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«ANYWHERE OUT OF THIS CENTURY: THE SATIRICAL WRITING OF EDGAR ALLAN POE»

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Abstract:

Despite his popularity and association with horror tales, Edgar Allan Poe extensively wrote stories characterised by humour and satire, reflecting his social/political milieu. Among other questions, Poe was particularly concerned with the state of American politics, democracy and the literary scene, and the mode he chose to address these issues was that of satire. With this research, I aim to illustrate the extent to which Edgar Allan Poe used satire in order to depict, scrutinize and condemn the unfolding circumstances of his time.

Keywords: Edgar Allan Poe, Satire, Magazine, Democracy

Resumen:

A pesar de su popularidad y asociación con los relatos de terror, Edgar Allan Poe también escribió historias caracterizadas por el humor y la sátira, reflejando su implicación con el entorno social y político de su tiempo. Entre otras cuestiones, Poe estaba particularmente interesado en el estado de la política y democracia estadounidense y de la escena editorial literaria, y el modo del autor para tratar estas cuestiones fue aquel de la sátira. Con esta investigación, pretendo ilustrar hasta qué punto Edgar Allan Poe utilizó la sátira para representar, inspeccionar y denunciar el cómo se estaban desarrollando estas circunstancias de su época.

Palabras clave: Edgar Allan Poe, Sátira, Editorial, Democracia, Política

1. INTRODUCTION

It can be safely affirmed that Poe's consolidation in mainstream culture has much to do with his horror tales and the celebrated poem which is "The Raven". With the author growing exponentially in legend since his death in 1849, the dark and morbid mystique surrounding the writer in public consciousness, while alluring on its own right, has sometimes obscured alternative interpretations of the author's work.

One consequence of mystifying an artist is neglecting to see certain aspects of him, in favour of other ones. Poe, like any artist, was influenced and affected by the specific circumstances of his time. Yet until the 20th century, both public and academic discourse tended to perceive Edgar Allan Poe as a kind of eccentric caricature, disconnected from his context, lost in escapist fantasies of an ancient and sombre Old World, oblivious to the actual developments taking place in the Antebellum America in which he lived.

However, controversial biographical aspects aside, the actual Poe could not be more dissimilar from this mirage of historical disconnection as previously stated. Edgar Allan Poe's volume of work recurrently approaches social and cultural concerns of the author, and his tool to address those questions was the stylistic device of satire. This consistent yet adaptable device could vary in form, subtlety and objective altogether, depending on the topic to portray. Thematic examples of such topics that will be treated in this research are: 1- The publishing industry and its sway over professional writers, who were forced to comply with questionable business tactics because of their livelihood depending on it, experienced firsthand by Poe throughout his career. 2- Specific political figures and the new model of democracy emerging in the United States since Andrew Jackson' presidency. These developments in America's political path deeply disturbed Poe, which he saw as the door to sentimental populism, increased nationalism and ultimately, the cultivated individual, among which Poe considered himself an exponent, becoming outmoded by the majority. Poe went as far as to qualify this possible future as the triumph of "mob rule".

The two aforementioned topics are to conform the specific sections found this essay, which is organised in exactly that manner lest for an additional section that acts as an overview, taking relevant events of Poe's personal life to better introduce and contextualise each ensuing section, therefore this project will be delimited as such. Concerning methodology, the two main topics of satire shown in this project have been specifically selected for the common overarching themes of their stories, and the close connection of these to Poe's

context. Apart from the stories, such philosophy too has influenced their order of presentation; I have generally arranged the stories based on their chronological order of publication, but I have not hesitated to take certain liberties when a story, presented in an alternative way, could facilitate the understanding of its satire and the subject portrayed, or maintain a general thematic cohesion.

I saw an orthodox mixture of historical and documentary methods of research as the most appropriate course of action. While the project has been delimited to two broad domains of satire, I note that Poe's satirical range was not exclusively contained within these, and more satirical stories directed at different subjects exist. Another nuance is that, whether within or outside the scope of satirical stories treated in this project, my judgement to qualify a Poe story as satirical is not anecdotic or partial, but has been realised based on a conscientious reading of the critical tradition concerning this subject.

All that is left is to formulate a research question, ideally one whose answer, or resulted insight, could be inferred from its own process of inquiry: How did Edgar Allan Poe's work contain satiric elements related to his own historical context?

2. EDGAR ALLAN POE: A BIOGRAPHICAL OVERVIEW

The task of this overview is to connect certain biographical facts concerning Edgar Allan Poe to the satirical themes that will be treated in subsequent sections. Among different biographical sources, *The Cambridge Introduction to Edgar Allan Poe* by Benjamin F. Fisher has proven to be the most useful for this stage of research. Because of its condition as an anthology, its biographical section is arranged in a manner that allows me to connect its content to the corresponding stories which will be treated. Furthermore, it is my impression that early biographical accounts, particularly those originated too close to the actual time period, often suffer from a personal bias. One example being the one given by author Rufus W. Griswold, with whom Poe had a literary feud during his life and as consequence, was nefariously depicted after his death. Hence, I have preferred to support this biographical information through a modern source.

Edgar Allan Poe (né Edgar Poe) was born in Boston, Massachusetts the 7 of October of 1809. After his father abandoning the family and his mother dying from tuberculosis in 1811, Poe becomes the foster child of the prosperous merchant John Allan, and although Poe was never

officially adopted, he later decided to use his foster parents' surname as his second name (2). From that moment, Poe received an education and upbringing proper of an upper-class family. From 1815 to 1820 he studied in Great Britain, but would continue his pre-graduate studies in Richmond, Virginia until the year 1826. Forced to abandon his studies, estranged from John Allan and pursuing a military career, Poe would publish his first volume of poetry, *Tamerlane and Other Poems* (3), in 1827.

Unlike his fiction and critical writings, Poe's poetry did not engage in any manner whatsoever with the cultural and political context of the author, and there is no evidence through which the cultural anxieties later held by Poe were manifest in this early period. However, this does not have to reinforce the existing narrative of Edgar Allan Poe being an isolated, apolitical writer, living in complete unawareness of his surroundings. An example of such position, held a century past Poe's death, is that of the professor and historian Schlesinger who exalted Poe as "a tragic and solitary genius", called him "the Ishmael of letters" and concluded that Poe "shows no reflection of place or time in his work" (211). One of the main aims of this research is demonstrating how this is not the case, and the contrary is true.

