

**The *New Ladies* of Poe:
Reshaping the View of the Poesque Woman
Through Parody**

By
Amira-Sabrin Mahmoud



ENG350
Master's Thesis
Department of Foreign Languages
University of Bergen
May 2020

Abstract in Norwegian

Denne oppgaven utforsker bruken av parodi i to av Edgar Allan Poe noveller «Three Sundays in a Week» og «The Spectacles». Jeg knytter disse to novellene opp mot kjønnssubversjon som jeg påstår er en stor del av betydningen bak fremstillingen av de ulike karakterene. Kvinnene i disse tekstene spiller en annen rolle enn de vanlige kvinnene vi finner i Poe litteratur, spesielt i forhold til de mest kjente *Dark Ladies*. «The Spectacles» og «Three Sundays in a Week» klarer gjennom det parodiske elementet å åpne et nytt blikk på en del av Poes forfatterskap som de fleste kritikere innenfor feltet har oversett eller ikke valgt å analysere. Jeg vil i denne oppgaven undersøke grunnen til hvorfor disse to novellene har blitt glemt bort, samtidig som jeg vil analysere dem for å finne ut hva de egentlig handler om. Jeg kommer til å gjøre rede for hva som kritikere mener en vanligvis finner i kvinnene i Poes tekster, *idealet* hans, for å kunne ha en oversikt over hvordan Kate og Madame Lalande, hovedkvinnene i tekstene, skiller seg ut.

I analysekapitlene, som tar for seg begge novellene hver for seg, bruker jeg fire analysevinkler som kan bli delt inn i kategorier. 1. Den direkte kilden for inspirasjon som ble brukt, med andre ord hvor Poe fikk ideen til å skrive parodien. 2. Hvordan livet til Poe relaterer seg til selve handlingen og hvem karakterene kan gjenspeile. 3. Bruken av parodi som en kjønnssubversjon. 4. Hvordan en eventyr-vinkel kan hjelpe med å forstå makt hierarkiet mellom kjønnene. Ved å samle ulike analysevinkler og bruke dem på begge novellene får oppgaven en mer nyansert tolkning på hvordan kvinnene har blitt illustrert av Poe. Jeg foreslår en tolkning hvor Poes forfatterskap ikke har blitt grundig utforsket, hvor denne kjønnssubversjonen gjennom parodi ikke har blitt inkludert som en del. Mangelen på kritiske artikler revolvert rundt «The Spectacles» og «Three Sundays in Week» er sentralt, men det er lesingen som parodi bringer ut som er i hovedfokus.

Acknowledgements

First and foremost, I want to thank my supervisor Lene M. Johannessen who supported me and gave me guidance this last year. Without you my Poesque breakdowns would have been the ending point for me. I would also like to give thanks to all the people in the MA *readingsaloon* for hour long coffee “breaks” that helped me regroup.

A big thanks to my parents for always supporting me, my mum for making me laugh when I needed it the most and my dad for making me feel loved no matter what. Thank you for all the kind words and love sent from the other side of the country, it meant the world.

Thank you to my partner who without any knowledge of Poe still let me rant for hours and hours, and still managed to make me feel better. Thank you.

Lastly, special thanks goes to my friends; the ones I roped into study sessions, the ones who were there with wine and encouragements, and of course all those Mondays where I could recharge for the rest of the week. You are all 10 out of 10.

Thank you all for supporting me through this love affair with an 19th Century drunk and literary genius.

“be the

unlikable

woman

protagonist

(synonyms:

bitch,

realistic,

manhero)

all the

men

just love to

complain about.

It’s so much more fun that way, isn’t it? “

(Amanda Lovelace, 2018)

Table of Contents

Abstract in Norwegian	iii
Acknowledgements	iv
Table of Contents	v
Introduction The Typical Poesque Women and the Rare Ones	1
<i>The Dark Ladies</i> of Poe.....	3
“ <i>Never Heard of Them</i> ”: The Lesser Known.....	13
Overview of My Approach.....	15
Chapter 1: Humour as Opposition: Connection Between Poe’s Ladies and the Use of Parody	11
Introduction.....	11
Self-Parody and Reflexivity	15
Poe and Parody.....	16
Chapter 2: The P(oe)radical Gender Performances in “Three Sundays in a Week”	24
Introduction.....	24
The Direct Source of Inspiration.....	27
Mirrored Characters and Relationships.....	29
<i>The Tense Familial Relationship Between the Men</i>	29
<i>Love (and Marry) thy Cousin</i>	31
Subversion Through Kate’s Parodic Performances.....	32

<i>“We musn’t forget the plum”</i> : Agency and Subversion	34
Chapter 3: The Parodic Spectacle in Poe’s “The Spectacles”	38
Introduction.....	38
Tale of Two Portraits.....	41
Love is Blind (Until You Get a Pair of Spectacles”)	45
The Parodic <i>Spectacle</i>	48
The Villainous Hero.....	49
Chapter 4: Putting on the Parodical <i>Spectacles</i>	52
Introduction.....	52
Wicked or Whip-Smart Women?	55
The Significance of Subversion.....	59
Bibliography	62

Introduction: The Typical Poesque Women and the Rare Ones

Edgar Allan Poe is mostly known for his literary works of the grotesque and the macabre, and his authorship is fully cemented in that genre. What is interesting to note is that more often than not, there is a woman at the core of these works, where she is dying or already dead. If we look at the statistics from Elien Martens' MA thesis research in "The Representation of Women in the Works of Edgar Allan Poe" on the number of women in Poe's works, she concludes that 54% of his poems include or mention a female character (2013, 7). The percentage of the appearance of female characters is even higher in Poe's works of prose, with 73% who she claims to either have a smaller or larger role (2013, 8). If we only focus on women who play what Martens calls a 'considerable part' in the tale, the percentage goes down to 46% (2013, 8). Martens does not specify what she means by 'considerable part' but one can speculate that she both means women who are somehow included in the work in a way that has impact on either the plot or the narrator, and women who have a speaking voice. As I am going to look at specific short stories with female characters, I will need to first understand the typical Poesque woman and what that includes such as the characteristics that typically are found as well as the typical appearance. Later we will also briefly look closer at Poe's more popular *Dark Ladies* tales before introducing the female characters this thesis focuses on; Kate from "Three Sundays In A Week" and Madame Lalande from "The Spectacles". If we go by Martens categorisations these two women belong in the category of women with a considerable part. Compared to this, Floyd Stovall claims them to be less of importance (Stovall 1925). Through the theory of parody, I will show how they are more than what other scholars have given them credit for. The female characters are the protagonists of their tales, and thus need to be analysed in their own chapters. I will suggest that by focusing on parodic elements a new way of reading female characters in Poe is introduced and leads to a changed perspective of his authorship.

Many scholars have over the years tried to divide Poe's fictional women into different categories, be it based on their appearance or their relationship to the male narrators. The most known categorisations are those from Floyd Stovall in his article "The Women of Poe's Poems and Tales" from 1925 which focuses on dividing them into classified groups based on their portrayal. Karen Weekes in "Poe's feminine ideal" has focused on the dead or dying

female characters and how they impact the male narrators. Martens has both looked at the popular *Dark Ladies* as well as the lesser known “intelligent women” (2013, 45). I, however, believe that there is a gap when it comes to the female characters in Poe scholarship and that some have been miscategorised as they are far more than first believed. “Three Sundays in a Week” and “The Spectacles” introduce a new type of female character, a new category, and I will try to show this in later chapters through contemporary parody. Before that however, we need to briefly understand the existing categories created by some scholars. Stovall’s research on female characters in Poe writing is arguably the most referenced in Poe scholarships. It has paved the way for many to re-examine his characterisations and create their own, like Martens does in her MA research paper.

The female characters and the real women in Poe’s life have often been compared and scholars have more often than not drawn parallels between them. Many argue that they become representations in some form or another of real women such as his young fiancé Virginia Clemm, her mother Marie Clemm, both his real mother Elizabeth Arnold Hopkins Poe and his foster mother Frances Allan as well as other female writers he corresponded with (Martens 2013, Stovall 1925, Weekes 2002, Lockwood 2013). And that is to just mention a few. I will also in later chapters suggest that other women who Poe did not know personally also were featured in some form in his writing. It is not a surprise then that women in general were a source of inspiration for Poe, especially as he was from a young age surrounded by women. Martens notes however that one cannot fully argue that the female characters in his poetry and prose were only based on real women as she believes it leads to it being a “[r]eal disservice” to his work “by the assumption, perennial and predicable as spring peepers, that his works are simple keys to his biography”(Martens 2013, 10). Whereas we can claim that the female characters in for example “Elenora”, “Annabel Lee” and the like were inspired by Virginia Clemm, there is more to these characters than just their fleeting resemblance. Much more could be said about this and we will revisit the theory later in the chapter. But for now, we can conclude that while the real women who were part of Poe’s life played a role in his writing, they were not the women we read about in his tales.

Stovall introduces another theory based on where Poe may have gotten the inspiration for his female characters from. He suggests that many of these female characters, in both poetry and prose, were reflections of Poe’s own personality or arguably traits he himself wished to have (1925, 197). Some of these traits were his heroines’ mental erudition and the devoted love they depicted. Stovall further backs this up by stating that Poe “liked to endow his women with faculties of mind and heart which he possessed or longed to possess” (1925,

208). Lorine Pruette agrees with Stovall and claims that Poe's "emotional interest lay in himself" in her article "A Psycho-Analytical Study of Edgar Allan Poe" (1920, 380). The female character Ligeia in the short story by the same name is who Stovall uses as an example of someone who is a representation of Poe. According to him, "her personal beauty, analytic mind, immense learning, powerful will, and supreme love were qualities which Poe himself possessed in varying degrees" and she "surpassed him most in will-power and in love" (1925, 208). In her, Poe managed to include both what he longed for and what he assumed he had. It can thus be said that the women in Poe's writing were portrayed in a way where Poe could idealise himself, where he could both romanticise traits he found attractive as well as the ones he believed he himself possessed. Joan Dayan agrees in her article "Amorous Bondage: Poe, Ladies, and Slaves" by stating that the women are "types for Poe himself" (1994, 4). By looking at these theories by Poe scholars, one can see that Poe's real life played an important part in his authorship, be it in relation to women in his life or he himself as an individual. I agree to some degree with these statements as we do get to learn more about Poe by analysing his writing, but there is more to his female characters than the resemblance and their biographical inspiration.

The Poesque woman, or Poe's feminine ideal, has many critics in agreement but also in disagreement. Some like Weekes argue that the helpless maiden with the fair hair and the big eyes is the ideal (2002, 152), while others argue that the raven-haired women with long foreheads and melodic voices are what is most Poesque of the female characters (Stovall 1925). While it is hard to conclude what his ideal is, we can state that many of the female characters in Poe's works are "very much alike in appearance and in character" (Stovall 1925, 197). Stovall claims that most share what he calls "classic features" that are "associated usually [with] a queenly stature, pallid brow, bright eyes, and a musical voice" (1925, 197). There are also two types of hair, either very fair almost yellow or very dark, but it is "almost always curly" (1925, 197). Weekes agrees with Stovall by stating that there are two different *types*¹ of women that can be found in Poe's poetry and prose. Poetic women in his poems are the ones with the fair hair or eyes, and the dark ladies found in his prose are the ones who share the black hair and dark eyes (2002, 152). She further states that Poe's feminine ideal is not a specific character from one of his works but rather that he "idealizes the vulnerability of a

¹ *Types* here refers to a group of women who share the same characteristics and appearance. In a way, they become stereotypes of women found in Poe. However, it is important to note that there are other *types* of women in his works.

woman” (2002, 148) and that specific vulnerability can be often found in the tales of the Dark Ladies. Stovall, as mentioned, agrees but he states that the embodiment of his female ideal lies in the character of Ligeia (1925, 202). Works that include the dark ladies are some of Poe’s most popular tales and can be argued to include the most Poesque women of them all. Martens claims that this is because the Dark Ladies “have been so frequently investigated that they often represent the epitomes of ‘Poe’s women’, completely eradicating variety of types of women in his other works” (Martens 2013, 46). The lesser known female characters found in Poe, like the ones I will be analysing in later chapters, do not fit into this *ideal* or *type*. The question then lies in if that makes them less Poesque or less of an ideal by themselves.

The *Dark Ladies* of Poe

As stated earlier, the short stories that include the female characters dubbed as the *Dark Ladies* are some of the works that have garnered the most critical attention, both by readers and academics. These ladies include the women in “Ligeia” (Ligeia and Rowena), “Morella” (Morella and Morella Jr.²), “The Fall of House of Usher” (Madeline Usher) and “Berenice” (Berenice). All these women share a common trait where they are either dying or dead, and as readers we follow them through the male narrators’ plight as most of them do not have a speaking voice in the narrative. Critics have for decades analysed these stories and through their research produced different results and conclusions. I will briefly take a closer look at some of these women to understand the *typical* female characters found in Poe’s authorship so that when analysing the women in “Three Sundays in a Week” and “The Spectacles” later, we can in more detail understand why these women have been overlooked. I will also suggest that they should not be disregarded anymore as they uncover something new in Poe scholarships. The Dark Ladies’ critical acclaim and popularity can be contributed somewhat to Poe’s own theory of what the best topic to write about is. In his article “The Philosophy of Composition”, he states that nothing beats the topic of death. He further claims that “when it mostly allies itself to *Beauty*: the death, then, of a beautiful woman is, unquestionably, the most poetical topic in the world – and equally is it beyond doubt that the lips best suited for such topic are those of a bereaved lover ” (Poe 1846, 165). The death of a woman is thus at the core of what makes his tales popular, especially that of a beautiful woman, and the topic he mostly enjoys.

² In «Morella» the daughter is given the name Morella after her mother later in the tale and thus I have chosen to call her Morella Jr. as to distinguish them from each other.

If we look at the aforementioned concept of his fictional women being representations of the real women, there is a parallel between them as Poe has witnessed the death of many of the women in his life. Virginia Clemm, Elizabeth Arnold Hopkins Poe and Frances Allan all died from either tuberculosis or pneumonia, or a different type of illness. This link lies in how all the Dark Ladies suffer from similar illnesses which leads to their deaths in the end. Ligeia, Rowena, Morella, Berenice and Madeline Usher³ are all ill before their death, either from tuberculosis or epilepsy. The readers follow the women through their illness until their end, and always through the perspective of the male narrator in the tales. This can be connected to Virginia Clemm, Poe's young and beautiful fiancé, who was sick from tuberculosis for many years before she finally passed. Arguably, that makes the narrators of the tales resemble and take inspiration from Poe himself, as they had to watch their wives die by their bedside just as Poe had to do with Virginia. Weekes continues with the correlation between the real women and the fictional dark women by stating that it could also be connected to Poe losing his mother at young age. She states that the "traumatic event caused him not only to seek desperately for replacement caregivers but to re-enact this bereavement in his poetry and prose" (Weekes 2002, 149). In other words, it became a way for Poe to mourn the losses he had to suffer. He is given a medium to share his feelings through his male narrators in a way that is therapeutic. Weekes also states that "art was for him a form of mourning, a revisitation of his past and of what he had lost, as if trying to make them right" (2002, 149). Poe keeps the women alive through his writing, his art.

