aaraaf is an artistic realm, Poe indicates that Earth's artistic treasures have their home there, he supposes many of the lost sculptures of our world to have flown (in spirit) to the star Al Aaraaf— a delicate place more suited to their divinity. As described in Part I, Al Aaraaf in composed of "all the beauty" of Earth with none of its dross.

For a better comprehension of this longest, and most difficult, poem Poe ever wrote, we must begin with the then untitled "Sonnet—To Science" which served as a prelude to the 1829 and 1831 versions of "Al Aaraaf." The sonnet is a romantic complaint against the destruction "science" has wrought in killing

\textsuperscript{1} W.B. Cairns : Some Notes on Poe's Al Aaraaf Modern Philology XIII (1915) PP.35-44

\textsuperscript{2} Floyd Stovall : Edgar Poe the poet Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press(1969) 102-125.
the myths once so meaningful to poets. "Science" might be here synonymous with skepticism. The sonnet attacks the delusion of modern man that he can reduce the phenomenal universe to his own convenient, measurable detail and nature exists just as man determines that-it shall, whether it contains Diana and nympha of laws of universe squares, or conservation of matter. It is reaffirming, like Emerson's Nature and like Moby Dick, that nature has wonders and comprehensible systems far beyond the trivially limiting perspective of science or man. If the sonnet is negation of science or empirical knowledge, "Al Aaraaf" is the affirmation that the poetic vision is capable of recreating what science and man's search for causality have destroyed. The imagination is god and envisions a universe of idea which far transcends the limitations of a mere space-and time world such as Lockean rationalism had demanded. Al Aaraaf is a kind of fourth estate: it is seen as a rectangle of four big stars near four bright suns. This is a place neither good nor bad nor even earthly; it is the fact and actuality of the substantial idea which not to be parcelled into "science" or skeptical realism but into the total idea which the separate parts of the universe contain.

The basic theme of the poem is that the power of idea and the ideal to manifest themselves in reality, are fact and word. The poet is the world's major "realist," for it is he who, as god, can make the word the prime agency of revelation; word
making is the re-enactment of both the original and the ultimate creation the first 29 lines rejected the "earthly" and took us at once to the all outer edge of reality, where there was no earthly sound, no earthly light, no earthly dross. The poem is a postulation of a pure visionary ideality beyond the mean limits of our conscious existence. The succeeding section (42-81-lines) is an extended epic simile on this act of creation which, from primeval time, ordained that all things in heaven and earth should exist in the unity of beauty.

After the harmonious universe of order has been pictured, Poe proceeds with the action of the poem. Nesace the ruler of Al Aaraaf sings her first song (lines 82 — 117), the words of which have the power of bring object and intangible ideas into existence. She looks from her sphere in the mid range of universal order for down through terrestrial space and sees the planetary systems far away, cast off from the central heaven. Her song is really a prayer to God in the perfect heaven, to have mercy on the inhabitants of the realms of chaos below: the "star" of earth has been patient in its long anguish, since first it was cast from God and ideal beauty. The Deity hears Nesaces's prayer and speaks a series of reproaches against man's debasement of pure love and pure knowledge. Yet he grants his permission to fly to the other spheres in the terrestrial system in order to prevent the
universal perversion, which degenerate man has already brought to earth. Mental darkness can destroy the purity of idea and beauty. With Nesace’s preparation for flight to restore the power of the ideal to the realms below, the first part of the poem comes to an end.

The song of Nesace by the miracle of synesthesia, is borne up to heaven in odours — the odours of the surrounding flowers. All the flowers exemplify the Tamerlane theme of reversal. In this way the Tamerlane cycle of poems is adsorbed into the Al Aaraaf cycle, which elaborates on the alternate dream reality. At this point, the Sonnet To Science is relevant, science distinguishes and separates fused elements. Al- Aaraaf is the happier star of art.

Unlike Nesace’s song which is conveyed synesthetically, Gods reply is conveyed by oxymoron, a “sound of silence.” This idea is elaborated in “Sonnet Silence,” which contrasts the corporate Silence of death with “his shadow,” the silence of ideality a concept which Poe introduced in “Silence- A Fable” The three poems Poe specifically designated sonnets are contained or suggested by Al Aaraaf. God commands Nesace and her followers relinquish the Earth and, using the fate of Earth as an example inform “other worlds” of the incompatibility of knowledge the province of intellect, and art, the province of
taste and imagination. So far the poem has developed a rather obvious religious theme—the decay of the world or the Paradise lost. The first part of Al Aaraaf is designed solely to advance an aesthetic doctrine. Part II illustrates the other half of that doctrine the incompatibility of art and passion—the province of the moral sense.

The fall of Ianthe and Angelo through passion is described in part I as unfortunate and metaphorical. Ianthe a native of Al Aaraaf and Angelo, originally of Earth miss Nesaces summons and thus fall. The quality of fusion is conveyed by images of things rising and falling and, by implication merging at some point. The rising and falling motions are combined in the image of the hypothetical drowsy shepherd.

Poe makes a curious and rather special application of the existence of death on earth, which is the final acknowledgement of man's submission to his fractured and mundane existence, it is the ultimate insult of a being who, by an act of his own will, chose disorder and chaos. Poe, here is investigating the meaning and rationale of death. Death on earth was the lowest stage man ever reached in the soul's downward descent from Platonic essence to brute form; yet death is the ultimate self-annihilation man must suffer and overcome if he is ever to return upward to spirit again. Only by the most arduous
discipline and effort of mind can man restore the lost harmony and destroy death. As a whole, then, the poem makes an allegorical illustration of Poe's poetic theory that poetry is concerned only with beauty and it is incompatible with both truth, that is intellect, and passion that is moral sense. The final destruction of Earth, in the poem, is also an allegorical illustration of Poe's conception of artistic creation as Earth represents the everyday reality. To be more exact, the existence of Al Aaraaf necessarily obliterates Earth. The dizzy sensations experienced by Angelo suggests Poe's view of the act of creation which occurs in an apocalypse of mind. Thus along with the thematic thrust, that bears the marks of Poe's pessimistic worldview and streaks of Platonism, this poem postulates a poetic theory and also illustrates, in a sense, the very act of artistic creation. It is in this that the poem's importance lies.

"Romance" titled "Preface" in 1829 version and "Introduction" in 1831 is a clear poetic statement of the poet's awakening from the romantic dreaming of his boyhood. It is an account of the poet's imagination wholeness being destroyed by time. The last lines of the poem are:

And when an hour with calmer wings
Its down upon my spirit flings—
That little time with lyre and rhyme
To while away—forbidden things!
My heart would feel to be a crime
Unless it trembled with the strings.