Admittedly, in a period when American literature was building its own nationalist mythology and therefore was loaded with country-specific tropes and settings, Poe can appear alien in comparison. Without endorsing such assumption, in "A Mania for Composition" Kennedy illustrates this premise: "Conjuring weird images of a fantastic Old World, Poe initially appears the most extraneous and un-American of our early authors" (2). In conjunction with Weissberg, Kennedy continues to exemplify the premise of Poe being isolated from his milieu:

> Evincing little sustained interest in the frontier, the natural landscape, the Puritan past, the settlement of the colonies, the Revolution, or democracy itself, he seems in many ways the most un-American of our early writers. Many of his narratives (and poems) depict not native scenes but the fantastic, half-remembered landscape of the England he had seen in childhood. (13)

Countering this confined, de-contextualising view of Poe's work, it is my stance, and that of Kennedy once he postulates his own view on the matter, that "Far from ignoring ideas popular with the American literati and the reading public, Poe challenged, exploited, and often mocked them" (Kennedy 2). Fisher too gives himself the task of demystifying Poe,

firmly refuting that the author was oblivious to the evolution of events taking place in America during his lifetime:

> That he was far more aware of the contemporary America of his era is also demonstrable, contrary to certain trends of thought that would position him, dressed in threadbare black and with a sickly complexion, in a drafty, poorly illuminated, and generally shabby garret, raven on one shoulder, black cat on the other, scribbling down his latest personal paranoia into jog-trot verse or a terrifying story (in which he figures as the major character), all the while uncaring or ignorant about the real world outside. That image vanishes, however, when we read many of his works or when biographical accounts impress us with some aspect of his knowledge of his American world. (16)

Although John Allan approved of Poe's career change by joining the army, and the author even seemed to exceed at the military academy, by the release of Poe's second poetry book, *Al Aaraaf, Tamerlane and Minor Poems* in 1829, the author's relationship with his foster father had become ultimately cold (3). Poe got himself expelled from the academy and went to New York, where his grandmother and aunt lived, with the aim to further pursue his ambition as a poet. What he would encounter in New York however was be a very dire situation. Poe soon realised that his blood family lived in extreme poverty and could not support him. Although his foster father had become wealthier through a family inheritance, he could no longer expect monetary aid from John Allan, Poe hurtfully realised saw that his poetry scarcely generated any income whatsoever, and would much less allow him to support himself (4). At that critical moment, entering the decade of 1830, Poe redirected his talents from the realm of poetry, which had been his original ambition, to any form of writing which would somewhat allow him to sustain himself, hence the author migrated to fiction and criticism (4).

Much would change the initial self-image of Poe as a sensitive poet, following the British tradition of Romanticism, sculpting his work in a shape not unlike the likes of Percy Shelley and Lord Byron, to what would eventually become the author of criticism and Gothic fiction.[1] Poe however was not confined to this genre of writing; Fisher declares that "Poe wrote and published fiction in hopes of financial gain, and although he is best remembered

[1] Note that Poe himself did not qualify his work as Gothic. To describe his own stories, he opted instead for using the terms "grotesque" and "arabesque" depending on their nature. However, I will use that adjective for the sake of simplicity and reference to the European genre tradition from which his stories take inspiration.

as a writer of Gothic horror his stories are actually not of just one type but reveal greater variety, as might be expected from a journalist eager to write what would sell" (48-49). This does not deny the fact that Poe saw Gothic fiction, a genre that was already looked upon with contempt as an "outmoded type of fiction" (Fisher 72), and through careful study he polished a formula that gained him critical and popular acclaim. This pragmatic approach was also applied to his writings as a critic, which likewise afforded him a relative success, although gaining Poe the nickname of "Tomahawk Man" due to the often-severe nature of his criticism (Fisher 5). But Poe, no matter the commercial strategies used, never really broke the poverty threshold, and he would mourn the death of his initial dream as a poet, a sacrifice he had been compelled to make in order to precariously live from his writing. We will see in the next section that the story "The Literary Life of Thingum Bob, Esq.", ostensibly a satire of the publishing industry, can also be read as a mocking autobiography of these events.

This venture into the domains of fiction and criticism originated in 1832, the year in which Poe's first five published tales appeared in the *Philadelphia Saturday Courier* in anonymous form (Fisher 4). Even at this early a stage, Poe's tendency to enter feuds with other literati can already be noticed. Such was the case involving fellow writer John Hill Hewitt, with whom Poe became angry because of the former, by a contest rule technicality more than his own merits, gaining a poetry prize which Poe considered to rightfully belong to him (Fisher 4). This anecdote is used to point at a broader tendency, which was Poe's antagonism to several colleagues and artists within the publishing industry. Incidentally, Poe's start as a critic was made possible by the same contest, as one of its judges, John P. Kennedy, made acquaintance with Poe and took a liking to the author, facilitating him work in a newly formed Virginia magazine known as the *Southern Literary Messenger*. Despite accruing several enemies from New York through his criticism, and controversy by the misattribution of an article endorsing two pro-slavery books (Fisher 5), in 1837 Poe would go to the Northern states in search of work. The two quintessential satirical stories "How to Write a Blackwood Article" and "A Predicament", originally titled "The Psyche Zenobia" and "The Scythe of Time" (Levine 414-417) respectively, were published in the *American Museum* magazine, in Baltimore, in 1838.

With Poe's stay in the Northern states, it is the moment to address the cultural consensus present at this moment in time throughout the country, or rather, the lack of it. One factor worth considering was that Poe, who found himself on a precarious monetary position, could not afford to alienate his readership, as his livelihood depended on their subscriptions. One

further complication however, resulting from the North/South dichotomy in Antebellum America, was the lack of a standardised social consensus followed by the majority of the country. This particularly brought problems to writers when they seemed obliged to approach controversial issues, particularly those related in any manner to politics or the institution of slavery (Whalen 123-124). To exemplify this lack of consensus and social instability, Whalen illustrates this fractured landscape when discussing the topic of racism in the following excerpt: “In this chapter I argue that any investigation into Poe's racial views should begin by acknowledging that in the 1830s, there were multiple racisms and multiple positions on slavery even in the South” (111). As their livelihood was dependant on magazines and their subscription model, writers were forced to navigate this situation exerting a difficult equidistance, in search for the middle ground on issues which tended to be inherently polarising. Poe personally tried to outmanoeuvre this economic insecurity by advocating for the development of international copyright protection laws (Kennedy 9). As copyright in its then primitive form allowed Poe’s works to be published abroad without giving the author any monetary compensation, or even asking for his consent (Whalen 44). The effort however would prove fruitless, and Poe would remain at the mercy of this uncertain climate. Whalen reinforces this point by stating that "Poe’s real argument is that given the absence of international copyright protection, American authors have a material or economic dependence upon a nationalist ideology” (143). Whalen goes one step further, and to illustrate the scope of the social compromise authors had to make, he affirms that “Even if he [Poe] had been a ranting abolitionist or a rabid secessionist, he would never have been able to express these views in the *Southern Literary Messenger*” (128).