Along the same line of thought as Stovall's when he claimed that Poe's personality is part of the female characters, the same can be said for the male narrators. As suggested by Weekes, by writing the tales from the point of view of the male narrator, Poe then through him gets to mourn his losses too. Weekes claims that the women in Poe, especially the Dark Ladies, share a "role as an emotional catalyst"(2002, 148) to the male narrators, their partners. This builds on the theory that the female characters are first and foremost used as a plot device in the tales where they are not their own individual characters but part of the male experience. Weekes expands on this by stating that "the woman must die in order to enlarge the experience of the narrator, her viewer" (2002, 148). By stating this, one can connect it to Poe's own statement that the death of a beautiful woman is the perfect topic when mediated through her partner, as the male narrators have the "lips best suited for such topic" as they are

³ Madeleine Usher is more puzzling as it is stated clearly in the short story that she is ill; it is never stated if she actually died or was buried alive. For the sake of this thesis, I will continue as if she died.

the “bereaved lover[s]” (Poe 1846, 165). The focus is then not the woman herself but the narrator and his experience of her. In other words, the Dark Ladies become “a receptacle for their narrator’s angst and guilt, a *tabula rasa* on which the lover inscribes his own needs” (Weekes 2002, 150). The *Merriam-Webster Dictionary* defines *tabula rasa* as “the mind in its hypothetical primary blank or empty state before receiving outside impressions”⁴. What is introduced here then is that the women have no individuality other than what they get from the narrator, and they become a vessel through which the male narrators can express themselves. The women’s “dying serves the poetic purpose of enhancing the male’s experience of Melancholy Beauty” (Weekes 2002, 160) rather than it being part of their individuality.

Martens, on the other hand, disagrees with Weekes on this point and claims that “the women [Dark Ladies] of these tales are not as powerless and unimportant as they might seem to be during a first reading” (Martens 2013, 13), but rather play a much more considerable role in the narrative. She also states that the female characters in these tales “might even occupy the superior position in relation to the narrator” (Martens 2013, 47). Arguably, in some of the tales of the Dark Ladies the women are often more powerful, even more dominant in some cases. This we can especially see in the short stories “Ligeia” and “Morella”, where they are not passive in the slightest. Morella and Ligeia are both portrayed as learned women and in both tales the “husband’s status is explicitly stated as child-like compared to the erudition of his spouse” (Weekes 2002, 153). The narrator in “Ligeia” himself even states that he resigned himself to Ligeia’s intelligence and guidance with “child-like confidence” (Poe 2010, 232). There is a clear divide in power as the husbands become the children and the women are the mother figures who educate them. Martens’ view is a complete contrast to Weekes’ who claims that the women are either “creatures of their own right, but ones who must die in order to serve a larger, androcentric purpose, or to utilize them as lifeless pasteboard props for the purposes of the narrator’s emotional excesses” (Weekes 2002, 150). The disagreement between the different scholars about the level of agency of the female characters of Poe is interesting to understand as it shows how even the popular works have sparked different opinions. While my thesis is focused on the lesser known women in Poe’s authorship and based on parody theory, I will still be utilizing these views in my analysis.

⁴ *Merriam-Webster.com Dictionary*, s.v. “tabula rasa,” accessed May 6, 2020, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/tabula%20rasa>

***“Never Heard of Them”*: The Lesser Known Women**

As I have now given a brief overview of the stereotypical women of Poe as well as the scholars who explore these women in general, I will move on to the lesser known female character that lie at the core of this thesis. Many researchers (Stovall and others) have, as mentioned, categorised the women in Poe in specific categories. They have, however, often only focused on the popular tales such as the ones mentioned earlier, and the lesser known women have been relegated to broad categories such as “fictional women” (Stovall 1925). Martens has on the other hand argued that “the lesser-known variations are the smart women, who outwit the men and are represented in a strong positive light” (Martens 2013, 13), which is a claim I am in agreement of. In this thesis I will be exploring two specific female characters that have been completely overlooked by Poe scholars as noteworthy: Kate from “Three Sundays in a Week” and Madame Lalande from “The Spectacles”. They are already different from the other female characters as they first and foremost do not die, and they have agency in their tales. Stovall states that these women, Kate and Madame Lalande, are “not clearly individualized” (1925, 204) and are thus dull and ordinary. I, however, claim that they do not belong to the typical Gothic horror genre nor are they preternatural in any way like the other female characters found in Poe’s writing; they belong instead in a completely new category. Kate and Madame Lalande are different yes, but the variance does not make them less significant nor allow for them to be overlooked. This I will explore with the help of contemporary parody theory. Martens claims that Kate and Madame Lalande “both appear in comical tales and offer a refreshing view on Poe’s oeuvre, both as regards genre as the representation of the female characters” (2013, 36). She continues by suggesting that they “offer an alternative to the by now stereotyped helpless, dead maiden of his other works” (2013, 36). While she states that they are different from the other female characters of Poe, she merely states that they are intelligent and to some degree have agency. I will however claim that the women in “Three Sundays in a Week” and “The Spectacles” are the protagonists and that they through parody introduce both subversion of gender norms as well as a representation of an ordinary woman who gets her happily ever after. There is a large gap in scholarships and critical articles about these tales and their women, especially where no one has linked them to parody, which is something my analyses will amend. Firstly, however, I will give a brief summary of the two tales and what I will be exploring both in terms of the characters’ portrayals and the tales as a whole.

In the short story “Three Sundays In a Week” the arguably main character is the male narrator Bobby. The plot revolves around him trying to convince his uncle to set a date for the wedding between him and his fiancé, Kate. The uncle responds that the wedding will be only when there are “three sundays in a week” (Poe 2010, 264). As would have been the typical Poesque move, the male narrator would have come up with the solution like often seen in for example “The Dupin Tales”⁵. However, I believe is Kate who is the true genius of the story. Kate is described as a “good girl” (Poe 2010, 265) and loyal. She is also said to have little money and is “barely fifteen” (Poe 2010, 265). Her father still sees her as a child as he calls her a “huzzey“ and “jade” (Poe 2010, 266). By stating that she spoke “sweetly” one can argue that she was shy to some degree, or at least soft-spoken and timid. By personality traits she then resembles the typical Poesque stereotype often found in his poetry, the helpless maiden. Her intellect is often compared to that of the Dark Ladies’. Martens argues that they do share that attribute, but that she has a different kind of intelligence. She claims that the difference is in the Dark Ladies being *book smart* whereas Kate’s “intellect is of a more natural source” (Martens 2013, 38). She manages to figure out how to foil her father’s, Mr. Rumgudgeon’s, plan due to this type of cleverness. While it is not clearly stated that Kate was the one who decided on the plan of action, the narrator states that it was Kate who found the solution to their problem. She is quite cunning, and thus it can be argued that she is both the one who outsmarts her father and also the one who orchestrates it in the first place (Martens 2013, 37).

In “The Spectacles” we meet Madame Eugénie Lalande, who also manages to deceive the male narrator of the story. Stovall puts her in the same category as Kate where he claims she is “not clearly individualized” (1925, 204). Martens agrees that she isn’t a “fully developed character” but that she does have more individuality in the tale than first expected (2013, 40). I, however, argue that she is indeed a fully developed character, and an intelligent one at that. Madame Eugénie Lalande manages to deceive the narrator to the point of him marrying her (a mock marriage which he did not know until the end) and she manipulates other men to help her with her scheme. Madame Lalande is in the beginning of the short story described as “grace personified” and “beau ideal of my [the narrator’s] wildest and most enthusiastic visions” (Poe 2010, 247). The male narrator of the tale, Simpson, focuses only on her appearance and he neglects to mention her other qualities other than her being naïve (Poe 2010, 251). His perception of her quickly changes at the end of the tale when he

⁵ “The Dupin Tales” is a short story series that follows Detective C. Auguste Dupin as he solves crimes and murders.

puts on glasses and her true identity is revealed. She is then described as a “wretch” and villainous old hag” (Poe 2010, 255). When Madame Lalande explains who she is and how she tricked Simpson, the reader understands that this is a very clever woman to have come up with such a detailed plan. One can also speculate that though this the reader also to some degree agrees with why she wanted to teach Simpson a lesson. Weekes states that Madame Lalande is “the opposite of Poe’s feminine ideal: she is more than a match for the narrator in intelligence” and that “she is not young nor delicately beautiful” (2002, 154). This introduces a new type of woman, one similar to Kate. Martens agrees by stating that “Kate and Madame Lalande are clever women, not identified by their appearance alone but moreover by their intelligence and wit. They do not die, nor are they dying, and their lovers do not attempt to murder them” (Martens 2013, 45). They are identified by their intelligence, but also as women whose depiction is linked to subversion. “Three Sundays in a Week” and “The Spectacles” introduce far more than varied female characters, they also show us how Poe through parody viewed society in its portrayal of women in the nineteenth century. Before we delve into the tales themselves, I will explore the genre of parody in Chapter 1 to lay the foundation of my analysis.

Overview of my approach

Chapter 1 will briefly introduce parody in general as a mode of narration with its typical features and characteristics, and Poe’s relationship to the genre and how he has utilized it in his more popular works. Little of Poe scholarship has linked the female characters in his writing to parody, with the exception of the female narrator in “How to Write a Blackwood Article” and “Ligeia.” By understanding the most often parodical elements found in his works, we can use them as a template for what to look for in “Three Sundays in a Week” and “The Spectacles”.

“Three Sundays in a Week” will be analysed in *Chapter 2*. I will suggest a new view of the female character Kate and link her to gender subversion through her parodical performances in the tale. At first glance she appears to be a sweet and young girl who is to be married to her cousin Bobby. However, by looking closer at her depiction I will argue that she actually represents more, especially through her intelligence. The same kind of analysis will be done of the male narrator Bobby who is depicted in a way that is not often seen in Poe and thus will be interesting to explore.

In *Chapter 3* we will be investigating the characters of Madame Lalande and Simpson from “The Spectacles”. I will provide an in-depth analysis of the parodical inspiration of the

tale and the characters in order to understand *why* they have been portrayed in the way they have and how the use of parody introduces a duality of perspective in the tale.

Chapter 4 is my final conclusions to the analyses and is dedicated to what these women have in common. I suggest that through parody Kate and Madame Lalande become the *New Ladies* in Poe and that they have been miscategorised until now. Their variation introduces a new view that breaks with the patterns often seen in Poe's authorship, and their depiction is significant in its own right.

Chapter 1: Humour as Opposition: The Connection Between Poe's Ladies and the Use of Parody

Introduction

Parody as a mode of narration is quite versatile in that it can be found in all different forms and genres, including literature, art, music, film and so forth. In this chapter the aim is to better understand the theory behind parody in literature as well as how it functions in this genre. Poe began his writing career with works of literature including parody and the burlesque in different manners. By examining the main aspects of parody and its features in general, we can understand the female characters in "Three Sundays in a Week" and "The Spectacles" better as they include many of the features of parody we will explore in this chapter. There is a gap when it comes to scholarships regarding Poe and his women in relation to parody, and especially in the aforementioned works. The gap in this understanding is something this thesis will focus on. Many critics and scholars have connected Poe and parody in general, and there is much to find on this subject alone. What is however interesting to note is the lack of research on parody in relation to works which contain Poe's female characters, especially ones where they play a considerable role in the narrative. As far as I have been able to establish, the works with female characters that have been analysed in relation to parody are few and far between. The most common ones are "The Oval-Portrait" and "The Assignation" (part of the collection "The Folio Club") where the focus is on the male characters of the stories or the style or manner of its writing. Poe's short story "How to Write a Blackwood Article" and its companion "A Predicament", as well as "Ligeia", are the only works that have been researched as works of parody and simultaneously have a female character as narrator as well as the main protagonists the story follows.

The term parody itself has been defined in many ways, but I have chosen to make use of two different views and definitions as the core of my understanding of the term in this thesis. The first explanation is from a dictionary on literary terms which explains parody as

part of the overlaying term *burlesque*⁶ stating that parody “imitates the serious manner and characteristics features of a particular literary work, or the distinctive style of a particular author, or the typical stylistic and other features of a serious literary genre, and deflates the original by applying the imitation to a lowly or comically inappropriate subject” (Abrams and Harpham 2011, 27). Parody then is a form of imitation with the aim of mocking the literary text which is being parodied. This definition of parody does however not encompass everything and thus a second definition is necessary to fully understand the term. Linda Hutcheon’s book “*A Theory of Parody: The Teachings of Twentieth-Century Art Forms*” explains how parody is not only a form used “to mock or ridicule but departure from an ideal or norm” (Hutcheon 2000, 5). Parody can therefore be understood as more than simply mocking or degrading; there are several other aspects to the form which I will be introducing in this chapter.

While parody is often revolved around criticise the original, several can be argued as being odes to authors whose stylistic qualities are esteemed and therefore have been imitated by others to highlight its significance. In other words, parody can be a form of admiration and appreciation and not only sardonic (Hubbell 1969, 100). Jay B. Hubbell claims in his article “The Literary Apprenticeship of Edgar Allan Poe” that using parody as a form of admiration was something Poe did in many of his own works, especially in the early years of his career. Works that have been classified as such include “Tamerlane”, “The Oval-Portrait” and the collection “The Folio Club” which will all be briefly discussed later in this chapter. I will also explore one of Poe’s most popular works, the short story “Ligeia” in this chapter. Based on the two general views on parody which will be used as a template for this thesis’ definition of the term, the aim of this chapter is to explore parody in detail. As the thesis will focus on short stories with female characters that use parody as a tool, we first need to explore the general relationship between parody and Poe. In other words, examine how it has been used by Poe in some of his debated works, both well-known and lesser known ones. The research already done on short stories with female characters will also be included in this part of the discussion. We will end by introducing the lesser known “Three Sundays in a Week” and “The Spectacles” and consider how they can be connected to parody. First however, I will elaborate further on the theoretical framework which underbuilds my argument. The core of

⁶ *Burlesque* is defined as “a literary or dramatic work that seeks to ridicule by means of grotesque exaggeration or comic imitation”. (“burlesque.” *Merriam-Webster.com*. 2011. <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/burlesque> (16 November 2019))

this exploration will be Joao Ferreira Duarte's theoretical approach in his article "A Dangerous Stroke of Art: Parody as Transgression" which explains parody as a genre and what the main features according to him are.