The fact to realize here, is that Poe himself is very emphatic regarding the term ‘romance’ in his first definition of poetry in “Letter to B”–“According to him romance presents “perceptible images with definite—sensations and poetry, in contrast to romance, presents “perceptible images—with indefinite sensations”. According to Poe romance deals with the felt and known relationships between images and definite sensations, whereas poetry is a magical exercise. Such a contrast continues throughout the poem and the poetical nature prevails at the end. It is also the reason why Poe adopts the technique of inversion. Poe presents a set of contrast in the second stanza, what was once the easy relaxation and happiness in sensuous pleasure is now the denial that one can live with the idle cares in a life overcast by an “unquiet sky.” The poet now in maturity, renounces any poetry which does not issue from the indefinite sensations which are out side the world of fact and reality.

Al Aaraaf and Romance are important in the 1829 volume, the other poems, in this volume are simply amplifications of the one or the other aspect of Al-Aaraaf, and none of them is important. The mood of the earlier poem is
maintained in the lyric "To——" the image, 'mother stars——be silvering pall,' part of the description of the Nesace's palace, figures in "To——" again. The eyes of Poe's heavenly mistress fall on the poet's funeral mind, "Like star-light on a pall." As we have already seen in Al-Aaraaf the artistic ideality is identified with classical times and ruins representing incomplete images of a former perfection. This glow of beauty and themes of artistic ideality are again touched upon in the poem "To The River"

"Fair river! in thy bright, clear flow
Of crystal, wandering water,
Thou art an emblem of the glow
Of beauty—the unhidden heart
The playful maziness of art"

The idea present here parallels the theme already discussed in Al-Aaraaf and "To The River" and the same also closes with the description corresponding to behaviour of Earth before its destruction.

The last poem of the volume "Fairyland," also evokes an apocalyptic state of mind. Like Al-Aaraaf, it describes a region beyond this world. Here is the conceiving of a shadowy realm into which childhood and youth have made so many excursions. This poem may be taken as an example of Poe's free play of imagination for the sake of imaginings only. By this the
poet creates the effect of indefiniteness that informs the sense of the beautiful. It describes a vision of the region beyond this world, through the description of a region of 'dim vales,' 'shadowy floods' and 'cloudy looking woods,' it anticipates a similar eerie atmosphere as described in "Ulalume". The Fairyland is ostensibly the world of the dead. It is a fantastic valley where the moonlight falls on enormous grotesque shapes. The poet is evoking a state of mind through a drawing of weird pictures and gothic landscapes. The description of the land of the dead is used here not as expression of limit but as a sign for effect.

These poems on a deeper level reflect a philosophical attitude of profound relevance to the twentieth century literature that of utter loneliness of man, whether it is the Tamerlane complex of poems or the Al-Aaraaf group, the central concern is about a being in the hands of a superior power that obstructs him from the performance of proper role. It is about a being that is alienated from the world and from himself. If Tamerlane depicts a character who is trying to explore his existence in the world, Al-Aaraaf enters extra-terrestrial space to explore the variety of existence: mortal, angelic, and divine. But the plight of the central figures is essentially the same like Tamerlane, Angelo and Ianthel also fall to perdition as determined by the power above. Inspite of the action added to these narratives, there is something static about both. With Poe,
even Tamerlane the great performer is an actor who has ceased to act. And when we put Al-Aaraaf down, with think less about the narrative we have read, than about isolated things: beauty of Nesace or the music of her speech, the power and majesty of God, and most importantly, the love and helplessness of Ianthe and Angelo. In short the ideas incorporated in Poe's early poems reflect his basic philosophy.

It can now be clearly seen that Poe's early poems need not be dismissed, as many critics tend to dismiss them as adolescent posturings, of a young man striving to express, a series of incoherent ideas, because both in theme and technique, they are as representative of him as his later poems. No doubt, in his later poems there has been a gradual departure from romanticism to symbolism, impressionism and even surrealism, yet streaks of these experimentation are easily traceable in his early poems also. It is natural to expect that the poems of his later years will have better technical finish. As aptly pointed out by Allen Tate, "Poe has one theme and many styles, or many approximations of one style." And Poe is also, like any other romantic poet, trying "to write one poem all his life, out of an interior compulsion; each poem is an approximation of the perfect "Romantic Poem." But Poe has been writing his "Romantic Poem" according to his own prescribed theory. As seen so far, he has come out successful when his theory is applied to
his own poems. His poems expound his own principles and also operate within these principles Poe's later poems, as we shall see in the next part of the chapter, mark an advance over these early poems in approximation of the "Perfect Poem" that he has been writing all his life.

**LATER POEMS:**

The poems of 1831 contained only six new verses; it has the re inclusion of Al-Aaraaf, Tamerlane, revision and expansion of poems like "The Lake," "To——," "Fairy land," and "Romance" are significant because these poems not only track down clearly the thoughts of Poe's objectified genius of 1827 and 1829 but also exemplify his views of his own poetry as an organic whole: At the same time, as we shall see, his new compositions are more mature and more finished as they conform more closely to his poetic principles.

Undoubtedly, the most note worthy is "To Helen" it tells how an artist who has been lost on the turbulent sea of passion is restored to his artistic home through the beauty of a woman. This poem also echoes the views of Poe, in relation to Beauty and Art, stated in Tamerlane and Al-Aaraaf. To be precise, "To Helen" makes a statement on the working of the creative process. In this respect E.H. Davidson's view is revealing. He says "To Helen is an investigation of the poetic process, whereby the
imagination destroys or goes through ostensible reality and reaches some comprehension of a world of ideas that lies beyond. "To Helen" makes and elaborate recording of an imaginative mind in operation. As Poe makes the virtual sensing of the Supernal Beauty invariably through a beautiful woman, so the archetypal beauty is invoked here for the same end. Poetry is a way of understanding, so is a beautiful woman: a timeless historical way of understanding.

Technically the poem is so finished that it is nearly perfect. In fact, it is one of Poe's most frequently and carefully revised poems: from its first appearance in 1831 to the final text of 1845 it passed through a complex process of revision and improvement before Poe was satisfied. Its appearance of simplicity is deceptive. To Poe, a poem is perfectly realized when its metre, language, and subject come together in perfect harmony of the parts to the whole. "To Helen" is an instance in point.