The grim economic landscape conveyed in the previous paragraph, for professional writers at least, exemplifies the extent to which Poe put efforts into securing his livelihood. His last major attempt at manoeuvring this situation was obtaining a job for the political administration (Marchand 31); this appeared possible through the friendship he had made with Thomas Dunn English, a fellow author who Poe met during his time working in Philadelphia. English considered himself able to help Poe secure a position as clerk under future President Tyler, and although Poe’s prospects actually looked promising, in the end, the project did not materialize. Despite securing a personal interview with Tyler, the author got himself inebriated and was ultimately indisposed for the task, hence ruining any chances of obtaining the post (Fisher 7). However, this chapter in Poe’s life did offer new outlets for the author’s satire because. While he had already written satire about specific political

figures, such as President Jackson with his stories “King Pest” (1835) and “Four Beasts in One” (1836), now in an effort of partisanship, Poe specifically wrote satire about two of the “enemies” of Tyler’s administration (Whipple 81) in regard to the next elections: the by then President Martin Van Buren and Vice-President Richard M. Johnson, both being respectively satirised in the stories “The Devil in the Belfry” and “The Man That Was Used Up”, both published in 1839. But once Poe no longer needed to cater to John Tyler for the premise of work, he would redirect his political satire towards broader aspects of America’s political system. This period of maturity in Poe’s political satire can be remarked in the stories “The Colloquy of Monos and Una” (1841), “Some Words with a Mummy” (1845) and “Mellonta Tauta” (1849).

With his ambition of becoming a clerk shattered, Poe had to face an unstable period of unemployment followed by minor work at multiple magazines; his luck however would briefly look up, as in 1843 he publishes “The Gold Bug”, a story which instantly becomes a popular and critical success, allowing Poe respite by offering him a certain degree of stability. The strike of luck would be continued with the publication of Poe’s most famous poem, “The Raven”, in 1845. Slightly before this period, Poe permanently moved to New York, and with his career appearing more consolidated than ever, it is difficult to conceive that he would still be menaced with setbacks. However, such was exactly the case. Starting with the death of his wife from tuberculosis in in 1847, Poe would live through a string of incidents which would threaten his career, which started going on a steady decline. After the death of his wife, Poe’s drinking worsened. And in 1849, although he did have work and published stories such as “Hop-Frog”, Poe did not have his current publisher, the conservative magazine *Flag of our Union*, in any esteem at all (Fisher 14). In a temporary stay in Richmond, VA Poe became engaged on a whim and planned to return to New York to marry, but details surrounding this event are unclear, as it was immediately followed with the author’s death in Baltimore 7 of October, after having been found delirious and taken to the hospital (Fisher 10), the exact circumstances of his death remain unknown to this day.

3. POE AS A CRITIC: SATIRE OF THE PUBLISHING INDUSTRY

Through joy and through sorrow, I — wrote. Through hunger and through thirst, I — wrote. Through good report and through ill report, I — wrote. Through sunshine and through moonshine, I — wrote.

—Edgar Allan Poe, “The Literary Life of Thingum Bob, Esq.”

Having made manifest Poe’s financially dependent relationship with literary magazines, it is time to address how the author portrayed the numerous issues he found with this industry through means of satire. But first, one historical remark worth considering in relation to what has been previously exposed: Because of the defective copyright laws, and the subsequent lack of income from literary circulation overseas, Poe was chained to the national literary market during a period in which nationalistic literature was proliferating as a propaganda effort by the United States (Kennedy 13), with the production of this type of literature being not only incentivised but positively reviewed as well (Faherty 17). And although Poe had shown a great degree of flexibility when adapting himself to literary trends, as a critic he stood firmly in opposition to this emergent issue. As this matter concerns the critical side of Poe, integral to his relation to the publishing industry, I judge appropriate to approach this topic before viewing specific samples of satire. This contrast between Poe’s stance and the national tendency to unconditionally acclaim American literature is exemplified by Fisher below:

> He [Poe] was different from many other American reviewers in his day because his critical writings, like his short stories, were modeled on those that had been appearing in such British literary periodicals as the *Edinburgh Review*, the *Quarterly Review*, *Blackwood’s Edinburgh Magazine* or *Fraser’s Magazine*. Reviews in those publications were frequently far more virulent than critiques by American reviewers tended to be. The tameness, by way of contrast, in many American book reviews resulted from the intense literary nationalism prevalent in the early nineteenth century. (100)

Fisher ties this phenomenon to cultural and logistical factors rather than ideological one, adding immediately after the previous quote that “Such nationalist sentiment sympathized with American writers’ lacking the centuries-long traditions of culture underlying European writing, so almost any book by an American was likely to receive a positive verdict” (101). Fisher also recalls that European books were cheaper to produce than American ones, so in case of reviews becoming more rigorous, authors from the new continent would become discouraged from creative writing (101). Such reasons are true, and they support the notion that American books were positively reviewed on a basis of national unity. Nevertheless, I would also draw attention to the ideological aspect of the matter. In the article "‘A Certain

Unity of Design", Faherty places the rise of this phenomenon specifically during President Jackson's term: "The surge of nationalism spawned by Jackson's populism generated an appetite for cultural texts that reflected the unique national character of the United States" (16). Furthermore, Faherty considers that editor John L. O'Sullivan was a key figure behind this spontaneous patriotic sentiment emerging in the realm of letters, as noted in the next extract:

> O'Sullivan zealously launched the Democratic Review in 1837 on the premise that if the Democratic Party lost control of the White House, "generations" would suffer an incalculable "loss of time in national progress." Even as he celebrated his party's allegiance to "the original ideas of American democracy," O'Sullivan lamented a widespread "anti-democratic sentiment," which had infected "the young minds of our country." The best way to combat this prevalent "anti- democratic" sentiment was through a new, nationalist literature. (16)

Confronted with this paradigm, Poe rejected exhortations to see a piece of literature in a better light just because of the fact that it was American, refusing any compliance with an idea of national literature to the detriment of his own critical standards. As Faherty states, "For Poe, the parochial zeal for promoting a national literature was a case of insular party politics overextending its reach" (16), and Poe' himself, in his "Drake-Halleck" review of 1836, criticised the cultural shift declaring that "this revolution is infinitely for the worse we believe" (9), described it as "misapplied patriotism" (10) and that "[We] often find ourselves involved in the gross paradox of liking a stupid book the better, because, sure enough, its stupidity is American" (10). A concrete example of Poe's modus operandi as a critic could be his review of the collection *Twice-Told Tales*, written by the famous author Nathaniel Hawthorne. Although Poe respected Hawthorne as a writer, he considered that the tales failed on the grounds that they did not conform with Poe's idea of appropiate length, as according to him, a piece of literature should be readable in a single sitting. This literary theory by Poe is developed in his essay "The Philosophy of Composition", where he explains:

> If any literary work is too long to be read at one sitting, we must be content to dispense with the immensely important effect derivable from unity of impression— for, if two sittings be required, the affairs of the world interfere, and every thing like totality is at once destroyed.

As Hawthorne's collection did not comply with this theory**,** Poe qualified the stories as lacking, challenging O'Sullivan's literary strategy by criticising the work of a renowned American author.

The satires found in this section will be those directed at the publishing industry and the literary marketplace, for which Poe had no less of an interest, as their mode of functioning and quirks deeply affected his life. Benjamin F. Fisher humorously classifies such quirks within the categories of "editorial practices, or malpractices", adding that Poe knew them "only too well" (58), much to Poe's distress.