Parody in itself is complex and does not have a set of characteristics that can be summarized easily in relation to every work of parody. Duarte explains how it has a protean form where it is "refusing to be captured once and for all by any watertight, fixed, ontological set of descriptive characteristics" (Duarte 1999, 71), and thus claims that parody is multifaceted. He however explores the main features or characteristics that can be found in a parodic text. By briefly getting an overlook of these features, it will make understanding parodic elements in Poe's "The Spectacles" and "Three Sundays in a Week" easier. The characteristics and features Duarte discusses can be divided into categories explaining parody as *reflexive*, *communicative overdetermination*, *ambivalence* and *transgenicity*. The first function comments on how parody has a *reflexive* function where it "represents another representation" (Duarte 1999, 71). This is the most common feature and the most central one. A parody cannot exist without the parodied text i.e. the original work that has been imitated in some way or form. There is a relationship between the two, where a parody relies on the original to exist. The concept of reflexivity will be further discussed later in the chapter as it will be one of the main features in the exploration of Poe's short stories.

The next feature Duarte points out is called *communicative overdetermination*. This is based on the relationship between the addresser and the addressee. The readers of the parody need to "be legitimately expected to possess the necessary knowledge to interpret correctly the authors intentions" (Duarte 1999, 72). In other words, the readers (addressee's) of the parody need to decode the text as parody for it to have fulfilled its intentions. If the reader does not realise what they are reading as a parody, much of the point the parody is trying to make will be lost. Poe in the beginning of his career wrote satiric parodies, and he was met with the public believing them serious rather than understanding the humor and commentary he made. Satire in literature is used as a form which uses humour, exaggeration or irony to criticize or ridicule people and society⁷. Even a close friend of his sent him a letter of appreciation of his work to let him know that some people (himself included) believed it to be "mistaken for satire – and admired too in that character" (Hubbell 1969, 100). Poe replied to the letter claiming that he had not fully acknowledged that satire had been the aim, and that

⁷ "satire." *Merriam-Webster.com*. 2011 <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/satire> (22 November 2019))

“most of them were intended as for half banter, half satire” (Hubbell 1969, 100). There is a sense of duality in parody, this being the relationship between the author of the parody and that of the reader of the parodied text. To fully appreciate a parody one needs the necessary knowledge and background. This is something that will be important to note when working with “Three Sundays in a Week” and “The Spectacles” as Poe parodies people and texts from the 19th Century which the readers would have been expected to have some knowledge of.

The third characteristic is *ambivalence*. Duarte states that there are three types of ambivalence; *etymological*, *intertextual* and *functional ambivalence*. The etymological function is however not central in this paper and thus will not be included because of its relation to the etymological definition of the word as well as its ties to the imitation of epic verses in Greek songs, something this thesis does not touch on. The other two functions will be more important in this thesis. *Intertextual* ambivalence is based on the relationship between the two texts; the text that is being parodied and the text that is the parody (Duarte 1999, 73). This differs from the *reflexiveness* of a parody as contrast and resemblance are keywords in this feature. In other words, the two texts share similarities but have different functions as works of literature. The relationship between them is complex, because if the parodied text is being mocked, it is also being imitated. A parody is then both sympathetic and critical towards the original text. A target of parody also becomes the structure of the parody, where the intricate relationship between the two shows how parody cannot be free from an original, as it has been internalised. The last form of ambivalence that is emphasised is *functional* ambivalence which focuses on the “role of parody in the social context” (Duarte 1999, 74). While Duarte claims that parody does not have any clear-cut rules that it follows, he also clarifies that parody manages to break the rules of literature by following its own rules. Parody is multifaceted and thus there is no defined ways to fully explain all the features and characteristics it encompasses. One can, however, still argue that there exists some main rules and features that need to be followed and can be pointed out and applied. A parody also accomplishes the task of bringing what is both elevated and serious down to earth, and thus bring it in to a new light by challenging the norm (Duarte 1999, 75). This understanding of parody in a social context consequently resonates with Hutcheon who argues that parody is a “form of oppositional discourse against a dominant cultural, social or political force” (Hutcheon 1992, 7). This will be part of the discussion of the reason why the lesser known works of Poe can be seen as parodies as they are arguably part of Poe’s view on gender roles.

The last characteristic of a parodic text that Duarte explores is that of *transgenericity*. Parody can be found in all genres, meaning it is not limited to one or a few specific genres.

By being applicable in all genres, parody manages to disturb their already existing status-quo. Duarte explains this by claiming that “wherever a self-identical form is found, there exist the conditions for its parodic doubling, for contamination by its ridiculing Other” (Duarte 1999, 76). In layman terms, anything can be parodied, even the parodies themselves can be transformed and ‘rewritten’ as a parody. Poe himself did so in the collection “Folio Club” which were parodies of another parody collection. The form then in itself becomes never ending. More on the “Folio Club” and its significance later in the chapter. The ability to parody multiple things like people, newspaper articles, other short stories and the such is particularly noteworthy as it will be central in our study of “Three Sundays in a Week” and “The Spectacles”.

Self-Parody and Reflexivity

The reflexive function of parody plays a big role in the exploration of this thesis’ analysis of some of Poe’s works. As mentioned, reflexivity is when a parody is representing another representation, and thus the relationship between the parody and the original text is in focus. That is, however, not the only element central to the explanation of reflexivity in parody. In “The Reflexive Function of Parody”, Michele Hannoosh states that a parody has a “capacity to reflect critically back upon itself, not merely upon its target” (1989, 113). It needs the ability to itself be parodied and critiqued. One could argue that the form itself demands a comedic transformation or retelling and if not then it cannot be called a parody. It has to be open to the possibility of the same treatment as other works where it too can be transformed into something comedic or playful. It must, in other words, allow itself to be critiqued, as it itself has been a critique of the parodied work (Hannoosh 1989, 114). In parody there is consequently a quality of being “open-ended” of sorts, where it manages to show the “process of literary creation to be unfinished and open for further development” (Hannoosh 1989, 116). There is thus no clear ending to a parody; that is to say, anyone has the possibility to change and expand the work.

An interesting factor of this literary form is also how it can be used by authors to themselves write parodies of their own works, and not just of others’. Self-parody is arguably a modern form of parody, but one can find authors writing parodic texts about themselves and their own works from many decades’ past. The purpose behind this type of parody, where one transforms one’s own work is not to question a literary structure but to question the creation of literature in general (Hannoosh 1989, 114). The author of the work manages to break from the original as it changes, managing through it to question the very act of writing and thus the

mannerisms of literature in itself. Hutcheon claims that self-parody is not “just an artist’s way of disowning earlier mannerisms by externalizations” but that it “is a way of creating a form of the questioning of the very act of aesthetic production” (2000, 10). In other words, self-parody does not mean that the author is trying to degrade the parodied text in and of itself, but rather question the why and how of its creation and purpose. This builds on the open-endedness of a parodied text, where it can be elevated in a way which was not seen by the original writer before, or the need to change it completely from the original and thus giving it a new meaning. Hannoosh agrees by stating that the “parody actually rebounds upon itself, calling itself into question as it does the parodied work, and suggesting its own potential as model or target, a work to be rewritten, transformed, even parodied in its turn” (1989, 114). The general notion of parody in literature is in other words to question what has been written and why it was done in the way it was, or for the author to explore new and different ways of writing.

Poe and Parody

As mentioned earlier, much of Poe’s early works of literature have been linked to parody and self-parody. Jay B. Hubbell in his article “The Literacy Apprenticeship of Edgar Allan Poe” claims that Poe’s career in the short story genre began with him

burlesquing almost every best-selling tale there was – the tale of terror, of mystery, of the Orient, of passion, of clever ratiocination – and ended with his own conviction that the art form he had begun by ridiculing was, after all, as serious, purposeful, and distinguished as the poem, the drama, the novel, or any other imaginative expression (Hubbell 1969, 100)

Poe believed that much of what was written in 1820 and 1830s were following a pattern – a ‘how to write a best-seller’ recipe – that many established authors took use of to launch their careers. He wanted to prove this to the public by writing in the style of the recognised pattern to show how he too could write bestselling stories that the public would unquestioningly consume. In “*The Oxford Handbook of Edgar Allan Poe*” Gerald J. Kennedy and Scott Peeples state that Poe claimed that authors were not born but were rather made (Kennedy and Peeples 2019, 139). This he linked to the printing culture and the system of both production and distribution. Through this, he understood the ‘system’ of how to write something the public would like and set out to show this through his writing over the years, not only in the early years of his writing career. As mentioned, many believed Poe was serious when he

started putting stories and poems out, even his friends assumed them to be meant as genuine works of art. While not always the case, many found out later that his works were indeed not meant to be taken seriously but that he wanted to expose the readers as well as society to something else, be it a social commentary or a critical stand on an author or work. As Poe began his career as a poet, one of the first poems he published was “Tamerlane” in the 1827 collection *Tamerlane and Other Poems*. The poem “Tamerlane” in itself was a parody of the writing style of Lord Byron’s drama “Manfred” and poem “The Giaour”. As Poe was a fan of his work, the parody was written from a point of appreciation. Hubbell argues that Poe’s poem was so heavily influenced that it was almost to the point of plagiarizing (1969, 99).

Poe was also a fan of Nathaniel Hawthorne and he imitated the writing style of Hawthorne’s “Twice-Told Tales” collection in his short story “The Oval Portrait”. Peter Gibian in his article “The Image and its Discontents: Hawthorne, Poe, and the Double Bind of ‘Iconoclasm’” states that it was “written as a commentary on and corrective to Hawthorne’s ‘The Prophetic Pictures’—a tale in which Hawthorne raises questions about the life-altering powers of an image-based art” (Gibian 2011, 2). Charles Edward May states that in Poe’s review of Hawthorne’s collection, he praised Hawthorne on his style of writing by stating that “the [writing] style itself is purity itself” (May 1994, 64) and that his stories belong “to the highest region of Art” (62). These statements documented in “*The New Short Stories Theories*” further remove the charges against parody as a degrading form, especially in relation to the manner of how Poe wrote some of his parodies. This form of parody was in admiration and appreciation, which is something that needs to be reminded of when looking at Poe and his works of parody. Hubbell claims that Poe in general, when dabbling in the burlesque, made use of two different kinds of imitation, and that these were founded on two different assessments of the parodied texts. The first kind of imitation Poe practiced was based on him seriously trying to “capture the elusive stylistic qualities of an author of whom one admires”(Hubbell 1969, 100), which is represented by the earlier mentioned “Tamerlane” and “The Oval-Portrait”. Poe was clear on what he saw as ‘good’ writing and as he had a career in magazines where he reviewed literature and authors, he was not afraid of letting his opinions be known. That could be seen both in his written reviews and through his own writing mannerisms of parodied texts. By both writing a commendable review of Hawthorne’s work as well as imitating his style, this is a prime example of parody used as a form of admiration.

The second kind of imitation Poe takes use of is the better known version of parody based on “the burlesque of a style one dislikes” (Hubbell 1969, 100). This type was where

parody got its reputation for only being mocking and degrading of the original text it parodied. It should be mentioned that the point of this thesis is not to change the definition of parody or defend the form by stating that it does not have those elements, but that it clearly needs to be clarified that parody also is a form of appreciation and praise. Poe wrote many satiric parodies of things he disliked or did not agree with, which, as mentioned, was not always understood as such by the public who believed the works to be genuine. One example is the short story “How to Write a Blackwood Article,” whose intention Ecaterina Hantiu in “Humor and Satire in Edgar Allan Poe’s Absurd Stories” claims was to ridicule the successful journalists of the time as well as the politicians (2010, 31). Poe here satirizes the way the magazines followed a pattern or formula and wanted the public to understand it as such through his own short story. He even dabbles in the reflexivity Duarte explains as Poe himself had written articles or short stories that followed such a formula which “Ligeia” is an example of. Arguably, “How to Write a Blackwood Article” (as well as its companion “A Predicament”) is one of Poe’s most known satires. The tone of the short story is based on humour and many critics have declared it as absurd and a “perfect piece of nonsense” (Hantiu 2010, 30). There are however discussions whether it can be claimed as a satire or a parody, as it has aspects of both forms. As “How to Write a Blackwood Article” brings up the concept of how to write an article in the ‘Blackwood style’ I will argue that it is a satiric parody, but primarily a parody, nonetheless.

It is moreover important to note that Poe used both satire and parody in his writings and that there needs to be a clear understanding that these are two different aspects of literature even as they resemble each other. Satire can briefly be defined as “a mode of writing that exposes the failings of individuals, institutions, or societies to ridicule and scorn” (Baldick 2015, 322). While it resembles parody in the aspect of making fun of something, there is a difference between the two when used in a literary text. Parody imitates the manner of writing or the style of the original text and transforms it, *intertextual ambivalence*, while satire tries to induce disapproval in the reader of what it has chosen to satirize. Hutcheon explains the difference by stating that “the fact that parody is not the same as satire – that they are separate literary modes with separate spheres of influence – helps explain the astonishing range of ethos: this is one reason some parodies appear to be respectful, even deferential to the parodied texts, while others seem merely playful, and still others savagely mocking” (1992, 8). Parody is more than a way of mocking or ridiculing an author or a work, and it is free from restrictions with the opportunity of having multiple purposes. As mentioned, a work of parody can be written in a style of admiration or with the purpose of bringing something

elevated down to earth. In other words, parody is complex and multi-faceted with many different functions, something that can be seen in multiple of works by Poe.

Another clear example of parody can be found in Poe's collection of stories called the "Tales of the Folio Club" (also referred to as "Eleven Tales of the Arabesque") which he first published in 1831 and continued to add to in subsequent years. The collection had eleven stories by 1836, and were short stories based on a fictional organisation called the Folio Club with eleven elite authors as its members. The members of the club have a competition every month where they discuss and critique each story presented by each author and choose a winner in the end who becomes the president of the Folio Club. Alexander Hammond in his article "Edgar Allan Poe's Tales of the Folio Club: The Evolution of a Lost Book" explains that the stories found in the collection

are mannered imitations of different kinds of contemporary fiction, clearly distinguishable from another in subject and style, suggesting they were indeed designed to serve as contributions from individual members from some u-form of the Folio Club symposium (1976, 18)

The collection itself is arguably a parody of Horace and James Smith's collection which again parodies authors of the time called "Rejected Addresses". The original parody collection contained 21 parodies of authors of that time. Poe got his inspiration from them, and while their parodies were good-natured, Poe's used it as an opportunity to critique established authors instead. He meant that new authors struggled against the established 'elite' authors, and that they did not get any chances in society to become successful due to this treatment. This is a clear example of parody's 'open-ended-ness' and ability to transform. Poe through this collection of works wanted to demonstrate how harsh and critical the public as well as the established authors were of new writers, especially those who had been in the business for years and made a name for themselves. Poe, as mentioned earlier, argued that there was a clear-cut pattern to what qualified as a great literary work in his time and thus wanted to critique not only the authors but also society in general. He often used parody as a way to 'get even' with society, where he managed to fool his audience as well as ridicule them. In the introduction to the collection Poe himself wrote that the "the members [of the Folio Club] are quite as ill-looking as they are stupid. I also believe it their settled intention to abolish Literature, subvert the Press, and overturn the Government of Nouns and Pronouns. These are

my private opinions which I now take the liberty of making public” (Poe 1902)⁸. This way of using literature as a social commentary can be found in “Ligeia”.