The next poem is Israfel — a companion piece to the "Helen," it is about poetry and poets. Israfel is about a lyrical angel of Heaven who symbolizes the ideal poetic self and idea of poetry. It begins where Al-Aaraaf ended i.e. it takes for granted that such a mythic or hypothetical world of other, purer beings.
Thus, "Israfel" sets forth the rationale of poetry that Poe already proposed in his "Letter to B——" that poets and poetry must treat of subject essentially poetic; that poetry is a form of music, that poetry cannot be a mixed form—it is what it is and nothing else; that poetry pertains only to the soul, and that poetry bespeaks passion or imotion—of course, only that emotion which becomes a poetry. This piece is a companion "To Helen," and is essentially poetic. It exalts emotion, but the emotion is contained inside a tight artistic form. The poem is as musical as a song and its musicality only brings the feel of the heavenly realm of Israfel. The total effect of the poem is centered round the evocation and communication of the beautiful which is spiritual and pleasurable. In short Israfel is an amalgam of Poe's poetic theory and practice, it is a philosophy of poetry and tries to set forth logically what To Helen had projected imaginatively; poetry is a way toward understanding both different from, and superior to rational science, logic; religion or any other learning processes of men.

"The City in the Sea" originally titled "The Doomed City" and in another edition published as "The City of Sin" (1836) has death and Hell for its themes. The uncanny is more prominent here, still the poem ministers immediately to pleasure. This poem may be taken as an example of Poe's way of
portraying the strange and the fantastical through vivid images, and nightmares as dreams. As the "City" becomes an archetype of life after death, it slides into oblivion by sliding into the sea. There being no beauty in the topic itself, it must reside in the treatment, the opening lines of the poem are

"Lo Death hath reared himself a throne
In a strange city, all alone,
Far down within the dim west.

There shrines, and palaces, and towers
Are — not like any thing of ours —"

These lines directly introduce the reader to Poe's incantatory manner of writing. The poet is seeking here to present his vision as a fact, with details of dimension, and time and place. The city to which he refers, although frequently identified with the Biblical Sodom and Gomorrah in the Dead sea, and sometimes with the legendary lost continents of the Atlantis and Lemuria, is almost certainly imaginary. It is a city with shrines and palaces, and time-eaten frozen 'towers' that resemble 'nothing that ours' is evoking here a time sense — one that is in eternity or absolute time which in quite different from the transiency or time in a man's world. He is also building up atmosphere for that final apocalyptic moment when man suffers his ultimate and
inevitable annihilation. It is the scene of life after death. As Poe is engaged here in his own imaginative researches into the absolute time, he is also concerned with the limit less past and the final apocalypse.

While Poe makes an imaginative thrust in his "To Helen" into the past, he makes the past a fact or an actuality in "The City in the Sea."

The factual presentation of death in the latter, substitutes the beautiful woman. And the presentation of death is also aesthetically satisfying because beauty resides in the method of treatment of the subject, Poe uses physical imagery here, largely through mood and atmosphere, to suggest him sense of time. His use of landscape always reflects an attitude to time that corresponds to Death. Regarding Poe's use of landscape, David Murray says:

"It is" neither a natural landscape, which would imply a cyclic passage of time independent of man, nor is quite a manmade landscape, which would imply historical time. Instead, we have various forms of frozen times, with people absent. So, Poe's physical imagery sets forth the mood here for a limit less past of frozen time which is death like.

The following passages very well demonstrate
Poe's method of using physical imagery, though unreal, to set a mood:

"Up shadowy-long-forgotten bowers
Of sculptured ivy and stone flowers
Up many a many a marvellous shrine
Whose wreathed friezes inter twine
The viol, the violet, and the vine."

The last line is critically acclaimed as one of the best in English poetry. In it, there is a successful fusion of two opposite qualities: verbal wit and hypnotic incantation. The next passage reads.

"So blend the turrets and shadows there
That all seem pendulous in air
While from a proud tower in the town
Death looks gigantically down."

And lastly

"But lo, a stir is in the air!
The wave—there is a movement there!

And when, amid no earthly moans
Down, down that town shall settle thence,
Hell, rising from a thousand thrones
Shall do it reverence."

In the first passage, the absolute non-being is presented against the background or its own kingdom of weird, sephulchral magnificence. The poem concludes with the suggestion that the poet is seeking deliverance which is no less than total annihilation of himself and his circumstances, to be followed by a next existence in another world.

This poem also shows Poe’s gradual shift from romantic emotionalism to symbolism and surrealism in the use of his poetic technique. The physical imagery is used in this poem for its connotative rather than denotative effect. The use of unworldly and Gothic scenes for symbolic effect is characteristic of Poe’s method. In this poem, Poe’s blending of the macabre and the beautiful, his emphasis on the bizarre and grotesque, his evocative atmosphere, and the incantatory music, are all in accord with his poetic theory. It must be mentioned here that the state of affairs of the imaginative city parallels Poe’s creative state of mind. The City in the Sea is therefore, a myth for the state of mind in which Poe composes poetry.

"The Sleeper" originally titled "Irene" is one of Poe’s early statements on the belief that though there is death,
no one really dies. In Poe’s poetic universe, death is usually equated with the idea of metapsychosis or transmigration of the soul. As death brings only metamorphosis, so death is a ‘sleep’ or a transition from one stage of existence to another. The “sleeper” in this poem is a dead woman laid out in her grave clothes. The speaker is the dead woman’s lover. The poem exhibits Poe’s idea that the dead sleep serenely as long as they are lovingly remembered. Though this idea has been muted after the revisions of the poem, it was apparent in its first version.

“The lady sleeps....... tears on Memory’s eyes.”

After the revision these lines have been changed as

“The lady sleeps ! Oh may her sleep ............... ghosts go by !”

The revision is not owing to any change of ideas on the part of the poet. The important thing to note here is that while the original ‘Irene’ had a message and moral to convey. The “Sleeper” is essentially analytic. The revised version marks a definite advance over the former in artistry.

The poem deserves due critical attention as it is the first of the six poems selected by Poe himself as his best. Many critics also consider it a masterpiece. The “Sleeper” is important not only for the fact that Poe’s theories have easy
applicability to it but also for the consideration that it is one of the most coherent, most finished, and most representative of his verses.

With "The Sleeper," we also come across Poe's proposed art of hints and suggestions and sounds perfectly laid down on a structure. The poem unfolds a different vista: The opening lines read:

"At midnight, in the month of June,
I stand beneath the mystic noon
An opiate vapour, dewy dim
Exhales from out her golden rim,
And, softly dripping, drop by drop
Upon the quiet mountain top
Steals drowsily and musically
Into the universal valley."

