


1809 - 1849

- Summary of last slide
- I. Major Works of Poe
 - Critical Essays
 - Poems
- 2. Biographical Information
 - Most misunderstood American Author
 - Poe's Parents
 - Disappointment in love
- 3. Critics Opinion
- His writings were a reflection of the inner turmoil
- His life became a slow suicide



He uses the **Raven as a means** to bring this drama to
the surface

What is the whole purpose –

Is It altogether showing the purposelessness and
meaninglessness of an absurd universe devoid of values?



If one chooses to read "The Raven" in this manner –

then Poe is a precursor of the **apocalyptic vision**

characterized in the twentieth century poem

Can you guess the poem?




“The Waste Land”



Louis D. Rubin Jr. - after observing questions of the
lover –

"is an assertion of purpose, of meaning, or the reality of
human love, affection, thought, intelligence, religion
even"



and that to each of these questionswe get only one
answer

Nevermore

It is nothing but

"the automatic, senseless, memorized glottal response of
a mindless, dumb organism,"



suggest that in this mechanical, meaningless repetition


there might be as an implication –

a hint that the **man asking questions is perhaps
not really the learned, rational lover**




but only a


"somewhat more complex, more highly developed, but
still essentially animal organism."



If this implication can indeed be read in Poe, then he might be **anticipating some very crucial twentieth-century questions**



If so, as Rubin puts it - **man is only an animal organism**, then what of all the hopes, aspirations, ideals of society, what of all its brave assertions of divine purpose and meaning, its quest for greater knowledge



its belief in a logical and God-ordered universe, its faith
in a society of progress, of men of good will, of
institutions for perfection?




Are these cherished goals too only mirages?

Are the strength and comfort they have afforded men
for thousands of years still available today?




'Nevermore'?



“Poe's fictional works have so persistently attracted the
serious attention of language-related theorists

from **Charles Baudelaire** in the nineteenth-century to


Jacques Lacan and Jacques Derrida in the twentieth –




few have ever bothered to examine closely Poe's own theory, especially- "The Philosophy of Composition"



Why



One reason could be that "The Philosophy" has
traditionally been discredited as but another of the
many **hoaxes Poe is supposed to have**
perpetrated against an unsuspecting readership




- its **overall purpose** being less to reveal the true method of the composition of "The Raven" than to **further enhance the reputation** of the already famous poem




Yet another reason may have to do with the prevailing

belief that **Poe's fictional works carry even more theoretical implications** about language, as well as about related questions of desire, than does his own theory.

Does not mean that...



This is not of course to suggest that "The Philosophy"
has been dismissed as a text of little theoretical
consequence.




On the contrary, the **French symbolist poets** (Baudelaire, Mallarmé, and Valéry), as great admirers of Poe, found in the essay a **strong confirmation for their own aesthetic method**




- a method emphasizing a kind of poetic

- **"suggestiveness"** that would range **"beyond the limits of direct speech"** (Buranelli 90).



Baudelaire was - quick to identify with the essay's privileging of the **poet's hard work and analytical thinking** over anything resembling intuitive inspiration




Rosemary Lloyd, in her study of Baudelaire's literary criticism, points out: "In Poe, ... Baudelaire discovers **a poet who is always in control of his inspiration, striving, like the true dandy, to banish spontaneity...**



and '*simuler le sang-froid et la délibération*' by paying


extremely close attention to every point of his poem,

no matter how minor" (77).



“Like the French symbolists, the **American New Critics**, later on, were also drawn to Poe's essay.


they **recognized an affinity with their own theoretical views** regarding the formal unity and totality of the literary work, ...




which is to say, their belief that "the work of art is an integral and self-consuming fact, embodying 'everything necessary for its understanding'" (Galloway 41; see also Foucault 22-23).



We have a Question




In what specific way does "The Philosophy" relate to the poem "The Raven," besides in the most obvious way of being both a **commentary** on the poetic work as well as a **theoretical statement** concerning Poe's general conception of the poetic process?



What story, that is, does "The Philosophy" tell with regard to the relation between its own theory (or theory in general) and the poetic discourse with which it is primarily concerned?



“How do the two discourses - the theoretical and the poetic - become mutually informing?”

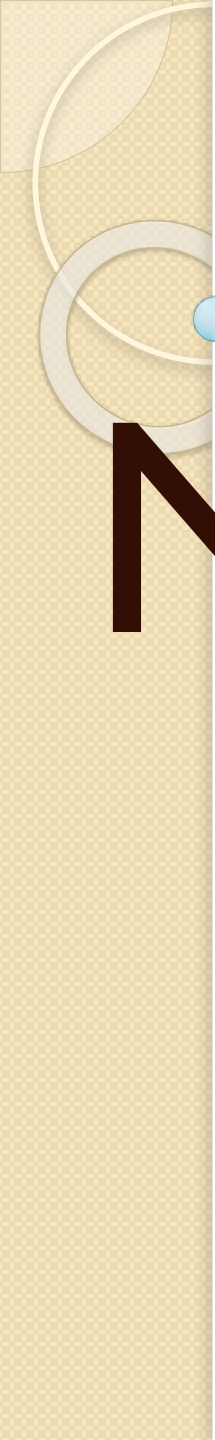


what story does "The Philosophy" seem to tell about the many images or myths of Poe - advanced and cultivated by critics, biographers, and general readers alike - that have come down through the years?



What, for instance, might it tell us about the usual

opposing perceptions, or myths, of **Poe as either the romantic artist par excellence** or the **ultimate rationalist**, scientifically inclined toward **creating a mathematical system** of poetic effects?...



NEVERMORE