One of Poe’s more popular work, “Ligeia” is part of the category of *Dark Ladies* who are by many scholars argued to include his most Poesque women⁹. As mentioned, scholars have argued that Ligeia was Poe’s feminine ideal, but few have connected it to parody. As my argument will be related to female characters and the use of parody, the need to better understand “Ligeia” is necessary. “Ligeia” is told through an unnamed male narrator who has lost his wife, Ligeia, to an unidentified illness. He keeps referring to her beauty or erudition throughout the tale, almost to the point of forgetting she is dead. After Ligeia’s death, the narrator moves from Germany to England and enters into a loveless marriage with a woman called Rowena. Soon after the wedding, she becomes ill and he stays vigil by her bedside till her death. The story ends with Rowena’s death, but in true Poesque storytelling, the narrator imagines she comes back to life and is resurrected as his dead Ligeia. The epigraph by Joseph Glanvill¹⁰ foreshadows some of the themes in the tale. Just from the quote one understands that the story is not a regular tale, but a narrative about death and willpower. John T. Irwin claims in “American Hieroglyphics: The Symbol of the Egyptian Hieroglyphics in the American Renaissance” that it could be directly correlated to how the narrator speaks of Ligeia’s resurrection, how she did not succumb to death as her willpower was far greater than that of nature (2016, 227). The epigraph goes as follows:

And the will therein lieth, which dieth not. Who knoweth the mysteries of the will, with its vigor? For God is but a great will pervading all things by nature of its intentness. Man doth not yield himself to the angels, nor unto death utterly, save only through the weakness of his feeble will (Poe 2010, 230).

⁸ As mentioned, there are eleven stories in the collection though some have argued there were even more added to it in the later years. However, by only looking at the established eleven, only three of the them include female characters. These are “Loss of Breath”, “Lionzing” and “The Assignment” (also referred to as “The Visionary”). “Mesengerstein” can arguably also be added, but it only mentions a woman briefly and therefore is of no notice.

⁹ This was discussed in the previous chapter which included an analysis of Poe’s fictional women and their common portrayal. Briefly explained, short stories including the ‘dark ladies’ are the most popular tales written by Poe as they include his favorite topic; the death of a beautiful woman. Poe himself states that “when it mostly allies itself to *Beauty*: the death, then, of a beautiful woman is, unquestionably, the most poetical topic in the world – and equally is it beyond doubt that the lips best suited for such topic are those of a bereaved lover” (Poe 1846, 165).

¹⁰ While it was attributed to Glanvill, it was later found out that Poe himself had written it.

The short story “Ligeia” is still to date one of Poe’s more popular works. It has been and still is widely researched and analysed, and scholars are still in disagreement on what the story is really about and the purpose behind it. Alexandra Urakova states that “Ligeia is among Poe’s most puzzling tales, one that leaves us pondering undying enigmas and unresolved questions” (Kennedy and Peeples 2019, 304). She questions what the tale’s meaning is; if it is a love story with death and resurrection as the surface belies during the first reading, or if it could be about something else completely (Urakova 2018, 304). As mentioned earlier, death, and especially that of a beautiful woman, plays an important role in Poe’s prose, especially that of a beautiful woman, something that is shown through Ligeia as she is beautiful and dies. The narrator uses more than a page on only describing Ligeia’s face which “in beauty of face no maiden ever equalled” and how she had the “radiance of an opium-dream”(Poe, 230). As the narrator is addicted to opium and much of his narration happens while he is high on the drug, the description offers an explanation. It brings the connotation of something fantastical or magical, and as the story has a mystical aura, one can draw a connection there where her perfection is compared to the effect of opium. However, it is important to note that the avid description could also be idealized as the narrator refers to her in past-tense ““I bring before mine eyes in fancy the image of her *who is no more*”¹¹ (Poe, 230). As Ligeia is dead, he only has his memories of her, which have been arguably altered due to the drug usage as well as idealisation.

The reader knows from the beginning that Ligeia is already dead, and in a true Poesque fashion we still get to witness a woman who is ill and dying, this being Lady Rowena who is his second wife. Ligeia and Rowena are shown as complete opposites; they are the epitomes of the two types of women mentioned by Weekes that can be found in Poe’s work¹². Rowena is portrayed as fair haired and passive, symbolising light, whereas Ligeia has black and curly hair and symbolises darkness. Clark Griffith continues to comment on how they are two sides of a coin by stating that the tale is “founded upon an elaborate allegorical scheme, one in which Ligeia-darkness stands for madness and abnormality, while Rowena-light signifies normality and rationality” (1954, 10). In his article “Poe’s «Ligeia» and the English Romantics” he further differentiates between the two where Rowena stands for England and

¹¹ My emphasis.

¹² Poetic women in his poems are the ones with the fair hair or eyes, and the dark ladies found his prose are the ones who share the black hair and dark eyes (Weekes 2002, 152).

the Romantics, while Ligeia for Germany and German transcendentalist. German transcendentalist was a group of people that Poe often criticised and thus Griffith has claimed that the tale in itself is a satiric parody based on this (Griffith 1954, 14).

If one puts “Ligeia” in the historical context as well as the timeline of when the different works by Poe were published, one gains a new perspective of the purpose of tale. In his article, Griffith suggests that it is a parody and satire of Gothic and Romantic fiction. He claims that “the burlesques published before and after ‘Ligeia’ illuminate certain difficult aspects of ‘Ligeia’ precisely because ‘Ligeia’ is partly burlesque”(Griffith 1954, 17). This resonates with Urakova who claims that the tale as well as the women become parodies of “Romanic and Gothic clichés” (2018, 306). Griffith especially links “Ligeia” to the satiric parody “How to Write a Blackwood Article”¹³ and states that there is a connection between the two. If one thinks of the short story as a burlesque, the meaning and symbolism behind the tale changes and it offers a new perspective on its meaning. Based on Griffith’s argument, Ligeia is no longer the female ideal for Poe as she becomes a satiric parody of something completely different. Having a female character with a considerable role in the story is also something “Ligeia” and “How to Write a Blackwood Article” share with his lesser known works. The question then lies in what the purpose of parody is in relation to them.

The analysis of “Ligeia” is necessary in order to understand the relationship between parody and women in Poe. The fact that “How to Write a Blackwood Article” is the only other work that is clearly stated as a satiric parody sheds light on how many scholars have relegated Poe’s other stories into different genres where little has been said about the humor or parodic element that can be found in them. “Three Sundays in a Week” and “The Spectacles” are not widely researched works, more often than not completely overlooked, but by introducing the concept of parody into their analysis, one can argue that the reason they are often disregarded is due to the public not understanding their purpose and viewing them as literal ‘lesser’ literary works compared to the more popular known poems and prose. As stated earlier, many of the Poe’s readers did not always understand the satiric or parodic intent in his works, which further strengthens my argument of how they did not understand the intent of “Three Sundays in a Week” or “The Spectacles”.

As we saw in Chapter One, many researchers (Stovall, Weekes and others) have categorised the fictional women in Poe’s writings. They have, however, often only focused on

¹³ In his article, Griffith calls “How to Write a Blackwood Article” for “The Psyche Zenobia” which was the name it was originally published under.

the popular tales and consequently the lesser known including women have been relegated to broad categories such as “fictional women” (Stovall 1925). Martens has, however, argued that “the lesser-known variations are the smart women, who outwit the men and are represented in a strong positive light” (Martens 2013, 13). In what follows we will focus on two of Poe’s lesser known women; Kate from “Three Sundays in a Week” and Madame Eugenie Lalande from “The Spectacles”. These characters are already different from the others as they first and foremost do not die and have agency in the narratives. Stovall states however that they are “not clearly individualized” (1925, 204) and are thus dull and ordinary. They do not belong to the Gothic horror genre nor are they preternatural like the dark ladies. They are completely different variations of the stereotypical fictional women often found in Poe’s writings. This resonates with Martens’ suggestion that Kate and Madame Lalande “both appear in comical tales and offer a refreshing view on Poe’s oeuvre, both as regards genre as the representation of the female characters” (2013, 36). She continues by claiming that Kate and Madame Lalande “offer an alternative to the by now stereotyped helpless, dead maiden of his other works” (2013, 36). The question then lies in why they are different, and what the purpose of their varied portrayal encompasses. While I agree with Martens, Kate and Madame Lalande offer more than just variation to Poe’s female characters in way of alternatives, they in themselves introduce a new way of seeing Poe’s authorship as well as a new category of female characters overlooked till now.

Chapter 2: The P(oe)arodic Gender Performances in “Three Sundays in a Week”

Introduction

Poe’s short story “Three Sundays in a Week” is one that has been overlooked by many critics and scholars, and to my knowledge there are not many articles about the work, especially not recently. The scholars who have discussed the tale all mostly agree on how it is one of Poe’s less notable works, and this consequently leads to few of its different elements being analysed. At the level of a surface reading, there does not seem to be much to focus on and the tale seems very straightforward: “Three Sundays in a Week” is a humorous tale centred around a young couple who is engaged, Kate and Bobby. The story follows them as they struggle to set a date for their wedding. We, the readers, understand early on in the tale how the only focus of the narrator, Bobby, is his future happiness through his union with Kate. It seems that he has been waiting to make the union official for a long time as it starts with him begging his uncle to set a date. Bobby has lived with his uncle Rumgudgeon and his cousin Kate ever since he lost his parents at a young age, and hence has known Kate most of his life. The relationship between the uncle and Bobby is very tense, which is understood already after the first line of the tale where Bobby calls him a “hard-headed, dunder-headed, obstinate, rusty, crusty, musty, fusty, old savage” (Poe 2010, 264). This sets the tone for the story, where the reader takes the side of the narrator and against Rumgudgeon as we understand that he is not the nicest nor the easiest man to be around. The tale continues with Bobby going to his uncle with the wish for him to set a date for the union, which Rumgudgeon takes offence at and thus states that the young couple can marry only when “three Sundays come together in a week!” (Poe 2010, 264). The story continues on to Kate and Bobby finding a solution to the problem, where they recruit two naval acquaintances, Captain Pratt and Smitherton. As both seamen have returned from year-long travels overseas, the dinner conversation naturally turns to them discussing their travels. One topic in particular becomes heated as both seaman debate what day Sunday was. The solution to the couple’s problem occurs when the discussion of different time zones continues. Both Captain Pratt and Smitherton believe Sunday to be respectively the day before and after, which the young couple see as their opportunity where they conclude that three Sundays have indeed come together in one week since for them, Sundays was ‘today’.

Amongst the scholars and critics who have analysed and discussed “Three Sundays”, most of them have argued that the tale is about the relationship between the young couple and its significance, as well as agreeing on how Bobby is the protagonist. Elizabeth Freeman in her article “Honeymoon with a Stranger: Pedophilic Picaresque from Poe to Nabokov” focuses on the navigation of time and sexuality, where her only focus is on the relationship between Bobby and Kate which she describes as “pedophilic” (Freeman 1998, 877). Marta Miquel Baldellou focuses on the familial relationships between the characters and how they relate to Poe’s real life in her article “A Series of Mere Household Events: Evoking and Questioning Nineteenth-Century Ethics of Victorian Family Life in Edgar Allan Poe’s Tales”. Another scholar, Fanny H. Cherry in “The Source of Poe’s ‘Three Sundays in a Week’,” does not mention Kate much, but claims that Bobby is the “hero” of the story (Cherry 1930, 232). She also looks at where Poe could have gotten the inspiration for the tale from. The short story is recognized as both a satire and a parody by all scholars, but they focus on quite different aspects without a common perception of the meaning behind the tale nor what it is referencing beside an article in the newspaper. I believe that all the different components that previous scholars have looked at play a role, like the relationships between the characters and the significance of Kate’s portrayal, but there needs to be a merging of them so we can actually distinguish what the tale is really about. All the scholars above make great points in their fields of exploration, and I will take use of them as they are relevant to this thesis’ examination of Poe’s female characters and its relation to parody. I believe that “Three Sundays” should not be overlooked as it has many elements vital to Poe’s authorship as well as introducing new ones.

“Three Sundays” in itself is humorous in tone, and arguably works like a fairy tale where we cheer for the main characters as the ‘villain’, the uncle, presents the tale’s focal complication which needs to be overcome by the hero of the tale so that it ends with a happily ever after. The parodying of specific fairy tale elements will be discussed later in the chapter. The main question however lies in who the protagonist really is in the tale. Cherry claims in her article that Bobby, the narrator and Kate’s fiancé, is the hero of the tale whereas Kate is nothing more than the woman “whom he is in love with” (1930, 232) and thus minimizes the significance of her portrayal. While Bobby *is* the narrator of the story, I suggest however that Kate is the real protagonist of “Three Sundays”. She is the one who finds the solution to the problem and thus moves the plotline along; in other words, she becomes the equivalent of the hero of the tale. This leads to Bobby being the ancillary character who arguably has very little to do with the story other than being the one who introduced the main complication of the plot

and of course narrated the whole affair. However, even those critics who agree that Kate is the one who orchestrates the plan that thwarts her father, they still believe her to be less vital to the plot compared to Bobby. This raises a few questions that we are going to answer in this analysis.

Kate's role is important in "Three Sundays", as it raises questions about how women are and were perceived by society in that period. It also introduces a new view on Poe's authorship where he both follows pre-set patterns he had developed in his writing but also reinvents and reverses those patterns. There are some aspects found in the tale that will be necessary to explore before we get into that, such as the source behind the tale and relationships between the characters. Fanny E. Cherry as well as Eleanor D. Kewer agree on Poe getting his inspiration for the story from two articles, one in *The Philadelphia Public Ledger* on the 29th of October, 1841 which was unsigned (Cherry 1930, 233) and "Three Sundays Within Nine Days", an article November 17, 1841 signed by "Naval" (Poe, Mabbott, and Kewer 2000, 648). The articles share a resemblance to Poe's short story with their similar names as well as the topic of time differences and zones thus taking use of parody's *intertextual ambivalence*. Another thing that will be explored in this chapter is connected to how the short story relates to Poe's own life. As mentioned earlier, Poe often used his writing as a semi-autobiographical outlet where many of the stories he wrote had some resemblance to his real-life experiences and relationships. Even a lesser acclaimed literary tale like "Three Sundays" did not escape the *reflexivity* aspect of parody with its commentary of another text. The most noticeable characteristic is the male relationship between Rumgudgeon and his nephew Bobby, and the relationship between the cousins Kate and Bobby. Baldellu claims that "many of Poe's tales depict relationships established between different family members, as a far prospect from the blissful and clearly-differentiated roles appertaining to each family member that were carefully described in the conduct books of the time" (2007, 467). This relates to Poe's tense relationship to his distant foster father John Allan. The relationship between Kate and Bobby reminds us, of course, also of Poe's relationship to his own young cousin Virginia Clemm, whom he married.