With the help of the haunting music and the description of a scene of nature, the mood is set. The moon sheds its opiate influence on drowsy flowers and the lake is transformed into a hypnogogic trance. Against this surrounding, the lover remembers his beloved who is no more.

Poe has applied here also his characteristic
method of time—shift. In the last stanza, the speaker imagines his beloved being buried in a remote family vault. He adds an imaginary tableau by visualizing her as a child pelting stones at the door of the vault. The last stanza of the poem reads:

"Some sepulchre, remote, alone,
Against whose portal she hath thrown,
In childhood, many an idle stone . . . .
Some tomb from out whose sounding door
She never shall force an echo more,
Thrilling to think, poor child of sin!
It was the dead who groaned within."

We have an organization of elements here solely for the peculiar aesthetic effect which Poe identifies as Beauty...the contrast between the young child and the dead woman, as well as the child and the grim echoing vault. The dead woman is presented as an object to be contemplated, twisted and turned so that all possible angles of aesthetic strangeness can be produced. This treatment of death may serve as a microcosm of Poe's use of images of death or ruin "not for any moral significance" but precisely for "the aesthetic effects to be achieved." Like "The City............," 'The Sleeper' is also a myth for Poe's creative state of mind. It rhythmically creates a frame of mind that leads to the psycho-aesthetic effect of, what Poe calls, the
Beautiful.

Poe's "Lenore" earlier titled "A Paean" has for its subject a dead woman and passionate love. The first speaker in the poem is either the family priest or one of the false friends of the dead Lenore: She was a proud rich, and beautiful young woman who died of defamation. Her true lover, Guy de Vere, speaks the lines which appear within quotation marks in the poem. He denounces the hypocritical grief of the other onlookers and expresses his true love for the dead woman.

The poem opens with a debate regarding the singing of the requiem for the dead Lenore. Her false friends advice the singer not to sing requiem at all. The lover replies that her friends loved her only for her wealth, and that they secretly hated her for her pride and beauty. The indignity of false sympathisers makes the lover change his song from requiem to a paean. He even expresses a pagan delight as the angel escapes from the earth to heaven. He says:

"Should catch the note as it doth float up
from the damned Earth!
And I tonight my heart is light... no dirge will I upraise
But waft the angel on her flight with a Paean of olddays!"

Once again, Poe has contrived here a situation similar to the one he did in the opening lines of "Tamerlane" in
which he contrasts the Christian attitude with an absolute spirituality that repudiates the "damned Earth" altogether, though this poem initiates dramatic qualities which will ripen in artistic expression in future, yet it must be conceded that "Lenore" is not of the same standard as the other poems of this volume discussed so far.

The last poem of this volume, "The Valley of Unrest," titled "The Valley of Nis" in its first version, describes a valley that has undergone complete transformation. It was once a silent dell, but now there is 'nothing',— 'motionless in it.' The poem reads:

Once it smiled a silent dell
Where the people did not dwell;
They had gone unto the wars,
Trusting to the mild-eyed stars,
Nightly, from their azure towers,
To keep watch above the flowers.
It is called the Valley Nis.
And a Syriac tale there is
Thereabout which time hath said
Shall not be interpreted.
Something about Satan's dart—
Something about angel wings—.
Much about unhappy things:
But “the valley Nis” at best
Means the valley of unrest.”

The poem is thoroughly pictorial, so lacking in narrative or argumentative structure, that all evidence of its true meaning must be drawn from external sources.

“Far away - far away
Far away - as far at least
Lies that valley as the day
Down within the golden east
All things lovely- are not they.
Far away - far away?”

This served at least to tell the reader that the poem was to do with the heart-breaking loss of some Eden, but Poe parted down the idea as far as possible in the revised poem. One must recall the significance of “going unto the wars” in relation to the warfare in “Tamerlane.” The opening lines suggest the picture of the visionary soul before worldliness corrupted it. Richard Wilbur sees “The Valley of Unrest” as a condensed and obscured “Tamerlane.” Undoubtedly the poem is obscure. While in Tamerlane there is a protagonist to narrate his cause of the fall and record his journey in the “Valley of Unrest,” it is the fallen state itself. The “Valley” presents the case of Eden becoming
Earth, where everything is now in unrest:

'The sad Valley of restlessness'

And the perennial tears

Are now inseparably en-messed in it.

Summing up we see the poems of 1831 volume maintaining a link with the early poems as they, too, make a poetic presentation of Poe's aesthetic theory. The poems like 'To Helen,' 'Israfel,' 'The City in the Sea' and 'The Sleeper' are Poe's finest because they are in the complete accord with his poetic philosophy: that beauty is the province of art, that the artist reveals truth through beauty and that a poem is to give pleasure. The difference between Poe's early poems and the poems of this volume is that the later poems are more pictorial and more dramatic. This novelty in the technique of composition gives the false impression that Poe's later poems are artificial and contrived. This misunderstanding may be owing to the fact that Poe in his later poems, comes closer to his own poetic theory. His later poems are technically more finished and as Floyd Stovall says they are, "more completely the work of a craftsman than the earlier ones." With poems (1831) Poe is a more mature poet.

It is now necessary to point out here that Poe worked on themes and thoughts characteristic of a romantic poet. But he has also successfully experimented in his works with
poetic techniques that is characteristic of a conscious artist. His
next volume, "The Raven and Other Poems" (1845), brings to
light the fact that Poe was also keenly cognizant of the value of
technique of verse.

There are 13 new compositions in this volume
and, thematically, most of them are variations of the poetic mind
investigating itself. While in the early poems Poe was creating
and communicating psycho-aesthetic effects through
description, here he is dramatizing a scene for the same end. His
method of romantic expressionism finds its perfect execution in
the poems of the volume. Moreover, by the time Poe wrote this
volume, he was convinced that language itself was sufficient to
project the mood or impression as efficiently as he wished it to
do. His anti-literary devices, the absurdist variety, like distortions
of words and scenes, exaggeration, and melodramatizations are
intended to meet the insufficiency seem in the conventional
function of the language. For example, Poe’s pictorial
presentation is meant here to make the picture become an
experience of the reader—the reader is required to obtain poetic
ideas from the vividly charged details of a picture. All the devices
employed in these poems are meant to supplement Poe’s grand
design of the ‘technique of effect.’ As we shall see the poems of
this volume show Poe as a better craftsman than he was in the
earlier ones.