The set of stories serves as a good introduction to their own particular subject, as their satirical scope is centred in a very particular market phenomenon related to the publishing industry, which was the sensationalist and faux-intellectual style of writing made popular by a certain magazine contemporary to Poe: *Blackwood's Magazine*. Because of the nature of this phenomenon being narrower in scope compared to the incoming set of satirical stories, which are based on Poe's broader experiences working in the literary sector, I see advisable to start with the satires orbiting around Blackwood first: "How to Write a Blackwood Article" and "A Predicament".

I have briefly outlined what could be known as the "Blackwood style" of article, but Allen offers a more detailed description:

> The *Blackwood's* formula remained an elitist one: it retained the air of exclusiveness and authority which had characterised the Reviews; it incorporated the curious and esoteric learning which was a feature of the more respectable older miscellanies like the *Gentleman's*, but it fused these elements into a more relaxed, personal, and intimate ethos which permitted the inclusion of more blatant sensationalism, literary gossip, and fiction for the less erudite reader. For all its affected elitism, the magazine was careful to maintain its relationship with the popular audience. (22-23)

How this writing formula was openly satirised by Poe can be even seen through the definite name of the first story: "How to Write a Blackwood Article". The protagonist in this tale, a lady by the name of Signora Psyche Zenobia offers her insight after being instructed by Mr. Blackwood himself on how to appropriately pen an article deserving of the *Blackwood's Magazine,* or as he expresses it; "a genuine Blackwood article of the sensation stamp" (360). Through Mr. Blackwood's earnest advice, satirical remarks against such style of writing will be abundant, one example being his plea made to Zenobia to write the details of her own

death; should she experiment a fatal accident, as it is prime writing material: “Sensations are the great things after all. Should you ever be drowned or hung, be sure and make a note of your sensations—they will be worth to you ten guineas a sheet” (359), imagination to portray the lethal episode can be used as a last resort, but Mr. Blackwood informs Zenobia that he prefers “that you have the actual fact to bear you out. Nothing so well assists the fancy, as an experimental knowledge of the matter in hand” (360). To this counsel, Signora Psyche Zenobia enthusiastically answers that she had “an excellent pair of garters” with which she could hang herself (360). Another unorthodox piece of advice is given when, apart from maintaining a general elevated tone, Mr. Blackwood implores her to indiscriminately use scholarly and classical terms on every occasion she finds (361); and specially, to use words from Foreign and Classical languages as often as possible, with Mr. Blackwood then proceeding to misquote Miguel de Cervantes as a demonstration (362).

Reuniting all this advice, Zenobia shows herself extremely grateful and embarks on writing her own Blackwood article; the result of which will be the next immediate story, “A Predicament”, acting as direct continuation of “How to Write a Blackwood Article” where Zenobia writes an episode ending in her own death. In this story Zenobia narrates the before, during and after of her own decapitation while utilising the Blackwood tropes recommended in the previous story. The fatal incident occurs when she gets her head trapped between the giant hands of a clock, after she inexplicably had the impulse to climb a clocktower (364) and put her head out of a hole in the wall (365) in order to appreciate the scenery of Edinburgh, where she had previously travelled to meet Mr. Blackwood. Zenobia revels on the details concerning her gruesome death (367), which does not stop her in any way from writing the article in question. Satirical elements alluded to in the previous story are directly embodied in Zenobia’s tale, such as the whole aspect of writing an article by deathly first-hand experience, the consistent melodramatic prose, obscure allusions to literature (364) or the misquotations in foreign languages, with Zenobia using Cervantes just as instructed (367). All the satirical advice given in “How to Write a Blackwood Article” is followed and portrayed in a “A Predicament”; and with both stories, Poe creates a two-part satire about the Blackwood trend of article in the literary market. One curiosity about an altogether different story, in which a character narrates the process of his own death, is that the subtitle in Poe’s story “Loss of Breath: A Tale Neither in Nor Out of 'Blackwood'” (1846) acts as a reference to this satirical trope related to *Blackwood* and present in this set of stories.

Throughout these three stories Poe denounces in a humorous way disagreeable aspects of the business he was familiar with, be it the state of the literary marketplace, the usual profile of its prominent figures, or several of those previously referred to as editorial malpractices (Fisher 58). As an example, in "The Literary Life of Thingum Bon, Esq." Poe will not hesitate to include open plagiarism, congenial magazines boasting each other's sales through overwhelmingly positive reviews, and the not so congenial ones doing the contrary by defaming a piece of writing exclusively because of its association with the competence. Although all the mentioned aspects are being treated in a satirical manner for comedic effect, Poe remains acutely aware of such tendencies which were almost everyday occurrences in his line of work.

In "Lionizing", Poe satirises the rapidly rising and lowering tides of acclaim magazine authors were subjected to, one day being exalted as a sort of poet laureate, and the next day falling into obscurity as a result of magazine politics, controversy or the ever-shifting trends of the market. Neither does Poe fail to depict the delusion and inflated ego that such pandered authors could experience. The literary satire is recognizable behind its most outlandish and ostensible elements. At surface level, "Lionizing" is a tale where the author protagonist occupies himself with the subject of nosology, not the actual medical domain by the same name but, as the protagonist explains to his father moments after being born: "the Science of Noses" (390). Notwithstanding, the extravagant piece still portrays Poe's real context, and more than anything else, his own observations about his colleagues. In *The Cambridge Companion to Edgar Allan Poe,* Kevin J. Hayes describes "Lionizing" as "an allegory of exhibitionism and megalomania about mediocre writers promoted to the status of the lionized literati" (65). Hayes refers the phenomenon of writers, oftentimes of dubious achievement, soaring in popularity overnight among literary circles. The recurrence of such event is something Poe intended to criticise in this story, and to accomplish the feat, he resorted to satire.