We need to look at the biographical backgrounds such as the ones mentioned above to get a clearer understanding to how the tale works as a parody of gender norms, this with Kate as the embodiment of the parodic performance which reveals the true subversive intention behind the tale. Kate Kenny in her article "'The Performative Surprise': Parody, Documentary and Critique" claims that parody in gender focused works can play a "critical function: it helps us to laugh at power and imagine alternatives"(2009, 222). The alternative is equality

between the genders where the women are no longer passive but play an equally important part to the storyline as the male protagonists. Kate being the one who manages to find a solution and thus duping her father shows how she is not passive, but actually is active and to some degree has the ability to exert power. However, we need to firstly look at the more evident examples of parody in the tale before we get into how the tale manages to introduce subversion of gender norms.

The Direct Source of Inspiration

“Three Sundays” is centred around the notion of how one finds time differences in different time zones around the world. In other words, it is based on how you in our day can wake up on a Monday, take a plane overnight and when you land, it’s still Monday. The main issue in the tale is resolved thanks to this occurrence. In “Three Sundays” we meet two naval officers who both have been abroad for a year. These seamen are called Smitherton and Captain Pratt who we learn are acquaintances of Kate, which is important to the tale. They return from their travels three weeks after Rumgudgeon exclaimed how Bobby and Kate only can get married when three Sundays come together in a week. Bobby claims that it was as the “Fates ordered it” (Poe 2010, 266) and alludes to them being back as important. Kate and him with Smitherton and Captain Pratt arrange for all of them to have dinner with Rumgudgeon the following Sunday afternoon presumably with something of a plan. Bobby says that “For about half an hour the conversation ran upon ordinary topics, but at last, we contrived, quite naturally”(Poe 2010, 266) to that of the two seamen’s travels. This leads to a disagreement as the phenomenon of time differences becomes prominent when they cannot agree on when the day Sunday was until they all (and a reluctant Rumgudgeon) declare that three Sundays have come together in a week.

The underlying idea in the story was, as mentioned, inspired from two different articles written in the *Philadelphia Public Ledger* printed a few months before “Three Sundays” was published on the 27th of November in the *Saturday Evening Post*. The first article that the *Ledger* published was on the 29th of October 1841, a month before Poe’s short story, under the title “Three Thursdays in One Week” (Cherry 1930, 233). As mentioned in the introduction, the name is quite similar to Poe’s own story only with the difference of what day is in focus. Both the article and short story also share the topic of time differences. The article in *the Ledger* is at about a thousand words and was published anonymously. While Poe’s tale is fiction, “Three Thursdays in One Week” is a scientific exploration of how time changes depending on where you are in the world (Cherry 1930, 234). We will come back to

the “scientific part” of the parody later when we look at the character of Doctor Dubble L. Dee and his significance as “the lecturer of quack physics” (Poe 2010, 265).

Cherry (1930) and Kewer (Kewer 2000) in “*Tales and Sketches: 1843-1849*” have also concluded that a second article with its corresponding response in the *Philadelphia Ledger* were a part of Poe’s inspiration for “Three Sundays”. They were both published a few days apart in November of the same year as the short story. The first article was published on the 19th of November signed anonymously by someone who called themselves for “X”. The topic of the publication was based on whether there were some vessels who adjusted their dates somewhere in the Pacific Ocean (Cherry 1930, 235). The response to “X” came in an article seven days later called “three Sundays within nine days” signed by one “Naval” (Mabbott 2000, 648). In the short story we meet two *naval* officers and thus can draw the conclusion that Poe saw the publications in the paper as the connection to the usage of the word “naval”. Another link between them is the concept of *three Sundays* coming together in a short period of time. As Poe lived in Philadelphia during their publications, it is not much to assume that he saw these articles. The resemblance between them is too high to think otherwise.

As has been mentioned in the previous chapter on parody, the parodical writings of Poe were targeted towards the audience of the early nineteenth century. This means that some of the satire and parody that is being used in the works could easily be overlooked by readers in the 21st century. One of these is the importance of the character that Rungdudgeon keeps referring to throughout the tale, Doctor Double L. Dee. This is a satirical reference to the real life Dionsysius Lardner, L.L.D (1793-1859) who was a professor in astronomy and natural philosophy at the University of London (Mabbott 2000, 648). In the 1840s, he travelled and delivered scientific centred lectures in the US and one can conclude that this is how Poe knew who the Irish man was. Another connection to Lardner being parodied in the short story is how “Three Sundays” was published in the issue directly after Dionsysius Lardner’s lecture schedule was announced in the *Philadelphia Saturday Evening Post* on the 20th of November 1841. This shows how Poe wanted the people to know how much of quack he was. By examining these real-life connections, which can even be found in a “lesser-worth” short story like “Three Sundays”, we see how even this story follows to some degree a pattern in Poe’s authorship. As mentioned, he parodies people and concepts he dislikes and thus has created a distinctive archetype that can be often recognized in his literature. When one has a somewhat formula when writing, it becomes easier for us readers to distinguish the significance of things that may have otherwise been disregarded. The same can be said for how Poe has a pattern of using his own relationships as inspiration in his writing.

Mirrored Characters and Relationships

The Tense Familial Relationship Between the Men

Poe is known for using his own life experiences and the people in his life as inspiration for his literary work. As was mentioned in the first chapter of the thesis, many scholars (Stovall 1925, Weekes 2002, Lockwood 2013, Martens 2013) have drawn the connection of resemblance between the real women in Poe's life and the female characters of his works' portrayals. There has also been those who theorise that Poe used the female characters as a portrayals of himself, either real or idealised versions, as Stovall claimed Poe did with his character Ligeia (1925, 208). In "Three Sundays" we can draw two different links to Poe's own real-life relationships, further strengthening the notion of how the tale is also following the patterns found elsewhere in his authorship. In this chapter, I will be looking at what I call *mirrored* relationships and characters based on how they are represented almost identically to people and relationships in Poe's own life. Duarte's discussion of the four main characteristics of parody and Hutcheon's theory of how parody can be used as a way of introducing reform is central in this discussion of "Three Sundays". The first mirrored relationship is that between Rumgudgeon and his nephew Bobby. This relationship resembles that of Poe himself and his foster father John Allan, which shows how Bobby himself becomes a portrayal of Poe. Both Poe and Bobby were taken in when they were young, and they were both affianced to their younger cousins, the real Virginia Clemm and the fictional Kate. By taking a more meticulous look at the short story, we can further understand Poe's own life and to some extent how he saw himself and the people around him.

The tense relationship between Bobby and Rumgudgeon then reflects how it was between Poe and John Allan, especially after Poe reached his teen years and started at the University of Virginia. Baldellou claims that "John Allan was often too absorbed in business and maintained a distant relationship with Poe" (2007, 468), something that did not create a close and warm relationship between them. This is similar to Bobby, who like Poe, had issues with the male character, his uncle, in his life. Bobby describes how "From five to fifteen, he threatened me, hourly, with the House of Correction" and that "it was a dog's existence that he [Rumgudgeon] led me" (Poe 2010, 265). The issues between the men seem to have started when both Poe and Bobby started the transition from boys to men, Poe when he started university and Bobby when he turned sixteen. Poe could have used the character of Bobby as a way to deal with how he believed that he was treated unfairly by his foster father and

through the portrayal shared this aspect of his life with his readers. Another tense topic that resonates with both Poe and Bobby is that of money. Baldellou states how after Poe's first year at university, he left the Allan household while owing more than two thousand in debts (2007, 468) and that it deepened the distance between the two. In "Three Sundays" the issue of money is brought up as well, and has created a rift between Bobby and Rumgudgeon, too. In the tale, Bobby claims that "From fifteen to twenty, not a day passed in which he did not promise to cut me off with a chilling" (Poe 2010, 265). Rumgudgeon also seems to believe that Bobby wants to marry Kate due to her money, something that further strengthens the concept of money being a big part of their issues.

Besides the money, another subject seems to be at the core for the disagreement and the tense relationship between the two men, both and real and fictional. It lies in Poe's vocation and interest in being a poet and writer. John Allan was a businessman and he wanted Poe to go into the same field as him. If we look at how poets are described by Rumgudgeon in the tale, we can come to the conclusion that if he is the mirrored character of Allan, Allan did not care much for the arts. Nothing is written in the tale about what Bobby actually does for work, but he explains how Rumgudgeon has the same conception and disdain of literature as John Allan. A key piece of textual evidence that supports this claim lies in when Bobby straight out states that his uncle had a "profound contempt" (Poe 2010, 265) for the fine arts and that his uncle claimed how "Poeta nascitur non fit" was "a nasty poet for nothing fit" (Poe 2010, 265). As the Latin quote actually translates to "A poet is born, not made"¹⁴ one can draw the conclusion that this was Poe's attack on Allan-types who did not understand the significance of poetry nor supported those in the literary field. In the tale, Rumgudgeon makes up his own translation of the Latin words where he transforms them into what he believes them to be based on their resemblance to the English words he already knows. An example of this is how he sees the word *nascitur* and believes it to be the word *nasty* instead. By doing so, Poe uses parody to convey the ignorance of men like Rumgudgeon and John Allan and thus follows the pattern of his authorship of criticising and degrading those he dislikes.

¹⁴ Merriam-Webster.com Dictionary, s.v. "poeta nascitur, non fit," accessed February 2, 2020, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/poeta%20nascitur%2C%20non%20fit>.

Love (and Marry) thy Cousin

There is, however, not only the portrayal of bad familial relationships in “Three Sundays”. Bobby and Kate are related and are portrayed to be happily in love, the love affair between them is the main focus in the tale. He depicted the relationship between them as a very good one and it is described as a one filled with partnership and love. The relationship between Kate and Bobby is very much reminiscent of the relationship between Poe and Virginia Clemm, his young cousin later turned wife. Both Bobby and Poe were affianced to their younger cousins and share the similitude of their great love for the women. Scholars like Stovall (1925) and Kewer (2000) claim that Kate is the closest representation of Virginia that can be found in Poe’s numerous writings. Kewer even states that “only Kate, of ‘Three Sundays in a Week,’ is really much like Virginia Clemm” (Poe, Mabbott, and Kewer 2000, xxv). Poe idealised his young wife, and much of what he saw in Virginia is represented in Kate’s depiction. Stovall agrees, and claims that Kate was an idealized portrait of Virginia (1925, 207). The exploration of the relationship of Kate and Bobby is vital to how subversion arises in the tale, and I will be taking a much closer look at this below when looking at Kate’s parodic performances.

Kate’s portrayal in “Three Sundays” is not filled with any bad qualities as she is described as a sweet and “good” girl who is “barely fifteen” (Poe 2010, 265). Her age plays little of a role in the tale other than contributing to the perception of her “childlike” (Freeman 1998, 887) disposition. It is, however, remarkable when we read further into the tale and it is this *child* who manages to solve the issue of the tale. Martens professes how “even at this young age, she [Kate] succeeds in outwitting her father to reach her goal” (Martens 2013, 38). Kate and Virginia Clemm are close in age, where Kate is only two years older than what Virginia was when she married Poe. Poe adored his young cousin, she was often described as sweet and innocent, especially in her love for him, we can thus argue that the discussion of her age was based on Virginia rather than her being young enough to be controlled. Bobby claims that he had a “firm friend” (Poe 2010, 265) in Kate, and the tale shows us that he also has a great love for her. Much like Poe, the narrator’s main focus is the woman (Kate) and being able to marry her is his priority, virtually the only way to secure his future happiness. The parallels between the real Virginia and the fictional Kate are significant as they further establish the patterns of Poe’s authorship. The real life relationships and the people Poe had in his life all played a role in his literary inspiration and even a lesser noteworthy tale like “Three Sundays” did only not manage to escape this, but is one of the better examples due to the influx of elements from that established pattern found.

Subversion Through Kate's Parodic Performances

Having looked at the sources of inspiration and the mirrored relationships and characters, the main focus of this chapter is however the exploration of how "Three Sundays" is a parody of gender norms and stereotypes, as well as how the characters are represented in a way that makes us question fixed power institutions. The short story in itself is quite different from Poe's usual works, especially those with prominent female characters. As previously discussed, the dying woman trope is believed to be Poe's favourite topic. "Three Sundays" differs in many ways from the usual Poesque tale that includes female characters, but what is most prominently different is the portrayal of Kate. She is alive at the end of tale, and as a character, Kate plays an immensely important and significant part to the story line as she is the one who moves the plot forward. She also plays a noteworthy part in a greater extent too due to her new and different portrayal.

Martha Nussbaum in "The Professor of Parody" states that "when we act and speak in a gendered way, we are not simply reporting on something that is already fixed in the world, we are actively constituting it, replicating it, and reinforcing it" (Nussbaum 1999, 7). This observation could be used in relation to the 'usual' portrayal of Poe's female characters. If Kate had had the same role, where she does not speak and is only known for her beauty and love for the narrator, she would have been reinforcing the already existing gender norms of the time. Nussbaum continues by claiming that "by behaving as if there were male and female 'natures', we co-create the social fiction that these natures exist" (Nussbaum 1999, 7). The idea of set natures when it comes to the genders gives way for set habits to be portrayed in a work of fiction. With the introduction of Kate, Poe breaks with these pre-set norms of how the different sexes are to be portrayed and presents his readers with a new view of how female characters can interact with literature. This "*new woman*"¹⁵ also breaks with the preconceived pattern Poe is believed to have when including female characters in his literary works. The female character's death or age play no important role, but rather the fact that she is a woman with intelligence and agency.