The opening poem of this volume, "The Coliseum," is Poe's first and best effort in blank verse. With its reference to a classical subject, it recalls the verse of "To Helen." This poem originally meant to be part of "Politian," is a set-piece meditation on the ruins of classical antiquity. Its opening line read:

Type of the antique Rome! Rich reliquary
Of lofty contemplation left to Time
By buried centuries of pomp and power!
At length—at length—after so many days
Of weary pilgrimage and burning thirst,
(Thirst for the springs of lore that in thee lie,)
I kneel, an altered and an humble man,
Amid thy shadows, and so drink within
My very soul thy grandeur, gloom, and glory!

Poe's contrast of the observed ruin and the unseen glory, awesome silence and suggested sound, surface desolation and submerged grandeur—all these pairings reflect his manner, of allowing undercurrents of prophetic meaning to emerge from what appears to be a dismal waste. The speaker's thirst for ruins suggests his aspiration for recapturing the primal state of the self and the world. It is the 'burning thirst' after a
lifetime of ‘weary pilgrimage.’ The ruins described here need not necessarily be the Rome only, rather, as Richard Wilbur has put it, “Poe’s subject is all Ruin.”

The ruins that have been described here serve, in their mystery, silence and desolation, “a prophetic function by offering premonitions, suggestions, and submerged meanings that resisted representation in ordinary language.” They produce a subtle psychological and symbolic effect in addition to generating an atmosphere of melancholy. Through their paradoxical nature, they allowed the poet to include a degree of psychological penetration that transcends fragmentary rhetorical flourishes. The broken forms of the ruins mirror the uneasy awareness of the speaker’s own fragmentation which induces melancholy and overwhelms him. The ruins are suggestive and expressive because prophetic sounds come from them “ As melody from the Memnon to the Sun.”

It is not from an actual experience of harmony but brokenness that the reader receives the prophetic sounds. Obviously, Poe is using ruins here to evoke a state of mind that finally leads to “Beauty.” The prophetic power of the ruins comes from their capacity to move the soul. The speaker is so obsessed with the ruins because he has been excited “to drink within (His) very soul......... (its) grandeur, gloom and glory.
"The Coliseum" is a successful poem as it creates a state of mind that exactly parallels the form of the poem. The dialogues between the speaker and the Echoes do not constitute a simple statement but an independent voicing of discreet attitudes. The ruins have several significances. Like any other absurdist work, desperate ideas are symphonically interwoven into a pattern of statement or counter statement, consonance and contrast. This absurdist tendency has become more prominent in Poe's later works.

The poems like "To One in Paradise," "Hymn," "To F...." "To F.....s S.O.....d," "Bridal Ballad", and "Sonnet to Zante" of this volume are not of any special significance as they merely repeat one or the other characteristics of Poe's early poems. These poems show the poet's brilliance only in patches. "To One in Paradise," which first appeared as part of "The Assignation" is the best among the lot. The contrast between the two forms of life has been suggested in the first stanza itself. "Edenic isle" is set against the "troubled sea," as "dreams" against "waking life" and the "past" against the "present." The "isle" implies a circular form of action and the poem the circular in pattern. The image of an isle reappears in "To F....and"Sonnet to Zante."
“Hymn,” which was originally written for Poe’s tale “Morella” is a hymn in character suitable to the lady in the story. The views expressed here in no way reflect Poe’s religious and philosophical attitudes. “To F....,” and “To F....s S.O....d” are addressed to Mrs Frances Osgood. These poems are poor imitations of Poe’s inimitable creation, “To Helen.” While in “Sonnet to Zante,” written in imitation of “The Happiest Day The Happiest Hour,” felicity is repudiated as too dangerous, the plot of “Bridal Ballad” duplicates the story “Ligeia” in toto. This poem, at the best, makes the reader plunge into the tide of rhythm and rhyme.

It must be mentioned here that except “To One in Paradise” the other poems of this group are not of the same standard as his finest work. In each of his four volumes, there are finely wrought poems as well as poems of poor quality. Poe’s unevenness as a poet is manifest in his badly written poems. However, no claim can be made about any poet that all his poems will be of equal merit.

The next poem of this volume “The Haunted Palace,” is as Poe stated, about a mind haunted by phantoms—a disordered brain. This poem may be seen as central to Poe’s tale, “The Fall of House of Usher,” as it, like the house of Usher, dramatizes Roderick Usher’s incipient madness. Both the “House” and the ‘Palace’ symbolize the same state of mind. The poem
centers round the theme, that will or thought, is inevitably
overpowered by the inimical world of reality outside. Poe's theme
of creating and probing the states of mind has led E. H. Davidson
to declare that "With 'The Haunted Palace' (1839) Poe began
virtually where he had left off with 1831 volume." The poem is
about some mind seen from inside the mind itself and it describes
not only its present state of being but also the manner of its
coming into existence. These psychological intricacies are
successfully presented through Poe's technique of romantic
expressionism.

The palace with its two eye like windows, stands
for the head of man. 'Thought' is the monarch here and he
presides over imaginative thinking. The inevitable, then,
happens and 'the monarch of thought' is assailed by 'evil things'—
the external prosaic and temporal reality. And monarch now loses
his control on the imaginative faculty. Consequently the valley
withers and the palace undergoes total transformation as
everything here is now discordant and ghostly. It is now a
different 'palace.' The last stanza records the changes:

"And travellers, now, within that valley,
Through the encrimsoned windows see
Vast forms that move fantastically
To a discordant melody,
While, like a ghastly rapid river,
Through the pale door
A hideous throng rush out for ever
And laugh—but smile no more.

Apparently, these transformations signify the difference between two states of mind or psychological changes. But the changes have made also the 'travellers' look like 'a deified entity.' It is not only a different state of mind but also a different state of 'being'——what he once was and what he now is. In short, the poem is both about states of mind and states of being. "The Haunted Palace" makes a symbolic presentation of abstract ideas that have both philosophical and psychological significances. To ignore the philosophical plane is to misread the poem. It goes to the credit of the master craftsman that he has successfully woven so many 'undercurrents' (or layers) of meanings into a single artistic 'whole.'