The tone for the story is already established within the first paragraph, with the absurd sentence "The first action of my life was the taking hold of my nose with both hands. My mother saw this and called me a genius. My father wept for joy, and bought me a treatise on Nosology" (390). The previously mentioned phenomenon of sudden popularity occurs when the protagonist, after writing his first pamphlet upon the subject, becomes instantly admired by various magazines such as the "Edinburgh" and "Blackwood" (391), the real-life counterpart of the latter already mentioned in this research. Exalted by critics and readers

alike, the nosologist is contacted by a Duchess and paid one thousand pounds "For his *nose*" (391), as the Duchess expresses, which translates into the Duchess becoming his patron and him joining her court of diverse intellectuals. When describing his performance in this new environment, the protagonist proceeds thus: "There was myself. I spoke of myself; — of myself, of myself, of myself; —of Nosology [,] of my pamphlet, and of myself. I turned up my nose and spoke of myself" (392). Captivating his aristocratic patrons and their guests alike with his knowledge of nosology, the narrator's courtly position seems to be guaranteed, but in a behaviour not uncharacteristic of Poe himself[2], the protagonist engages in a spiteful feud with a fellow intellectual and challenges him to a duel in which he shoots his nose. Scandal follows, resulting in the scarred person taking our protagonist's prestigious position. After the disgrace and fall from prominence, the protagonist's father summarises the situation. With this finishing speech, Poe is admonishing the reader about real situations in which a magazine author has come out the worse for engaging in controversy, or simply by attacking the wrong colleague in a strategic power play:

> [I]n hitting the Elector upon the nose you have overshot your mark. You have a fine nose, it is true; but then Bluddennuff has none. You are damned, and he has become the hero of the day. I grant you that in Fum-Fudge the greatness of a lion is in proportion to the size of his proboscis—but. Good Heavens! there is no competing with a lion who has no proboscis at all. (393)

"X-ing a Paragrab" focuses on the petty battles fought between competing magazines, pitted against each other in their strife to amass the greater share of a limited literary market. North/South tensions can also be felt in this tale, as the first of the two main agents in the story is a writer from New England, mocked for his condition as a Northerner by his adversary, an editor native to the town in which the conflict takes place. Hayes has this to say: "Another Poesque fable about the press bears on parochial controversies. "X-ing a Paragrab" depicts two competing newspapers in the city of Nopolis far 'out West'" (66). The story begins with a logical argument comparing the New England editor to the Three Wise Men from the Bible, since like the three magi he comes from the East and hence, just like the magi, he must be wise (410). However, Poe continues his description of this character declaring that "the only occasion on which he did not prove infallible, was when, abandoning

[2] One example of this erratic behaviour is when Poe had a fist fight with fellow writer Thomas Dunn English. Before the fight erupted, Poe had previously asked English to borrow a firearm, as he feared retaliations from a third person. For more details on the episode, consult page 150 of Edgar Allan Poe by Kevin J. Hayes.

that legitimate home for all wise men, the East, he migrated" (410). The reason given for this decision is that the editor thought the territory to lack magazines: "when he made up his mind finally to settle in that town, it was under the impression that no newspaper, and consequently no editor, existed in that particular section of the country" (410). But after finding the presence of an indigenous magazine, the editor immediately proceeds to enter a feud with his competence through an aggressive first article degrading his adversary: "and as for the editor of "The Gazette," he was torn all to pieces in particular" (410-411). Picking the low-hanging fruit, the Gazette's editor responds by mocking the overuse of the letter O in such article, a critique which "ironically points to the circular reasoning of a Yankee carried off by sounds instead of pondering over meaning" (Hayes 65), with the Western editor declaring that "We really do not believe the vagabond can write a word that hasn't an O in it" (411). As the spiteful interactions between the two magazines continue, the New England editor proposes to create an ingenious response using the letter O in every single word, with a tone reminiscent of "a mock-heroic Shakespearian historical play" (Hayes 66). But the local editor anticipated such course of events and preventively sabotaged him, by removing the letter O from the press. Before this dilemma, the foreman simply decides to use an X instead of an O, setting the edited result to be released thereafter. This decision has catastrophic consequences, as the publication of the "mystical and cabalistical" (413) article sends the entire town into a state of panic. At some point during the frenzy, the New England editor flees the town for fear of being lynched, and thus the feud ends. Leaving the local editor as the sole victor in the conflict, and able to keep the entirety of the magazine market as his spoils of war.

The following, rather than satirising an isolated aspect of the magazine industry, sets out to portray the broader experience of living in that trade. This feat is accomplished through a story spanning the entire career of a magazine editor whose successes and most importantly, failures, are very reminiscent of those experienced by Edgar Allan Poe himself. "The Literary Life of Thingum Bob, Esq." can be set against the background I have described: the precarious condition of writers, underhanded publishing tactics, and a period of uncertain economic transition in which a form of nationalistic literature begins to be cultivated. As the most comprehensive satire of the US literary scene, it is not strange that Poe's original title for the work was "Memoranda to Serve for the Literary History of America" (Kennedy 14). Apart from capturing a specific period in the United States' literary history and satirise the magazine industry, the work acts as an autobiography of Poe's own career as an author,

where Poe's own condition as a poet who had to resort to criticism for sustenance acts as a convenient motif for the subjects satirised.

Part of the story is characterised once again by hyperbole and absurd statements, satirising the illusory and self-attributed importance whom magazine editors gave themselves. Examples can be seen as soon as the text starts, with the editor protagonist comparing himself to William Shakespeare and thus beginning his memoirs: "I am now growing in years, and—since I understand that Shakespeare and Mr. Emmons are deceased—it is not impossible that I may even die" (376). Several other instances reinforce this delusion, such as how he explains his decision to write an account of his life because it is "the duty of him who achieves greatness, to leave behind him, in his ascent, such landmarks as may guide others to be great" (377). The profession of editor is exalted to a degree by which the narrator acknowledges that he, when a child, regarded them with "veneration and awe", admitting that he "regarded them as Gods" (377). When he eventually decides to become a poet and editor, announcing his refusal to continue the family business, his father sees this course of action with positive eyes against all built expectations, as according to him, the profession of editor is more prestigious than that of a lawyer or politician. To such encouragement, the son and protagonist humbly replies with "Your generosity is boundless. I will repay it by making you the father of a genius" (377). In the protagonist's beginnings as a poet, the first on a series of usual editorial malpractices is ironically represented, and the malpractice in question is plagiarism. Before a creative block, the poet-in-progress decides to take random passages from canonical works like *The Divine Comedy*, *The Iliad* and *Paradise Lost* (without acknowledging any of these pieces) in order to pass them as his own. But if the idea of a writer blatantly plagiarizing the Western Canon is reason enough for satire, what is to come is even more so: magazines refuse to publish his work not on the grounds of plagiarism, as they neither recognise the source material, but by reason of these magazines qualifying the canonical writing as trash, advocating that it pales in comparison to any text written by their own contributors (378-379). Neither do they lose the opportunity to defame competitors through their response, invariably saying that such mediocre material would be more suitable for other magazines, names included. This spiteful environment between competing magazines can also be perceived when later in the narrative, Thingum meets the chief editor Mr. Crab, as this will diminish another editor through the following description: "He was a villain. He had composed a tragedy which set the whole country in a guffaw, and a farce which deluged the universe in tears" (381). Facing such rejection of his first literary attempt,

Thingum experiments with originality and decides to write a single, extremely simple couplet under a new pseudonym. The two lines of uninspired poetry are an instant success, and afford Thingum the opportunity to enter the editorial world, with him considering this disproportionate good fortune "scarcely more than justice" for his efforts. However, with his entrance into the industry, Thingum discovers a very real malady suffered by writers, that of poverty. While there is a widespread admiration of Mr. Crab and his magazine's payment rates (382), the moment Thingum dares to mention the word "remuneration", the chief editor reacts by almost fainting, and then he immediately grabs a cudgel.