Nussbaum's theory can be brought to bear on a more detailed reading of "Three Sundays" if we compare Kate to detective C. Auguste Dupin. He figures in the series of short

¹⁵ The term was coined by the feminist movement in the US in the late 19th century where "new women" represented "a contemporary, modern understanding of femininity, one that emphasized youth, visibility, and mobility as well as a demand for greater freedom and independence" (Rabinovitch-Fox 2017). While my thesis does focus on the agency of women and subversion, in this sense I mean a new type of female character represented in Poe's writing. As to not introduce confusion, I will be calling them the *New Ladies*.

stories known as “The Dupin Tales”, and can be compared to Kate due to the similarity of their deductive ways. Whereas there is no surprise in a male being the intelligent one who solves the mysteries, a woman is something not heard of and is thus actively subversive towards these preconceived gender “natures” (Nussbaum 1999, 7). “Three Sundays” can then be read as a self-parody, where Poe parodies his own detective fiction and through it also his male characters. He does so by having the detective be a young woman rather than the expected male character and gives her the power of sorting things out. While there is no concrete evidence of Poe’s intention of writing “Three Sundays” as a critique of the established gender norms in society, nor of general stereotypes of the nineteenth century, I believe that the outcome of the tale is indeed a form of subversion and representation of hidden rebellion. As Duarte claims in his article, parody also has a *functional ambivalence* where it plays a role in a “social context” (1999, 74). Whilst the readers of the time period the short story was published may not have seen this interpretation as an option, conversely, by using new feminist theories and thinking, one can argue that the outcome was to further society’s view of women, whether it was done intentionally or not.

If we then look at “Three Sundays” from this point of view, where Kate is “carrying out these performances [that are usually done by males] in a slightly different manner, a parodic manner, we can perhaps unmake them just a little” (Nussbaum 1999, 7). There is quite a difference in what Dupin does when he solves murders in the different popular detective tales¹⁶ and what Kate does in “Three Sundays”. However, the concept of being intelligent enough to solve something that is not easily solvable, such as having three Sundays come together in a week, is a comparable point between Kate and Dupin. Kenny’s writing on parodic performances can be included in how we view the comparison between the two protagonists. She claims that the critical function parody plays allows us to imagine alternative meanings and through it laugh at for example power institutions such as the patriarchy (Kenny 2009, 222). Through the humorous take on of how time zones work and science in general, Poe not only uses parody to take shot at the “quack” (Poe 2010, 265) Doctor Larder, but also allows the reader to laugh at the epitome of male dominance that comes in the form of Rumgudgeon.

Freeman, however, does not put much faith in Kate having agency due to her age as well as the age difference between the couple. She claims that “Poe here insists that if it suits

¹⁶ These include short stories like “The Murders in the Rue Morgue”, “The Mystery of Marie Rogêt” and “The Purloined Letter”.

her the little girl can and will crack the code that legitimates both her own and her lover's desire" (Freeman 1998, 877). In this reading Kate, in other words, is not active in the tale for herself, but is active in favour of the male as it benefits him. Everything she does is because of Bobby, and Freeman is then trying to put Kate back in the box where many of Poe's female characters have been stored: this is where the women only live for the men, and everything they do is to benefit them rather than themselves. Freeman's view relates to Cherry's claim that Bobby is the hero of the story and thus relegates Kate to a lesser role and minimizes her importance. To both critics, Kate becomes a "mere mechanism of the plot, without character or individuality" as Stovall claimed (1925, 197). Weekes contributes to this view by also stating that Kate's portrayal, like the other female characters of Poe, is "more significant in her impact on Poe's narrators than in her own right" (2002, 148). By continuously being intent on downgrading Kate's importance as an active character in the tale, these scholars all contribute to actively constituting the set gender norms and thus reinforcing them. Kate as I show here, however, plays a much more important role in "Three Sundays" than what she has been given credit for. While her solving the issue of marriage is benefitable to Bobby, it is also benefitting her. She is not as docile as to manage to come up with this convoluted plan just for the benefit of Bobby, she could have easily not mentioned her naval acquaintances and let their union be uncertain. While in true Poesque fashion she is young and related to her fiancé, it still does not change her portrayal as an intelligent woman who is not an object in a male centred tale but someone with a great deal of agency.

"We mustn't forget the plum": Agency and Subversion

Women's reclamation of their agency and the mantra of "this is my body" that we have in the 21st century is still in its infancy. In the 19th century, the concept of women getting to decide what to wear or what to do with their own body was foreign (Wayne 2007, 17). Throughout "Three Sundays", there is a repeated mention of Kate's "plum" (Poe 2010, 264-265), which relates to the sexual aspect of gender and how it is almost a prize the man is rewarded with through marriage. Having the "plum" as such a central piece in the tale could be interpreted as a way of preserving the objectification of women in that time period. Rumgudgeon keeps referring to Kate "and her plum"(Poe 2010, 264) often, where there is no separation between the woman as a human being and her as a sexual object. One "mus'n't forget the plum" (Poe 2010, 264), as he states, showing that her identity as a sexual being is what is most important and that Bobby is only after her because of this. Bobby's desire to marry Kate is then not based on love, but on her ability to fully satisfy his needs after the union as is expected of her.

The ownership of her body gets transferred from her father to her husband without her having any say in the matter, making her a passive observer of the transaction.

However, this is where the parodic performances in the tale introduce subversion of these gender norms. Bobby clearly states in “Three Sundays” that “Kate’s plum was her own” (Poe 2010, 265) and thus breaks away from the set norms by transferring the ownership back to Kate. With power over her own body and sexuality, it is up to her when and what happens to her body. Kate is stated to have “offered her plum” (Poe 2010, 265) to Bobby herself, meaning that him wanting her for her body alone is false. By doing so, the power gets placed with the woman and thus removes her from being a sexual object in the patriarchy where her father has placed her. Rumgudgeon then becomes a symbol of the patriarchy as a whole due to his belief that he can decide when and who Kate can give her “plum” away to. This alludes to Kate only being permitted sexual relations if he has given her permission as he owns her body. Poe could then have been trying to use her father as a symbol for not only the patriarchy but also society in how women are treated as less due to their autonomy and agency being removed.

If we look at Bobby’s portrayal in “Three Sundays”, it vastly differs from that of Rumgudgeon. He speaks of Kate with great respect which we can understand from phrases he uses such as “all that Kate and myself wish” (Poe 2010, 264). Martens claims that by putting Kate’s name first, Bobby “seems to value it [Kate’s opinion] more than his own” (2013, 38). He gives her a will of her own and is supportive throughout. He clearly states that “Kates ingenuity enabled”(Poe 2010, 265) them to find a solution to the problem, almost sounding proud of his future wife. By showing such great amount of support it appears that “Bobby and Kate can be considered to be equals, both loving and respecting each other equally” (Martens 2013, 38). Poe thus also introduces a new type of male character through Bobby, one that is not the protagonist but a man who is supportive of the female main character. Together with Kate as the feminist hero and Bobby as the feminist ally, they become the symbol of how relationships are supposed to be based an equal partnership and how women are no less important or “dumber” than men.

In her article, Kenny states that “parodic representations help us to imagine alternatives to taken-for-granted institutions and critique power” (Kenny 2009, 222). With Kate as the “new woman” and Bobby as the “new man”, we are introduced to an alternative society that resembles the one we have in the 21st century. The tale in itself then becomes “essential for healthy political and cultural debate” (Kenny 2009, 222). While not clearly stated in “Three Sundays”, the notion of these taken for granted views of gender roles become

highlighted and reversed with subtle clues. A shift has happened of the typical power institutions, where Kate now has the qualities that previously were only attributed to men and by doing so she has become the real protagonist of the tale. Kenny claims that “parody must push what is powerful, yet taken for granted, directly into the spotlight to be copied and displayed as a ‘carnavalesque’ spectacle” (2009, 225). While this ‘pushing’ is done subtly, one can still argue that “Three Sundays” takes the preconceived gender norms and make a humoristic spectacle out of them, mostly in the form of Kate’s portrayal.

Parody also operates on the level of genre, namely fairy tales. By exploring the concept of existing power institutions, such as how genders are divided in literature, the idea of seeing “Three Sundays” as a fairy tale came to mind as these institutions become more evident in the genre. “Three Sundays” has many of the elements that are usually found in a fairy tale, but they have been altered. The short story presents itself as one due to the structure; the short story has a prince, a princess and a villain all followed by a major obstacle that needs to be overcome for a “happily ever after”, which is the formula for a fairy tale. The interesting part with this comparison is how it is not Bobby who becomes the prince, but rather Kate. She becomes the equivalent to the cunning prince who saves the day by defeating the villain, her father Rumgudgeon. The main obstacle that stands in the way of the couple’s happily ever after is trying to figure out how to have three Sundays come together in a week, which Kate manages to solve. The usage of the number “three” is also very fairy tale-like and should not go unnoticed: *three* Sundays have to come together as well as how it is *three* weeks after the initial request for a date to be set that Kate solves the problem. By looking at it through the lens of preconceived notions of what makes a fairy tale, the patriarchy becomes the literal villain who is in the wrong. The institution of power gets criticised as well as used as an alternative where the female character becomes the hero. The parody of the fairy tale elements can then “help us to ‘re-imagine’ the organisations and institutions that form part of daily life” (Du Gay 2007, 13) as they introduce the concept of gender equality through imaginary themes and humour, and thus create an alternative society in a literary form accessed and understood by all.

Nussbaum states that “we are doomed to repetition of the power structures into which we are born, but we can at least make fun of them; and some ways of making fun are subversive assaults on the original norms” (Nussbaum 1999, 6). To conclude this chapter, I will suggest that while the “Three Sundays” did not have a big impact on how women were treated or how they were perceived, Poe still managed through “Three Sundays” to write a humoristic and subversive tale that challenged the preconceived limitations of the genders and

thus put a spin on the norms that are seen as fundamental. The story also introduced a new element in Poe's authorship that has gone largely unnoticed as seen through my analysis of the tale. It proves that Poe was to some degree a feminist in how he portrayed the women in a way that challenged the power institutions of society. The introduction of gender equality, especially of that in relationships, is significant to how we see Poe and his works from now on.

Chapter 3: The Parodic Spectacle in Poe's «The Spectacles»

Introduction

Edgar Allan Poe's short story "The Spectacles" is, like "Three Sundays", one of his lesser known and acclaimed works, even if a little bit better known than "Sundays". "Spectacles" was first published on the 27th of March 1844 in the *Dollar Newspaper* and reprinted a year later in another publication, *The Broadway Journal*, on November 22nd, 1845. The very few scholars who have analysed the short story either focus on the musicality in the tale with Stephanie Lalande's bravura, or they discuss Poe's fascination with the relation between the mind and optics. While I will explore some of those themes in this chapter, I will also argue that there is more to the tale than those critics have pointed out. The parodic spectacle presented in Madame Lalande's and Simpson's portrayal breaks from what is usually seen in Poe's authorship. The tale, much like "Three Sundays", introduce female characters never seen before. Different from "Three Sundays", the story explores how the mind and eyes can play tricks on us.

"Spectacles" is centred around 22-year old Simpson, formerly known as Froissart. He had to change his name to Simpson in order to gain access to an inheritance left to him by distant relative, one Adolphus Simpson. He is the narrator of the story, and the readers follow his journey where he desperately tries to arrange a meeting with a woman he has fallen in love with. Simpson sees the woman one day when he goes with his friend, Mr. Talbot, to the theatre for opera night. There, during the performance, he spies her in one of the private boxes. He instantly falls in love with her as he becomes "arrested and riveted" (Poe 2010, 247) by the sight of her. After staring at her often, she sees and acknowledges him and he believes her to be interested in him as well. The woman he notices turns out to be his elderly great-great grandmother¹⁷, Madame Eugénie Lalande, who only stares back at him because she believes he recognizes her as a relative. However, Simpson, unaware of their shared blood, continues on to describe Madame Lalande's beauty at length stating she was the "most exquisite" woman he had ever seen and that her "form was divine" (Poe 2010, 247).

¹⁷ This in itself is, of course, an absurd exaggeration of their familial relationship which relates to the parodic nature of the story.

This becomes questionable as he should have struggled to see her that well both due to the badly lit theatre and the fact that his sight was bad enough to need spectacles. Simpson, being vain in complexion, claims that spectacles “disfigure the countenance of a young person” (Poe 2010, 246). His friend, Mr. Talbot is the one who identifies Madame Eugénie Lalande, and Simpson spends the rest of the performance either begging a confused Talbot to introduce him to her or staring at the lady.

In the end, after much persistence, Mr. Talbot agrees to arrange a meeting between the two so that they can get acquainted, but he disappears the next day without arranging anything. Simpson, having lost the only link to Madame Lalande, spends the rest of the week inquiring about her in town of everyone he meets. He even returns every morning to see if Talbot has returned. After a long week of searching, Simpson finally locates Madame Lalande’s house where he waits for her to leave alone so he can speak to her. When he does get the chance, they talk and end up going to a “musical levee”(Poe 2010, 252) together where he walks her home after. Back in front of Madame Lalande’s house, Simpson asks for her hand in marriage. She agrees to marry him on the curious condition that he wears spectacles after their union. Simpson readily agrees to it, and they get married the next morning. The happiness of Simpson soon changes to horror when he puts on the eyeglass and it is revealed that Madame Lalande is actually his great-great grandmother. As he sees her clearly for the first time, he becomes stunned and disgusted by the sight before him. Madame Lalande explains how she deceived him to teach him a lesson, and that he did not marry her but her ward, Stephanie Lalande.

“Spectacles” is on the surface a humorous and absurd romantic tale about the lengths a man is willing to go to be with whom he believes to be his one true love. However, if we delve deeper into the significance of the characters and their portrayal in the tale, as well as the message of the tale, we can uncover more about the story. The concept of optics is in focus throughout the tale, from the continues mentions of love at first *sight* to the repetition of Simpson’s need of *eyeglasses* and *spectacles*. The narrator of the tale, Simpson, manages to fall in” love at first sight”(Poe 2010, 247) with someone he can barely see. The significance of this is interesting, especially when the readers learn how bad his sight really is and who he thought he fell “deeply, madly, irrevocably in love”(Poe 2010, 247) with. The reader’s perspective and comprehension of a specific text is unique, and in this short story the reader’s perspective becomes intertwined with the narrator’s, even though there is a sense of foreboding due to the mentioned repetition of his bad eyesight. As Simpson is a first-person narrator, the reader sees the events through his subjective eyes where he draws the reader in

with his focalization which leads to the readers perspective being intertwined with his. The concept of Simpson as a focalizer will be discussed later in the chapter, especially that of the focalization in relation to his blurry perceptions.

As mentioned, Simpson describes the beauty of Madame Lalande in great detail, stating that she is the “most celebrated specimen of female loveliness” and “grace personified, incarnate, the beau ideal” (Poe 2010, 247). To the reader, this might not be something to question, but if one rereads “Spectacles”, Simpson’s proclamations become suspect as one knows of his very bad eyesight, a weakness he himself admits to early in the tale. Whenever Simpson makes an inquiry of Madame Lalande, the people he is speaking to believe he means Stephanie Lalande, the young ward of Eugénie Lalande who indeed is very beautiful. This strengthens Simpsons desire for their union and removes any doubt if such doubt was even present, alongside his unquestionable desire also helps Madame Lalande’s ruse of deception to succeed. The short story itself utilizes parody in varying degrees, whether it parodies another work of literature or real-life people.