Poe's "Sonnet——Silence," an experiment in a 15 line form with a nine-line octave and also an irregular rhyme-scheme, in an abstract speculation on the dual nature of existence. The philosophical ideas contained in this sonnet recur in Poe's next Poem "The Conqueror Worm" and find there a better poetic expression. Silence stands for the twin nature of existence as it, itself is dual; here it is represented through 'sea and shore' or 'water and land,' and 'body and soul.' The 'twin
entity’ of silence is revealed through the ‘silence’ that we know and that ultimate ‘silence’ of the ethereal ‘music of spheres.’ The poem is least characteristic of Poe as there is in it more philosophy and less art. As a work of art it may not be of much significance but the ideas expressed are valuable in relation to the poet’s philosophy. The ultimate silence is a total nothingness beyond reality and God and therefore, beyond our knowing.

“The Conqueror Worm” makes a dramatic presentation of human life on earth. In this drama of life—the tragedy is called ‘Man’—the hero is death, personified by the worm, and not man. This is the irony about human life and his unchangeable situation on earth. This Tragic inability to change the human condition is implied in the very setting and timing of the ‘play of hopes and fears.’ The time is the Biblical ‘latter years’—before the Apocalypse. Since then nothing has changed and man has never been the protagonist of the dreams of his life.

“The Conqueror Worm” is one of Poe’s most successful poems. It has been presented through a series of minor images all contributing to a single intended effect wherein it emerges as a symbol. The consistency of the images is easily evident; the angels watch a drama against the fitful orchestra of the spheres and the image is completed as the worm crawls and devours ‘human gore’ at the end of the poem. The rhythm and
the rhyme assist so perfectly that the effect is communicated as intended and the illusion is completed. The tone of the poem is so overpoweringly melancholic that it sounds like a cry of deep-seated constitutional depression of the spirit. The use of the gothic details also helps Poe make a symbolic presentation of the anguished human condition. As we have already seen the theme is man's existential problem, which has been artistically expressed through the gothic atmosphere created, which evokes an atmosphere of dread, anguish, anxiety, and horror. They also suggest an inescapable situation of mutability and bodily corruption. It is to be added here that the philosophy of the poem, though pronounced, is not allowed to dominate it: it is subordinated to the poems artistic frame.

In "Dream-Land," Poe once more creates a state of mind that parallels his own creative state: a state between 'wakefulness and sleep.' Through this dreamscape of the state of creativity, he is also approximating the original state of creation. To Poe, God the Artist and the creative poet compose their works exactly under the same state of mind. In 'Dream-Land,' The poet is recreating that state of mind and his reference to an unimaginable past is the reference to God's state of original creation.

Under the guise of a traveller, the speaker
narrates his journey into a realm of unsubstantial pageantry, by an obscure and lonely route of bottomless vales, Titan woods, surging seas and lakes with their lone waters, and dismal tarns and pools, the traveller meets 'sheeted Memories of the Past..' At the very outset, Poe is reading the creation back into "its original chaos or unity" through the images of a limitless lake. The use of a lake as a symbol for the creative state of mind is characteristic of Poe's works. Here, the limitless lake symbolizes the original state of creation where chaos precedes unity. The condition Poe is referring to is the primordial condition before God had formed space and time. The traveller had passed through this condition (has journeyed the land) and he has just returned to narrate his experience. His experience is important because it is the journey into the very mystery of the universe. The traveller speaks about the land in which the 4 elements of earth, water, fire and air are fused together. Paradoxically although the atmosphere seems to be one of terror, it is soothing region in fact. The 'pilgrim shadow' signifies that the place is beyond death. The traveller may not dare open his eyes but he must use a half-closed eye for a better view. By bringing in a contrast between 'the weak human eye unclosed' and the soul beholding through 'darkened glasses,' Poe seems to suggest that the ultimate ideal can be apprehended only imaginatively, and that intellect cannot know things perfectly. It is further suggested that only imagination has a
positive function in one’s creative state of mind.

In spite of its plausible theme and artistic execution, “Dream land” is also one of Poe’s most misunderstood poems. Many critics consider it to be a mere description of dreamstuff dealing with the chaotic world of “disengaged creativity.” But it must, not be ignored that the sense of separation, loss and discontinuity is often the basis for Poe’s poetic impulse. C.M. Bowra has compared this poem with Coleridge’s “Limbo” where also there is the same condition of chaos and disorder. In “Dream land,” Poe’s state of anarchy simply delinks the creative mind from the world of habits. Thus, the poem is a statement on the creative state of mind which parallels the original state of God’s creation.

In “Eulalie—A Song,” also Poe shows his antipathy to the real world. The speaker imagines happiness that comes in its purest form, only after death when one soul unites with the other. His world was of ‘moan’ but he now visualizes another world which will be homely and beautiful—bright and strong—with love of Eulalie. The imagery which attends Eulalie is nocturnal: stars and the moon and the purple vapour Eulalie stands for Poe’s ideal Beauty and the suggestion of the bloom of ideal life, proves this point.
Before taking up Poe's major poems of his last years we may note here that his casual poems, written during this period like "A Valentine," "To M.L.S.--," "A Enigma," "To--," and even "To My Mother" are not of much poetic significance. Only "To My Mother" makes poetic expression of the sincerest gratitude that Poe owed to Mrs. Maria Clemm, his mother-in-law.

The first major poem of Poe's last years, "Ulalume—A Ballad, "is unanimously accepted to-day as one of his best poems. E. W. Carlson has called it one of Poe's two or three finest. The poem reveals Poes growing maturity of artistry, and his deft handling of a theme having great psychological importance. It is rather puzzling to find that Poe's best poems are usually the most misunderstood and therefore, the most maligned. Till the recent past, critics like Huxley, Yvor Winters, and others took this very poem as an example to prove their charges of vulgarity deliberate obscurantism,' and cheap mystification' against Poe's poetry. Their misreading of this poem, as already pointed out by recent critics, are primarily due to their overlooking of the psychological theme and the symbolic impressionist nature of the poem. Beside the allegedly gross defects like heavy rhyme, cloying sounds, and general effect of theatricality are highly exaggerated, they are, primarily, only defects of qualities necessary for Poe's special hypnotic purpose.
"Ulalume" describes the longing of a weary widower for a second wife and also his fear that he may get pure love in the second marriage. The poem is an elaborate meditation on the contrast between pure love (Dian) and lust (Astarte). It takes the form of a debate between the poet and his inner self, and the poem makes an interesting comparison with Poes’ story ‘William Wilson’ which is also on the theme of the divided self. The proper names used in the first stanza are meant for creating an atmosphere of mystery and vagueness. The words like ‘Auber’ and ‘Weir,’ primarily chosen for their sound-value, may also refer to persons like R. L. Weir and J. F. Auber whose works imply something wild, misty, and weird. Poe is slowly disengaging the reader by taking him to this weird region, from the known familiar world and the known state of mind, Poe brings the distance of time along with this distance of place to complete his process of disengagement. The narrator is in a state of extreme excitement. Without intending to philosophise, Poe renders here a philosophical account of the speakers journey to self recognition. He is made to seek for his self “a unity of mind, body and conscience.” This theme also conforms to the recurring motif in Poe that Unity, or the ideal, or the secret of existence is intertwined with death. Thus the speakers journey to self recognition brings him to the knowledge of death.
Poe's use of tone built on made-up sound, words and repetitions is entirely functional and not the gaudy rhetorical embellishment as Huxley found it to be. The experience described here is of the subconscious state and coherence is psychological rather than logical. An objective reading of the poem reveals Poe's experimentation in bringing the combined effect of symbolism and sound impressionism. By combining archetypal images of dark forest, 'dim lake,' and 'misty mid region' with the sounds suggesting something wild and weird, Poe has successfully put this method into practice.