Hesitantly avoiding violence, Mr. Crab ultimately decides to persuade the young writer based on his inexperience and the poem being his first ever publication; thus Thingum is dissuaded from being paid. In many aspects which concern his career throughout the story, Thingum follows the steps of the actual Poe. Like his real-life counterpart, Thingum redirects his writing to the domain of criticism despite his original sensitivity for poetry. Furthermore, Thingum is encouraged by his editor to play, as he calls it, the role of "Thomas Hawk", reminiscent of the nickname "Tomahawk Man", which Poe himself received as mentioned in the preceding section. In the words of Mr. Crab, "by "playing tomahawk" he referred to scalping, brow-beating and otherwise using-up the herd of poor-devil authors" (385). In a direct reflection of Poe's own life, Thingum becomes consumed by the role of critic; he is given "a permanent situation as Thomas Hawk of the 'Lollipop,'" (386) yet he remains in poverty. However, Thingum's subsequent success appears to be achieved when, through multiple forms of pandering, stratagems and schemes, he manages to barely sustain himself. Having achieved this, Thingum considers himself to have reached the greatest heights of the literary world, and immediately proceeds to retire from business, writing his memoirs to guide future writers.. The tendencies and malpractices depicted in these stories tended to be general custom and could be found anywhere in the industry. No matter whether Poe worked in magazines from Southern or Northern states, his condition as a precarious author would not greatly differ, as demonstrated by his own experience. The next thematic focus in this project is Poe's relationship with his political context, and the satires resulted from such. These new sets of stories are to be introduced in the following section after some general context is offered.

4. POE IN HIS MILIEU: POLITICS, DEMOCRACY AND MOB RULE

To understand Poe's stance on political matters, be it about specific persons in power, or the general spirit of his era—a zeitgeist of rapid social change and an unprecedented democratic sentiment—it is first necessary to become acquainted with the developments taking place in the White House, as they affected the political climate which Poe would later condemn through his satire.

Andrew Jackson's presidency, from 1829 to 1837, marked what is known as the Jacksonian era: a period defined by an extension of democratic rights to the country's citizens. Wilentz describes the President as a "frontiersman" of humble and even rough origin and mannerisms, who gained prestige through his military exploits in the 1812 war against Britain, and was particularly endowed with a hatred of aristocratic elitism (9-10). Though controversial for this behaviour, Jackson's nearness to the newly materialized average voter granted him overwhelming political success. Even his opposition, the members of the party known as Whigs, whose ambition was to maintain a more rigid social and cultural hierarchy which they nostalgically associated with the old Republican ways, were aware of that success. And the mutual realisation among opposing parties led to an evolution on their political strategy, by which both sides made every effort to sway this new potential voter base, resorting to demagogy if necessary. Meyers aptly describes how the process developed, and how the otherwise spiritually aristocratic Whigs adapted themselves to this new paradigm:

> As never before, the parties spoke directly, knowingly, to the interests and feelings of the public. The Jacksonians initiated much of the change in the instruments and methods of popular democracy; they adopted new party ways with a natural ease and competence which earned them some electoral advantage; the Whigs understandably resented their success, and quickly followed their example. (8)

Poe's reaction to this new form of democracy was one of pure contempt. Although not unconditionally, it could be said that Poe ideologically sympathised with the Whigs on a number of issues, particularly in contrast to the Democratic party. However, he was still wary of this new form of populism regardless of the political party from which it emerged. Above all, Poe considered that this new form of government, dependent on the uneducated mass, could pose a great threat to the long-term future of the country, and ultimately give place to irrationality, political dishonesty and mob rule. Quoting Poe himself, Marchand in "Poe as

Social Critic" describes this position, advocating that "Being the intellectual aristocrat that he was, Poe despised the rabble with its "excitable, undisciplined, and childlike . . . mind," and heaped scorn upon it early and late. Democracy was merely an attempt to give "the obtuse in intellect" power over their betters" (41). Because of this, it should not be surprising that this contemporary form of democracy, with its always latent possibility of devolving into mob rule according to Poe, was one of the main subjects of satire he wrote about.

However, before writing satire addressing this bigger picture, Poe first concerned himself with stories satirising specific figures who were playing a part in it. In particular, I am referring to the stories written about Vice-President Richard M. Johnson, President Martin Van Buren, and President Jackson himself. The stories in question are "Four Beasts in One: The Homo-Cameleopard", "King Pest", "The Devil in the Belfry" and "The Man That Was Used Up". One extra nuance I would like to add however is that Poe's reason to compose satire specifically aimed at these famous political figures was primarily a self-interested one, at least that directed at President Van Buren and Vice-President Johnson. As mentioned in the first section, during this period Poe was trying to stay on good terms with the politician and future president John Tyler looking to secure a work position as a clerk, and through it escape the economic precarity he suffered when working for magazines. Once hopes about the matter were destroyed, however, Poe broadened his satiric scope to what he perceived to be the intrinsic faults of American democracy. This general satire can be appreciated in a different set of stories, among which "Some Words with a Mummy", "The Sphinx", "The Colloquy of Monos and Una" and "Mellonta Tauta".

As a reflection of Poe's career and his chronology of publications, we will first treat the stories satirising individuals, and as the most influential person on the political climate of his era, the stories concerning President Andrew Jackson will take precedence. Although "King Pest" predates "Four Beast in One: The Homo-Cameleopard" in publication by one year, being published in 1835 and 1836 respectively, I consider that the satirical elements of the latter are more straightforward, therefore I choose to start with the story "Four Beast in One" to ease the subject.

Despite the ancient oriental setting, the monarch in this story is portrayed as sharing the same physical traits of the US President. Whipple notes the intentional similarity and symbolic connection: "The King of Syria becomes a tall, lanky individual like Jackson" (84). Furthermore, Whipple considers the animal race organised by the Syrian king in the story as

being an allegory of presidential elections, and he interprets the king's concubines as a satirical attack based on rumours of a presumed affair between Andrew Jackson and Peggy Eaton, a confidant of the President (84). Hayes ties some of the satire found in the story to Jackson's populist tendencies by highlighting the fact that "The King of Antioch disguises himself as a giraffe to be worshipped by his dumb subjects on the streets" (64). Based on the idea that this story approaches broader political issues which would be developed in future satiric works, Hayes concludes that in this "allegory of Jacksonian democracy, Poe's tale addresses the issues of propaganda and mob rule" (64). Allegorical aspects aside, I consider the Syrian king's mocking portrayal done by Poe to be a satirical examination of President Jackson, and I note that this occurrence was not exclusive to "Four Beast in One: The Homo-Cameleopard", but was present in "King Pest" as well, through the figure of King Pest the First.