English professor and honorary member of the Poe Studies Association, Burton R. Pollin’s article ““The Spectacles” of Poe-Sources and Significance” is central in the exploration of parody in the tale. In this article he writes that the direct source of “Spectacles” is first and foremost another literary text, “The Mysterious Portrait”¹⁸ (Pollin 1965, 186). The parodied work was anonymously published a few years before in the London based literary-fashion magazine, *New Monthly Belle Assemblée*, in 1836. The two short stories, both original and parody, share many similar themes and characteristics. Both include for example the notion of a young man attaining an inheritance from a distant relative and the topic of a whirlwind romance based on *love at first sight*. While there is no question that “The Mysterious Portrait” is a direct source to Poe’s parody, there are other sources that deserve attention such as another article in the aforementioned 1836 magazine issue, *Belle Assemblée*. This was a summary of a memoir about an esteemed opera singer which written by Joseph Thomas Nathan and it was given two pages in the magazine. The title of the article was “Memory of Madame Malibran de Beriot” (Pollin 1965, 188) based on the life of Maria Garcia Malibran. Associate Professor of English Rebeccah Bechtold in her article “Poe’s Silent Music” agrees with Pollin that Poe took inspiration from the life of Malibran, the opera singer the published editorial was about (Bechtold 2018, 32). In her article, Bechtold discusses Charity McAdams’ view of how Poe “stole his description of the fictional Stephanie

¹⁸ Not to be confused by the 1835 published short story by Nikolai Gogol under the same name.

Lalande's singing" from "Memoirs and Letters of Madame Malibran", a two volume memoir of Maria Garcia Malibran's life (Bechtold 2018, 32). Poe's parodies often included imitations or references of real-life people such as Malibran and the people in her life who then impacted the characters of the story in how they acted or looked.

In this chapter, I will firstly examine the direct source of inspiration behind the short story and then explore the more subtle references that are included throughout the tale, these being the two articles referenced from the *Belle Assemblée*. As mentioned, there are few scholars who deem "Spectacles" as a noteworthy tale to discuss and analyse. As well as Pollin and Bechtold, other scholars who have investigated different aspects of the tale will be included in this chapter's exploration of "Spectacles". Charity McAdams in her book *Poe and the Idea of Music: Failure, Transcendence, and Dark Romanticism* focuses on how Poe got his inspiration for the characters from Malibran and her life that he found in *Memoirs and Letters of Madame Malibran*. Rae Beth Gordon in her article "Poe: Optics, Hysteria, and Aesthetic Theory" discussed the relation between themes of illusion and Poe's fascination with optics. Whilst these scholars all have some interesting claims that are vital to the thesis' study of Poe's usage of parody, there are some aspects that I find lacking in the field. The most important is that the tale as a whole works as a cautionary tale of male foolishness and vanity. Simpson thus becomes the embodiment of those two traits, as his vanity leads him to being foolish and getting humiliated by Madame Lalande with the help of Mr. Talbot. One possible reading is that Poe uses him as a way to convey his bitterness towards the notion of true love, this being based on his own biographical background in relation to women. The parodic spectacle presented in the tale is both humorous and subversive, and the portrayal of Madame Lalande raises the question of who the real hero of the tale is. Simpson, being our first-person narrator, draws the reader in with his focalization where the readers perspective is intertwined with his. Furthermore, by examining the tale through the lens of the fairy tale genre, I believe that it shows how Madame Lalande is not presented as the 'bad guy' due to her deception. Simpson, as much as her, can be described as the villain which presents another possible reading of the tale. This I will come back to later in the chapter as we first need to examine the direct source behind "Spectacles".

Tale of Two Portraits

"Spectacles" differs from "Three Sundays" in the source of inspiration. "Three Sundays" parodied factual articles written and submitted anonymously to journals as well as Dionsysius Lardner, the doctor who he described as a "quack" (Poe 2010, 265). The direct source of

“Spectacles” is, as we saw, a short story with the title “The Mysterious Portrait”¹⁹. While “Portrait” too was submitted anonymously to a magazine, it differs in how it is another *literary* work of fiction as well as having a named editor, a Mrs. Cornwell Baron-Wilson. As mentioned in the introduction, the tale was published a few years before “Spectacles” in the 1836 issue of the *New Monthly Belle Assemblée*. The plotline of “Portrait” naturally resembles that of Poe’s parody in many varying degrees and there is an “intertextual ambivalence” (Duarte 1999, 73) where the relationship between the two texts is based on the aforementioned resemblance as well as contrast. This strengthens Hutcheon’s claim of parody being a “mode of ‘parallel scrips’” (1992, 9) as the plot of “Portrait” and “Spectacles” are remarkably similar.

“Portrait” starts with Frederick, a young man, who finds a mysterious miniature on the grass by the Champs Elysees. He ends up falling in love with the woman in the picture even if he has a fiancé. What he does not know is that the woman in the picture is actually his 80-year-old grandmother, Madame de Bermond, whose ward he is engaged to. Madame de Bermond finds out about the picture and devises a plan to “cure Frederick of his infatuation” (Pollin 1965, 186). Madame de Bermond gets help from her servant Oliver, and he is the one who tricks Frederick into thinking that the woman in the picture is the ward of a horrible man named Durocher. Oliver convinces Frederick that Durocher is planning to marry the beautiful woman, and that she saw him pick up her miniature with hopes of him planning to free her. Frederick, elated by this, puts on a disguise and plans to go to her house to free and marry her. He is, however, delayed by people he meets on the way as they want to speak to him. In the end, he gets to her garden at midnight and enters a carriage that’s planned for Lyon so that they can get married, this all being carried out by Oliver. It ends with a mock marriage where the grandmother reveals herself and tells him that the picture was of her when she was younger. Frederick is shocked but he apologises to his fiancé and marries her instead. As we can see, “Portrait” shares many of the same themes as “Spectacles”. While we will not explore all the similarities between the two tales in great detail, I still feel it prudent to make a list of the similarities and differences between the two as to get a clear overview:

¹⁹ «The Mysterious Portrait” will from now on be referred to as “Portrait”.

Figure 1.

Similarities between “Spectacles” and “Portrait”.	Differences between “The Spectacles” and “The Mysterious Portrait” (what Poe has added in his short story).
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Old ladies, ages 80 and 82 - Paris - Grandparents that engineer deception - Fast elopement - Early morning marriage - Carriage out of town - A miniature of the ladies fifty years earlier - Love at first sight - Nearsightedness - Bravura song episode - Exchange of notes /letters - Inheritance for the young man - Actual marriage to the beautiful ward instead - Assumed names - Male accomplice 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 1st person narrative - Tone of grotesque humor - Play on French names - The English of Lalande (in her letters) - Pretended anger at the end

Pollin claims that compared to the “Spectacles” the original story has “more restraint” (Pollin 1965, 190) and that it is “free from the ‘grotesqueries’” (Pollin 1965, 186) found in Poe’s version. What these *grotesqueries* are, however, he does not state at all and we are thus left to wonder what they might be. Like in the “Spectacles”, the main male character has fallen in love at first sight with a woman he never has met. Simpson and Frederick both attain miniatures of the women they desire, and these pictures end up being their 80- and 82-year-old grandmothers. The difference between the two short stories lies in how Frederick, the

male protagonist of “Portrait” was actually engaged before he acquired the picture of the beautiful young ward of his grandmother, Amelia. “Portrait” and “Spectacles” share a major link as the notion of an elderly woman devising a plan to rid the man of his foolishness is present in both. The ending of both tales, with the man understanding and learning from the experience, is significant. Weekes claims that the portrayal of Madame Lalande is negative in how Simpson reacts to the revelation, stating that, “once a woman steps out of the narrow boundaries of the stereotypical feminine role, she is reviled rather than revered” (Weekes 2002, 154). I, however, disagree due to the fact that Madame Lalande, like Madame de Bermond, may have been the source of the male protagonists’ horror but they were not seen as the villains after the reasoning of why they deceived was revealed. Simpson himself claims to have learned from this experience, much like Frederick who learned from his wrong and apologised to Amelia. The concept of whether Madame Lalande is the villain in the tale will be returned to later in the chapter, the same with the discussion of male foolishness.

The second direct source of inspiration of parody found in “Spectacles” lies in the character of Stephanie Lalande, who we only hear about in the tale but never meet or hear talk. In Poe’s tale, Stephanie becomes the parody of Maria Garcia Malibran who was an opera singer of high esteem. She died in 1836 which led to the two-part summary on her life in the same *New Monthly Belle Assemblée* issue as “Portrait”. Pollin (1965), McAdams (2017) and Bechtold (2018) all claim that there is evidence of Malibran and her life being a source of inspiration for Poe. They claim that Poe either saw the editorial in the *Belle Assemblée* (Pollin 1965) or that he became familiar with her through the biography written after her death (Bechtold 2018, McAdams 2017). The last piece of evidence of Poe parodying Malibran lies in how he himself reviewed *Memoirs and Letters of Madame Malibran* in 1840 for *Burton’s Gentleman’s Magazine* (Bechtold 2018, 32). Poe did not hide the fact that he parodied Malibran either, as we see in the short story when Simpson comments on how Madame Lalande’s singing was an “imitation of Malibran” herself (Poe 2010, 253). What needs to be explored is how it is not only her singing that is parodied, but also the people in her life. The portrayal of the characters in Poe short story can be linked to several people in her life, both related to the likeness of names and characteristics, which strengthens the parodic aspect of the tale.

McAdams is, as mentioned, certain that Malibran and her life played a role when Poe wrote the “Spectacles”. She goes into detail on how *Memoirs and Letters of Madame Malibran* introduced some of the characters in the tale and how real-life people from Malibran’s life are represented to some extent. One of the things she claims is that Poe

borrowed the names of people that were part of Malibran's real life. For instance, the name Eugénie is linked to Malibran's hated husband's name, Eugene Malibran. McAdams claims that not only did Poe borrow the name, but also character traits. Madame Eugénie Lalande and Eugene Malibran both share an "attachment to material wealth" (McAdams 2017). The difference between the two is how Eugénie Lalande has wealth in the tale whereas Eugene Malibran did not, no matter his deep wish for it. This resonates with Simpson's portrayal, who, similarly to Malibran's husband, is depicted as vain and obsessed with money. McAdams claims that Simpson too becomes a parody of Malibran's husband due to his "attachment to material wealth [which] enhances his blindness to any other qualities, so much that he can clearly see Eugénie's wealth, but mistakes everything else" (McAdams 2017). Simpson continuously makes mentions of Madame Lalande's wealth and high breeding throughout the tale, and he mostly refers to how she was a woman with "so evident an air of high breeding" (Poe 2010, 248). His vanity and wish for a high "position in society" (Poe 2010, 249) is consequently something that he shares with Eugene Malibran.

If we continue looking at the name factor, there was an actual Lalande in Malibran's real life. This was her musical rival, Henriette Meric-Lalande (McAdams 2017). McAdams argues that by putting the names of Malibran's disliked husband and her musical rival together, Eugénie Lalande becomes the embodiment of what Malibran hated (2017). On one side, this arguably mean that Poe's portrayal of Madame Lalande was meant as a negative one, such as Weekes claims in her article (2002, 154). If the readers were aware of this connection upon reading Poe's story, they could have anticipated Simpsons feelings of dislike and horror at the end of the tale when the ruse is revealed. While I do not believe that Madame Lalande is the symbol of so called 'hatred', I do agree that Poe could have used this as a way to foreshadow the ending of the tale. In doing so, the suspense of the tale becomes even more interesting and the parodic elements such as the *communicative determination* (Duarte 1999) play their role as the readers who were familiar with Malibran would have an inkling of what was to come.

Love is Blind (Until You Get a Pair of Spectacles)

In the "Spectacles", there are two female characters included, both with varying degrees of agency. Madame Eugénie Lalande has more agency compared to Stephanie Lalande, who we only hear mentioned and never actually get to meet in the tale. Stovall states that Madame Lalande is a not "clearly developed character" (Stovall 1925, 204) in the way she is been portrayed and he completely disregards the significance of her role. Martens agrees some

degree and she, too, claims that while Madame Lalande is not a “fully developed character”, she has some kind of agency where she plays a role in the tale compared to Poe’s other female characters (Martens 2013, 40). As mentioned in previous chapters, I will however argue that she is indeed a fully developed character, and that her portrayal is vital to the plot as well as introducing new views on Poe’s authorship. Arguably, Madame Lalande becomes a self-parody where Poe has created a female character that is completely different from the regular women we meet in his works, such as the Dark Ladies. Weekes claims that Madame Lalande “is the opposite of Poe’s feminine ideal” and “is not young nor delicately beautiful” (Weekes 2002, 154). She is furthermore an old woman who does *not* die in the end of the tale. While the reader believes her to be based on another Poesque female character on the accounts of Simpson early in the tale, this changes when her trick is revealed. The readers understand that she is completely different from what was expected. While Madame Lalande shares some of the characteristics of the Dark Ladies, such as her intelligence and the notion of being a guide to the man, she is in fact something that Poe has never created before. I will come back to this later.

Gordon claims in her article that “Poe uses optics for amusing as well as for frightening effects” (Gordon 2000, 50). In “Spectacles” we are often reminded of how the narrator struggles with his vision and how objects often are blurry to him. When he sees the “majestic loveliness” (Poe 2010, 249) of Madame Lalande, what he sees in actuality is a blurry figure. However, he projects what he hopes she looks like on to her. Simpson is our first-person narrator, but he is also the *focal* character. In other words, he both narrates and perceives at the same time. Focalization is loosely defined as ‘point of view’ and more strictly as “to bring to a focus”²⁰. The narrative’s focalization is intertwined with the narrator’s voice, and we find both in Simpson. William F. Edmiston states in his article “Focalization and the First-Person Narrator: A Revision of the Theory” that:

If focalization is defined as a restriction on perception, then it makes sense to say that everything presented by the FPN [First-Person Narrator] is focalized, or restricted to what this fictional human being could logically know (1989, 734).

²⁰ Merriam-Webster.com Dictionary, s.v. “focalize,” accessed March 19, 2020, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/focalize>.

The reader, through Simpson, only gets to see and feel what he knows; the only perspective they get is his and it is thus restricted. The fact that his perception of things is blurry as well, makes his point of view even more restricted. Essentially, the reader becomes part of the delusion and we too are deceived by the optical illusion of Madame Lalande. What Simpson does do well is that, while recounting the story of how he fell in love at first sight, he does not reveal the ending of his story, nor that of the tale. He becomes a “consonant narrator” who “draws no attention to his hindsight and identifies with his younger incarnation by renouncing all cognitive privilege” (Edmiston 1989, 733). Arguably, Simpson learns the lesson Madame Lalande wants him to learn but instead of seeing her as the villain, the resentment is gone and him telling his story is Simpson’s way of warning others from doing the same mistake he did. This narrative strategy breaks with Poe’s authorship in how the male narrator does not blame the female character for his misfortune, like in many of Poe’s other short stories like the Dark Ladies, but rather appreciates her meddling as it helps him.