"To Helen" is addressed to Mrs. Sarah Helen Whitman, a widowed poetess of Providence. Poe wrote to her regarding the poem "The poem which I sent you contained all the events of a dream which occurred to me soon after I knew you."

The poem presents a vision and it depends heavily upon design of the earlier poems. Helen is presented as a rare woman of considerable beauty and charm. The spiritual aspect of her beauty fills the poet's soul with hope, which is obviously in the other world and in another form. In comparison with the earlier poem on the same subject (Helen, thy beauty is to me) this poem is manifestly poorer.
The next poem, "Eldorado," was written at a time when the Californian gold rush was very much in the news. 'Eldorado' means the far off land of gold, sometimes with overtones of philosophical bliss, the latter being, the sentiment Poe catches in the poem —— the basic theme of the poem centers round the idea that the dreams of the soul are not realizable in this life. The search for Eldorado, thus, is a search for the fulfillment of the dreams of the soul.

This short lyric with its lilting beats gradually develops into something more profound. Its ballad-like simplicity is deceptive as the poem suggests thoughts of high seriousness. In its continual emphasis on seeking something beyond and unreachable, the poem is most characteristic of Poe.

In this short and simple poem Poe gives poetic expression to a series of ideas that haunted his life and art: the alteration between hope and despair (in sunshine and in shadow) which yielded the deepest extremes of happiness and sorrow and yet produced his finest work, the preoccupation with the idea of a double, a shadow which would follow him throughout his life, and that life itself was insubstantial dream. All these recurring ideas have been fused together in Eldorado making it a work of abundant energy and fascination.

"For Annie" is addressed to Mrs. N. L. H.
Richmond. The nature of Poe’s love as revealed in this poem is Platonic, to him love ultimately is a mystical experience. This poem has characteristic aura of Poe’s spiritual emotionalism.

“Annabel Lee”, the simplest and the sweetest of Poe’s ballads, is a well written tribute to his wife, Virginia Clemm. It reflects, however, indirectly, his feelings for his wife. The individual events have been artistically transformed into Poe’s views of an ideal reality. It is one of his most deeply felt compositions, and conceals an emotional intensity rare in the body of his work. The poem deals with themes of childhood love and the spiritual union in death. By setting the poem in some legendary past and in an unfamiliar world, Poe is taking the reader to a distance both in time and place, in order that imagination may have free play. The first four stanzas describe the spirituality of childhood love while, the last two celebrate the spiritual union in death.

The genuine feelings of love are so earnestly depicted here that a relationship is artistically established between the death of Poe’s wife and the world of his dreams and desires. From a purely rhythmical standpoint this poem is perhaps the most perfect of Poe’s poems. Critics are unanimous in their praise of its symmetry and charm. The principles of effect, mood, tone, music and length reach their culmination
here. For example, by means of repetition each stanza is coiled back on and is absorbed in the one immediately preceding it. Poe's artistry is seen at its best in Annabel Lee. As a characteristic poem of Poe, "Annabel Lee" exactly makes a psychical excitement "appropriate to the mock-destruction of this world and the dim glimpsing of another" through its theme of love and death.

With this poem also ends the series of poems written in ballad form. Poe has proved that this form may also be used for serious writing as it has all the "essentials' of verse. By varying and extending the qualities of the simple form, Poe has also enlarged the functions and possibilities of melody in verse.

Poe's doctrine of rhythm and rhyme finds its best expression in his last poem, "The Bells." To enlarge the scope of Poetry, Poe makes a successful appropriation, of course with finest artistic discernment, of the vitalizing power of rhyme and rhythm. It exemplifies Poe's use of onomatopoeia, the ringing sound of the bells effects the ear as well as the mind. It is a unique creation and cannot be compared with any other of Poe's poems. It is "a tour de force." Buranelli has thus observed about the poem; "World Literature can scarcely show a more triumphant handling of onomatopoeia—— suggestiveness and meaning conveyed through the medium of sound."
The secret of the success and charm of the poem lies in the humanizing aspects of the tones of the bells. It is not personification, but speaking in person to our souls. In each of the four sections of the poem, the sound of the bells assumes a different character. The bells toll out the four stages of man: The human cycle of birth, marriage, struggle and death. The four sections of the poem have four types of bells representing four stages of human life. The silver bells mark out youth and merriment, the golden bells happiness and harmony in love and marriage, the brazen bells maturity and awareness of the polarities in life, and the iron bells old age and death. Through the sound of different bells, Poe is effecting varied sensations of human experience. In a sense, Poe’s object here is to synthesize “the ambivalences of experience by underscoring heavily on the multi faced complexity of a single object.”

With the progress of the poem, the reader sees qualities like happiness, fear, solemnity, and melancholy finding their music in the way the image of their bells is developed. It is the climax of Poe’s art on its technical side. The reverberating melody of the poem slowly becomes infused with a developing maturity of thought and feeling as it moves from the jolly sleigh bells and happy wedding bells through the loud alarm bells to the incessant tolling of funeral bells. With the crescendo of sound
almost audible on the printed page. The shifting sonorities passing through the four sections of the poem give it its remarkable dramatic auditory effect. To Poe, words have meanings, but these are much less emphatic than the echoes which they bring through their sound. And in The Bells Poe puts this axiom to practice. Even in terms of his theory this poem is the ultimate that an artist can manage through the sound of words.