The next story, "King Pest", follows the same lines of "Four Beasts in One": A physical description of a leader character resembling Jackson and the presence of other characters related to his associates. Whipple once again notes the resemblance of a decadent leading character to Jackson: "King Pest is tall, gaunt, emaciated, with a high forehead. One needs only to look at the cartoons of Jackson to realize how closely the description fits" (86). But in "King Pest", Whipple also emphasises how "the revelers strongly suggest political figures close to Jackson" (86). Through the satiric portrayal of the characters who compose King Pest's court, Peggy Eaton is once again alluded to, described as a "delicate little creature" with a consumptive complexion and a very long nose (299). However, this time she is accompanied by Jackson's wife, noted by the narrator immediately after King Pest himself, and described as the complete physical opposite of the character inspired by Eaton, exaggeratingly on the corpulent side (299). Alongside them, there is a handful of three other characters who represent politicians and supporters of Jackson's administration, each particularly satirised based on their physical traits, background and relationship with the President. Alongside "Four Beasts in One", this satirical story shows Poe's condemn of President Jackson and his administration. Apart from satirising the figure by itself, in both stories Poe is coating the respective characterization of the President in an atmosphere of decadence which the author associated with Jackson's political leadership.

The next political figure to be satirised by Poe is Martin Van Buren, former Vice-President under Jackson's administration who later succeeded Jackson as President of the United States. As, at this moment, Poe was still currying favours with political candidate John Tyler

for the clerkship post, Van Buren supposed a prime target for the writer's satire. This political compromise through satire was realised in the form of "The Devil in the Belfry", a story settled in the Dutch borough of Vondervotteimittiss which is specialised in the production of clocks and cabbages, and whose citizens are obsessed with maintaining the present state of things (394-395). The borough however begins to be tormented by a devil, described as a "little personage" elegantly dressed and with a histrionic grin (396), who sabotages the most important object in the entire borough: the clock of the belfry found in the town-council steeple from which all the citizens synchronise their own clocks (397).

"The Devil in the Belfry" is political allegory in which, like the satire against Jackson, an antagonistic character is described with the mannerisms and physical traits of the American President: "We see in the little devil who bows and pirouettes, whose hair is tied in curlpapers, who is constantly smiling and seems so self-satisfied, a delightful parody of Van Buren's dandyism and consciously acquired courtly mannerisms" (Whipple 90). To further build the correlation between this devil and Van Buren, Poe uses the nickname "Flying Dutchman" to address the imp, perfectly aware of Van Buren's Dutch origins. But apart from Van Buren per se, Poe in this story also satirises how he considered Van Buren's presidential career. To give an example following Faherty, the first on a set of fundamental laws applied in the Dutch borough where the story takes place, reacts against any alteration of the established course of events; according to Faherty (13), this rule "encapsulates Van Buren 's strategy as he campaigned to succeed Jackson in the 1836 election". Through the satire of an entire village blindly following a rule which leads to total stagnation, Poe is mocking Van Buren's philosophy of continuity concerning Jackson's political legacy. The story's connection to President Van Buren is further expressed in its final paragraph, which could be read as an appeal from Poe, made in the light of approaching U.S. elections, with the objective of overthrowing President Van Buren, preferably with John Tyler taking his place: "Let us proceed in a body to the borough, and restore the ancient order of things in Vondervotteimittiss by ejecting that little fellow from the steeple" (397).

The last story of this satirical set focuses on Van Buren's Vice-President, Richard M. Johnson, and how his status as a war hero was manipulated and iconised in an effort to appeal to the voters' feelings. Before his Vice-Presidency, Colonel Johnson was shot and gravely wounded in a battle fought against the Native Americans, his unlikely survival gained him national renown and the status of a war hero, and with his affiliation to the Democratic party, he eventually became one of its most powerful symbols. However, Johnson's ideological

mythification clashed in some details with his factual condition. With the goal of promoting this national legend, a narrative divulged by media (Whipple 92) was that Johnson had perfectly recovered despite the grave wounds, yet differing witnesses affirmed, on the contrary, that they had seen Colonel Johnson in crutches and deeply mutilated (92). Apart from Poe being interested on attacking Vice-President Johnson for the reasons already discussed, this contradiction between reality and false ideological narrative, born from political interest, is where "The Man That Was Used Up" originates from. When interpreting the story, Faherty sees the fictional version of the colonel as an embodiment of Jacksonian ideology: "Disdainful of the past and profoundly optimistic about the future, the fictitious General Smith of "The Man That Was Used Up" mirrors the familiar tropes of Jacksonian era politicians, journalists, and venture capitalists alike" (14). But it is Whipple who openly acknowledges Vice-President Johnson as the true subject of Poe's satire, reasoning his arguments on the extremely close parallelisms between the army men:

> When we compare the military career of Vice-President Johnson with Poe's satire we are struck, even at this distance in time, with the obvious similarities: the swamp fight, the prodigies of valor, the shattered body. Any one of these clues was probably sufficient to insure a correct interpretation of the satire by people already beginning to warm to the personalities who made the 1840 campaign a bonfire of political emotionalism. (93)

From "The Man That Was Used Up" onwards, Poe would stop writing satire aimed at specific political figures, a plausible reason for this being that, once his prospects of working as a clerk were ruined, he no longer needed to appeal to a specific party, nor demonstrate his affiliation through his writing. Instead, Poe would use satire as an approach to the maladies brought, in his view, by the consolidation of Jacksonian democracy in the United States. This shift in satire is reflected in the next set of stories: "Some Words with a Mummy", "The Sphinx", "The Colloquy of Monos and Una" and "Mellonta Tauta".

With this next set of stories, a chronological order of presentation with certain liberties again proves a reasonable approach, as the first published story, "Some Words with a Mummy", conveniently serves to illustrate the newly expanded range of political satire written by Poe. The exception to this chronological arrangement is "The Colloquy of Monos and Una", placed as a bridge between "The Sphinx" and "Mellonta Tauta" despite being the earliest story, published in 1841. Such arrangement has been decided by reason of judging "Some

Words with a Mummy" as a better introduction to the satirical themes portrayed in this set of stories.