Critics also see a definite purpose behind Poe's structuring of this poem into four sections and his method of making each section progressively longer than the preceding section. According to David Ketterer, four sections of The Bells correspond to the four cycles of Poe's poetry. He says, "The four cycles of poetry find their parallels in the four stanzas and stages of The Bells the wintry childhood corresponding to the Tamerlane group, the happy marriage to the Al Aaraaf group, the troubled alarming of adult life to The Raven group, and the happy melody of death to the Ulalume group."

Poe thought of his poetry as an organic whole. His four volumes of poems are assimilative in nature: the Tamerlane group gets assimilated into the Al Aaraaf group these two merge into Raven group and finally all these three merge into the Ulalume group of poems. Poe's stanza pattern in The Bells is also assimilative. It is very likely that Poe, in his last poem, thought of
giving poetic expression to the concept of his own poetry as an organic whole. In this sense reading meanings into The Bells is to read the course of development of Poe the artist.

Summing up, the strength of Poe's later poetry, as already seen, lies in his ability to convey deep emotion in language of utmost ease and fluency. Since his poetic theory requires poetry to approximate music for vagueness and spirituality, the reason for regular rhythm as well as heavy assonance, alliterations, and repetitions in the later poems is easily explained. By repeating words and phrases without continually modifying their meaning, Poe is deliberately shifting the reader's attention from sense to sound. In the same way, his theory of unity of effect accounts for his careful and constant revision of poems and for his obsession with the technical perfection. His later poems are better finished than the earlier ones because they have undergone the close scrutiny of a mature artist who has been honest to his own poetic principles. By any orthodox critical standard Poe's poems are good and well made as they are based on his grand conception of poetry: Poetry as a harmonious sphere transmitting spiritual effect. But his poetry, indeed, is fully understood and appreciated only when measured against his own criteria.

Poe's view of the universe corresponds to his
view of a poem. In other words, Poe's cosmic myth justifies his kind of poetry. His views on his cosmic design that parallels his aesthetic views find fuller expression in his prose poems and other poetical works.

Poe's poetical works include an unfinished verse drama and six prose poems. These works express his poetic principles in the proper perspective and illustrate how his writings are part of a single and all-inclusive vision. Poe, in fact, seems never to have been happy about his play, as it did not meet with the high artistic standard he set for himself. His abandonment of the play was out of his honesty and not for his incapacity, as some critics opine, for writing a drama. The reason is that Poe could not mix up drama and poetry and Politian is a dramatic poem in blank verse. According to him it is an anomaly because any drama written in verse is neither pure drama nor pure poetry, in his estimation, the object of poetry is beauty it concerns itself with only supernal reality and drama with everyday reality. At one point he declares "Beauty can be better treated in a poem. Not so with terror, or passion, or horror, or a multitude of such other points." In accordance with his theory of drama, Poe has based the plot of Politian on an actual incident, because he believed that a dramatic product must be valued according to its degree of naturalism and verisimilitude. This work is based on the well-known 'Kentucky Tragedy' though the scene
has been reset against the backdrop of sixteenth century Rome. Politan, like Tamerlane and other poetic personalities of Poe, is thoroughly conceived and developed as a romantic personality. The themes and techniques employed here are also the same as those used in his poems. The entire play echoes Poe's poetic sentiments though he has chosen to superimpose some dramatic complications. This is the contradiction that Poe could not reconcile to, and for this he abandoned the play halfway.

The other prose poems of Poe are semi-philosophical in nature and in each the style verges on poetry. These metaphysical pieces also illuminate Poe's poetic theory. For him a poem is perfectly realized when its meter, language, and subject come in perfect harmony of the parts to the whole, or it maintains 'harmony,' 'symmetry' and 'consistency.' Poe's philosophical ideas on the nature of the universe and the nature of man, as revealed in these works, correspond to his aesthetic principles.

"Shadow—A Parable" (1835) is Poe's first attempt at writing a prose poem, and is often admired for its evocative power and its oracular tone effectively conveys a serious intent. It is Poe's humble beginning of his philosophical ideas which find clearer and more coherent expression in his last philosophical piece "Eureka."
“Silence—A Fable” (1838) originally titled “Siopée,” is a companion piece of the “Shadow- A Parable.” As in his poems, here also Poe is ambivalent regarding his views on death variously: as a benign friend, welcome privacy for the soul, an emotional release, a spiritual union with the realm of absolute truth, static beauty, and an unpleasant end.

“The Conversation of Eiros and Charmion” (1839) is Poe’s first statement on the catastrophic destruction of the earth. It is a dialogue between two spirits in heaven after the earth’s annihilation, this dialogue may plausibly be read as account of an existentialist or psychological apocalypse.

“The Colloquy of Monos and Una” (1841), a sequel to the “Conversation between Eiros and Charmion,” describes the destruction of earth by fire and the cause of this destruction is attributed to man’s misappropriation of his ‘reason’ and his perverse way of snapping the relationship with nature. The philosophical overtones of the piece have led Allen Tate to term the ‘dialogue’ as “a theological fantasy of the destruction of the earth.”

“The Power of Words” (1845) is also a dialogue between two angels and the time is also the post cataclysmic end of the world. Here Poe is again undertaking, as observed by Allan
Tate, a deliberation on the function of angelic imagination. Tate says: "In "The Power of Words the angelic imagination is pushed beyond the limits of angelic intelligence to the point at which man considers the possibility of creative power through verbal music." Poe through his apocalyptic presentation, is evoking the poetic-reality of the truth of the Void.

"Eureka" (1848) is couched in a form that-synthesizes poetry and philosophy. Poe is here also making his final attempt at articulating a rationale of poetry. Eureka offers a semi-rationalistic vision of the final disappearance of the material world into the first or the Original Spiritual Unity or God. In Eureka Poe felt he had summarised his philosophy of life and art in a composition of total consistency and beauty, and that beyond this he had nothing further of substance to add. Poe sees in the nature of the universe a cyclic process of diffusion from unity back to unity again.

The most significant aspect of Eureka is that ideas concerning art, science, and philosophy have been successfully brought within the purview of a single poetic vision. Here, scientific cosmology has been equated with aesthetic principles, and philosophical ideas are primarily developed to support an aesthetic theory. It is clear that Poe claims access to intuitive knowledge in Eureka only. In a sense, his conception of
intuition not only combines philosophic and aesthetic modes of perception but also bridges the inevitable divorce between reason and imagination that Poe proposed in his theory of poetry. His philosophical bent of mind was basically directed towards an understanding of certain principles of art.