"Some Words with a Mummy" questions democracy and Anglo-Saxon civilization, and the main agent of this satire will be none other than an ancient Egyptian mummy named Allamistakeo who, coincidentally, views all new advancements brought by Anglo-Saxon culture as a mistake. The narrative consists in a discussion between the mummy in question, suddenly reanimated as a reaction to being electrocuted in jest, and the group of gentlemen who performed this electrocution (514). These cultivated individuals, who specialise in different domains of science, will then repeatedly try to demonstrate to Allamistakeo the undeniable superiority of their knowledge in comparison to that of his primitive time, only then for the mummy to easily render all these new advances "trivial or absurd" (Long 4). Kennedy also illustrates this clash felt by the American thinkers when "Their illusions of Anglo-Saxon progress and mastery, sustained by the successive boasts that comprise their argument, collapse before incontrovertible evidence of Egyptian scientific and technological prowess" (25), concluding that "In this singular tale, a dark-skinned embodiment of ancient learning defies an emerging myth of American supremacy, his exquisite and articulate corpse a reproach to the fantasy of national destiny and racial dominance" (25). The critique of democracy made by the ancient Egyptian is particularly hurtful to American sensitivities, as Allamistakeo, when informed of the concept of politics and democracy, associates the latter with a catastrophic event he witnessed during his time. Allamistakeo then proceeds to narrate a political experiment, not unlike democracy, made by thirteen Egyptian colonies which ended in the most brutal form of despotism ever conceived by mankind. When the narrator, positively alarmed, exhorts the mummy to reveal who was the "usurping tyrant" who corrupted this political experiment, Allamistakeo answers that as well as he could recollect, their name was "Mob" (522). With this political analogy eerily similar to the history of the thirteen American colonies, Poe satirises what he considered the most blatant flaw of democracy as a form of government, while also implying a very bleak future for the United States. With this fatidic revelation, and the futile attempts made to impress the mummy, trying in vain to reassure him of the modern feats accomplished by Americans, the narrator mentally falls apart. The story ends with him deciding to be embalmed like Allamistakeo in order to see what the future might bring. By use of this bizarre personal decision that concludes the story, Poe again brings attention and satirises the subject of democracy, as our protagonist's biggest anxiety concerning the future is nothing but "who will be president in

2045” (522). Apart from reinforcing the satirical aspect of the plot, this doubt echoes, as Long phrases it, “Poe's general disillusionment with modern democracy; Now he [the narrator] exposes the banality of his own disillusionment by taking an avid interest in the future of the democratic process" (11).

Comparable to Allasmistakeo’s grim musings about democracy, the subsequent stories too are akin to this same line of political satire. Following the Egyptian motif, the next story is named “The Sphinx”, and likewise, the subject of democracy is mentioned. Although the foreground conflict is the presence of a horrible monster which is revealed to be no more than a mere insect, a by-product of the paranoid protagonist experiencing an optical illusion (319), Poe relates this failure to ascertain the true dimension of a phenomenon to the topic of democracy, and its possible consequences for humanity. Although a subtler form of satire by part of Poe, proof of this correlation is the narrator’s friend explicitly mentioning the potential effects of democracy in relation to this specific issue:

> [T]he principal source of error in all human investigations, lay in the liability of the understanding to under-rate or to overvalue the importance of an object, through mere misadmeasurement of its propinquity. "To estimate properly, for example," he said, "the influence to be exercised on mankind at large by the thorough diffusion of Democracy, the distance of the epoch at which such diffusion may possibly be accomplished, should not fail to form an item in the estimate. (318)

I interpret the satire and themes found in “The Sphinx” as Poe creating a cautionary tale about miscalculating the true impact of democracy, and the failing to envision its looming consequences for the United States. Bachinger supports the same conclusion: “it seems more likely that Poe regarded the admirers of democracy as those with a vision too weak to see its far away consequences, those who failed to recognize democracy as an omen of doomsday” (224).

If “The Sphinx” shared similarities with “Some Words with a Mummy” in regard to satirising the subject of democracy, “The Colloquy of Monos and Una” does the same plus satirising the fallacy of progress. While the story leans into the poetical, being a conversation between two reunited lovers formerly parted by death, it is situated in the near future, and Poe’s supernatural characters do not hesitate to make some remarks about the so-called improvement brought by modern society. Monos tells his lover: “You will remember that one or two of the wise among our forefathers— wise in fact, although not in the world's

esteem—had ventured to doubt the propriety of the term "improvement," as applied to the progress of our civilization" (120). Another example, this time with a direct allusion to democracy, is seen through Monos' lamentation: "Among other odd ideas, that of universal equality gained ground; and in the face of analogy and of God—in despite of the loud warning voice of the laws of gradation so visibly pervading all things in Earth and Heaven—wild attempts at an omniprevalent Democracy were made" (121). Monos and Una's story shows that Poe's range of satire could greatly vary, from the more conspicuous found in the previous stories to a subtler example of satire which can lean towards the allegorical, such as in this case.

The last story of this section, and very late publication in Poe's corpus of work, "Mellonta Tauta", thematically culminates a variety of subjects which Poe contended through his political satire: Jacksonian democracy, its pervasive effect on the United States, and the illusion of progress. Set one thousand years into the future, a character named Pundita reflects on the ancient civilization that she knows as "Amiriccans". What separates this story from other pieces of science fiction among Poe's work is that, when Pundita speculates about this enigmatic group of people who settled beyond the Atlantic a thousand years ago, she is all the while mocking their ideas about equality and self-government, contemporary to Poe. A prime example of this is seen Pundita's reaction when her travel companion, Pundit, tries to explain the idea of democracy to her:

> He has been occupied all the day in the attempt to convince me that the ancient Amiriccans governed themselves! —did ever anybody hear of such an absurdity? . . . He says that they started with the queerest idea conceivable, viz: that all men are born free and equal . . . Every man "voted," as they called it — that is to say, meddled with public affairs — until, at length, it was discovered that what is everybody's business is nobody's, and that the "Republic" (so the absurd thing was called) was without a government at all. (593)

Pundita continues to reflect on this ancient form of government, postulating that the philosophers that conceived it must have, at some point, realised that "universal suffrage gave opportunity for fraudulent schemes" and inevitably, "rascality must predominate—in a word, that a republican government could never be anything but a rascally one" (593). Just like Allasmistakeo, Pundita concludes that "the matter was put to an abrupt issue by a fellow of the name of Mob, who took every thing into his own hands and set up a despotism" (593).

By Pundita disclosing this, Poe illustrates through satire the same argument asserted in "Some Words with a Mummy": The inevitability of democracy devolving into tyranny, wielded by those willing to take advantage of the American form of government.

Poe's anti-democratic sentiment was not born in a vacuum, but it surfaced as a reaction to the material, political and cultural context of America during his period: with Jackson's permanent effect on the political framework of the country, and ideas concerning equality, economic liberalism and progress becoming rooted on the American consciousness, Poe was worried about the majority potentially supressing the individual. His political satire is the trace of Poe's scepticism when facing a grand narrative of progress born during his own lifetime, a scepticism aptly depicted from a letter written to James Russell Lowell, in 1844: "I have no faith in human perfectibility . . . Man is now only more active — not more happy — nor more wise, than he was 6000 years ago".

5. CONCLUSION

As observed through the stories used as samples throughout this research, pertaining the literary and political sphere contemporary to the author, and approached with thoughtful consideration of the author's personal and historical context; it can be appreciated that Edgar Allan Poe was indeed deeply concerned about the unfolding circumstances of his milieu, and satire was oftentimes the main device utilised to address the depicted issue. A further nuance to add is that Poe's satire is not in the least limited to the two main topics shown in this project. While the included stories have been selected based on the common overarching themes of their satire, and their intrinsic connection to Poe's own life, there exists a wider variety of examples about other, altogether different subjects. While those varied examples of Poe's satire won't receive a closer treatment here, they can foster and give place to further discussion, as one strength of this research has been the amount of primary material by Poe which has been consulted.

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