As Simpson falls in love with Madame Lalande at *first sight*, everything that comes after is clouded by this love he believes to have for her. Gordan states that “love will necessarily be based on an optical illusion” (2000, 51), where Simpson is deceived by what he sees and Madame Lalande become the optical illusion. English professor Leland S. Person agrees and states in his article “Aesthetic Headaches: Women and a Masculine Poetics in Poe, Melville, & Hawthorne” that “Simpson therefore falls in love not so much with the woman as with an image of her he has created” (Person 1988, 45). His love for her is a trick of the eye where reality and mind have merged together, and neither he nor the reader knows what is what until the end of the tale. This becomes interesting when remembering that there is indeed a beautiful woman in the tale, Stephanie Lalande, raising the question of what Simpson’s obliviousness to her signifies.

As mentioned earlier, in “Spectacles” the reader does not get to meet Stephanie Lalande in “person”, nor does she have agency in the tale which leads to us disregarding her importance. The only thing we know about her is her singing voice, which is like Malibran’s. That is to say, it is quite exquisite. The reader also understands that Stephanie is beautiful to the point of people talking about it, even if it is only recognised in the end when the smokescreen provided by Simpson disappears. This is shown when Simpson is having a conversation with three of his friends about the “all absorbing subject of [his] heart” (Poe 2010, 250). While the men are talking, an open carriage passes by them with both Lalande women inside. The other men then begin to wax about Stephanie Lalande, whom they believe is the woman Simpson is inquiring about. They continue to talk about Madame Eugénie

Lalande, stating that she “also wears remarkably well” (Poe 2010, 250). When Simpson states that she does look nice, but is nothing compared to her companion, the men laugh at him. The mix up of the two women leads to a strengthening of Simpson’s resolve, where if he had any doubt about Madame Lalande’s beauty this is now gone with the reassurance of his friends. Simpson truly believes in Eugénie Lalande is the beautiful one, whilst ignoring the other, Stephanie. His desire is so great that he sees nothing else but the object he is fascinated by. Gordon claims that Simpson “in gazing at the Object of his desire, he perceives only a blur” (2000, 51). The loveliness he projects upon Madame Lalande becomes all he perceives, which makes Stephanie the symbol of his blindness and delusion. He has somehow become even more blind by his desire, and thus reality has been replaced by fantasy.

The ending of the story ensures that his love turns into horror and disgust: when Simpson follows Madame Lalande’s wish and condition by putting on the eyeglasses after the wedding, the illusion of Madame Lalande disappears, and he is faced with reality. Gordon states that “illusion based on sensory distortion turns to horror as the Real breaks through to the narrator’s consciousness with full force” (2000, 51). The tale of Simpson becomes a parody of how delusions of love can be turned upside down when faced with reality, and that rashness becomes foolishness. The fault does then not lie with Madame Lalande for having deceived him, but with himself for being immersed in his delusion. Person states that “when they project such an ideal, male characters commit themselves to a creative process at once destructive and self-destructive” (1988, 44). Simpson made himself into the fool by letting the ideal become his reality.

The Parodic Spectacle

The word spectacle itself has so far been focused on from the sense of the optics. There are, however, multiple meanings of the word that can be interesting to explore in relation to how we read the story. Another definition of the word is for instance “spectacle” in the sense of “something exhibited to view as unusual, notable, or entertaining” and “an object of curiosity or contempt”²¹ where something happens that is not expected and is even comedic in nature. Arguably, the tale is presented like a comedic play with its absurd portrayal of the plotline and the characters. As a whole, it builds up to a notable and extraordinary finale where

²¹ *Merriam-Webster.com Dictionary*, s.v. “spectacle,” accessed March 7, 2020, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/spectacle>.

Simpsons ends up making a spectacle of himself when Madame Lalande tells him how she deceived him.

Kenny claims that in parody the “*spectacle* is vital”(Kenny 2009, 225) as a way to make people laugh. The parody brings with it a moral of not being too vain and self-centred, almost as an absurd and comedic warning. Much like in Poe’s own life, he often made a spectacle of himself when he harshly criticised other authors. The idea of “Spectacles” also introduces another parodic spectacle, that of how women should behave. The entire tale itself consequently becomes a parodic spectacle that introduces a new way of seeing, spectating, the role of a female character. Gordon claims that “themes of illusion and deception are presented almost immediately” (2000, 51) in the short story. Like Kate in “Three Sundays”, Madame Lalande is portrayed as intelligent in a devious way that does not reflect badly on her. The one who becomes the fool is Simpson, as he lets his vanity go too far. By not admitting his weakness, he finds himself in a situation he could have easily avoided by using glasses and thus becomes “self-destructive” (Person 1988, 44). To some degree the tale thus turns into a parody of forced masculinity in the sense of men not being honest about having weaknesses; in the tale it is presented in how appearance go before practicality for Simpson.

This in itself leads to the destruction of the male self. If we go further by stating that this type of masculinity is part of the patriarchy, Lasse Bundgaard’s statement in his paper “Gender Roles in Edgar Allan Poe - A Study of Oracles in ‘Ligeia’ and ‘Berenice’” can be linked to this discussion even if it is not “Three Sundays” he talks about. He states that with “a change of perspective and some displaced hierarchies, we find our stories to be about powerful women attempting to help their loved ones by sharing their wisdom” (Bundgård 2013, 62). Madame Lalande becomes the wise figure who helps Simpson right his wrongs, where she is at the top of the hierarchy. The parodic spectacle then lies in the alternative power hierarchy introduced, echoing Nussbaum’s point that “by carrying out the performances in a slightly different manner, a parodic manner, we can perhaps unmake them just a little” (1999, 7). Simpson makes a spectacle of himself; he has been tricked “by a woman” (Person 1988, 45) but the sympathy does not go to him. This is a change in Poe’s authorship, where the male character for once is not the one we end up rooting for but criticise for his foolishness.

The Villainous Hero

If we look at “Spectacles” from a fairy tale point of view or perspective, Poe’s parodying of some of the genre’s aspects grant us the opportunity to examine who the real “villain” of the

tale is due to the deception that is being done. It is valuable to see the tale through the fairy tale genre as it introduces an alternative view of existing power institutions in a way that is much easier to break down and analyse. Vladimir Propp in his article “Morphology of the Folk Tale” analyses the structure of fairy tale and speaks of some of the known elements that can be found. While “Spectacles” is indeed not a fairy tale, it does include some of the structural pieces Propp mentions. One of these is how “THE VILLAIN ATTEMPTS TO DECEIVE HIS VICTIM IN ORDER TO TAKE POSSESSION OF HIM OR OF HIS BELONGINGS,” where the villain of the tale coerces or deceives the hero of the tale for his own benefit. (Propp 2010, 16-17). As has been mentioned, I do not believe that Madame Lalande is the villain in the tale, but for the sake of the argument I will here consider her in that role. Madame Lalande attempts to deceive Simpson in order to teach him a lesson and succeeds in the end of the tale. Propp states that another part of this structure is when “THE VICTIM SUBMITS TO DECEPTION AND THEREBY UNWITTINGLY HELPS HIS ENEMY” (2010, 17). Simpson in his vanity refuses to wear eyeglasses and by doing so, he helps Madame Lalande’s plan to succeed. Whereas he is the victim in the tale as he is tricked, one can argue that the tale is more nuanced and thus cannot be categorised as a fairy tale as such.

Simpson, as the hero of the tale, tries to find Madame Lalande as she is the only thing that can secure his “future happiness”(Poe 2010, 250). His portrayal is similar to the typical male characters Poe usually writes about. He needs guidance and has a tendency of obsessing over a woman in the name of love, much like the male characters in the Dark Ladies tales. As we have mentioned earlier, Simpson resembles the male narrator in “Ligeia”. In other words, there is no break from Poe’s pattern in his portrayal. The break happens with the introduction of a new type of female character. Madame Lalande, if we follow Propp’s list of functions, is the villain of the tale where she deceives the hero. Now, if we reverse this, Simpson becomes the villain in the tale. He stalks the hero (Madame Lalande), where he as the villain “MAKES AN ATTEMPT AT RECONNAISSANCE” (Propp 2010, 15) to find out who she is so he can meet her and be with her. This is shown when Simpson himself states that he “had been in the habit of watching her house” (Poe 2010, 251) after finding out where it is by following her, i.e. “THE VILLAIN RECEIVES INFORMATION ABOUT HIS VICTIM” (Propp 2010, 16). If we look at it from this point of view, Simpson as the hero of the tale undergoes a change where the readers no longer root for him but rather Madame Lalande, who has been labelled as the villain of the story, the “villainous old hag!” (Poe 2010, 255). This raises the question of the need to have someone as the ‘good’ guy and the ‘bad’ guy. In the tale the terms

become so coalesced that there is no distinct separation between the characteristics of one versus the other, and thus one can argue that there does not always need to be one.

The concept of *love at first sight* is a recurring theme in fairy tales. The whole basis of “Spectacles” is centred around Simpson seeing Madame Lalande at the theatre and falling “in love at first sight” (Poe 2010, 247). This leads to Simpson going on a ‘quest’ to find her so they can get their happily ever after. Christian Maurer in his book *On ‘Love at First Sight’* describes love at first sight as “an undoubtedly intense, but shallow phenomenon” (2014, 171). Being shallow is something that is closely linked to vanity, and thus fits with the portrayal of Simpson. “Spectacles” is about his desire for Madame Lalande, and through this he turns her into an object to be claimed. What the woman wants is not relevant, the only function she has in the story is to be the object the hero gets in the end. For Simpson, he believes that “the object of [his] quest is obtained as the direct result of preceding actions” (Propp 2010, 35). Poe, however, manages to turn this around, where Madame Lalande does not end up being an Object but the one who lies at the core of the whole plot without being obtained in any way. “Spectacles” ends with Simpson learning a lesson on how to behave and he himself states that “I am done with billets doux and am never to be met without SPECTACLES” (Poe 2010, 257). He has learned not to be rash and foolish when it comes to love and to not put vanity above everything else. In a broader sense, by changing the roles of the characters the parodic performance can be seen as a “tool of both reaction and reform” (Hutcheon 1992, 7). The parodic subversion of gender norms happens in a nuanced and subtle way, where the readers’ perspective of the events changes with the ending and consequently allows them to question the significance behind the tale. By changing it up in this way, Madame Lalande is neither dull nor the villain in the tale.

If we see “Spectacles” as a cautionary tale based on Poe’s own life, the pattern of his authorship is included in this short story as well. As mentioned earlier, Poe was a quite proud man and, based on his scathing reviews of other authors, believed himself to be a connoisseur of what good literature was. His posted reviews ruined his life as he became unpopular in the literary circle of Baltimore (Lockwood 2013), which can be linked to how Simpson’s vanity ruined much for him. The significance of the tale is then based on two elements. The first one being the introduction of the “new” female character who is neither evil nor passive, but someone ordinary with intelligence. The second element the tale implies is the break from Poe’s authorship without completely changing it up. While he introduces this changed female character, he still follows the pattern of how he used parody in his literature.

Chapter 4: Putting on the Parodical *Spectacles*

Introduction

Critics over the years have compiled different views on how Poe portrayed his female characters. Weekes, for instance, claims that their purpose lies in “enhancing the male’s experience of melancholy Beauty” (2002, 160), a view that resonates with many Poe scholars. While it is true that the typical Poesque woman often is monotonous in character portrayal and appearance, Poe also introduced other types of women that had never been seen before in his writing. As Martens claims “there is no such thing as one Poesque woman” (2013, 69). Poe’s female characters may indeed be alike in appearance where they follow the two types that we discussed in an earlier chapter. To briefly recap, Weekes has suggested that the poetic women in his poems are the helpless maidens with the fair hair or eyes, and the Dark Ladies found in his prose are the ones who share the raven black hair and dark eyes (2002, 152). However, while their appearance is important to note, their character and personalities are more significant in this discussion. I will suggest that Poe does not have a fully formed ideal due to the female characters being varied in mannerisms and behaviours, especially if we use parody as the foundation of the discussion. Paula Kot in her article "Feminist ‘Re-Visioning’ of the Tales of Women”(1996, 400) states that “Poe’s preoccupation with the death of a beautiful woman in his poems and tales concerning women actually reflects his interest in recovering women’s stories”. I agree with this statement, but believe it goes further than that. Not only does Poe recover women’s stories, he also through parody gives some of them a voice and personality where they can be ordinary, yet smart women without any backlash. He does not oppress his female characters but shows us how they are being oppressed and how they fight against it. In other words, he introduced everyday women and how they manage to survive in a patriarchal society.

Other scholars argue that Poe wrote his female characters as a representation of himself where he put into them characteristics and virtues he himself believed to have or strived towards obtaining (Dayan 1994, Stovall 1925, Pruette 1920). The most typical example of this is Ligeia of the Dark Ladies as she is the one with most erudition along with beauty no one could challenge. Stovall claims her to be Poe’s “ideal woman” (1925, 208) as Poe saw her as an idealized version of himself. As mentioned in earlier chapters, the Dark Ladies are the female characters who are the most renowned and researched in Poe’s prose. Their portrayal and commonalties, such as their learnedness and death, have become the

staple symbol of what is usually found in his writing. With this outlook they are thus often determined to be a portrayal of how Poe viewed women in general. This has led to Poe getting a reputation of being anti-feminist and using the women in his tales only as “means to a (male) end” (Weekes 2002, 148) rather than giving them their own purpose and meaning. Martens, however, disagrees with claims like these and states that the Dark Ladies are in fact “not as powerless and unimportant as they might seem to be during a first reading” (Martens 2013, 13). In her article she suggests that these women have more agency than first believed as the tales are about the narrators’ reaction and relation to them. This raises the question of whether it really is agency if they are there to elicit and produce reactions. I, like Martens, deem that they have more agency but, differently from her, not just due to the reactions they produce from the male narrators. Their agency lies instead in how they manage to turn the tables on the narrators and become the protagonists. Madame Lalande and Kate do elicit reactions from the male narrators, but that is not the true significance behind their portrayal. The real agency comes in the form of them being themselves and making choices that both benefit themselves but also has an outcome that has value in itself.

During my archive-research I have discovered that the overlooked women in Poe’s works are actually the ones worth exploring as they do not fall into the aforementioned *Poesque* women category. By doing an in-depth analysis of their portrayal and through the eyes of contemporary parody theory, I argue that Madame Lalande and Kate introduce the *New Ladies* in Poe. This changes the above view of his authorship by disproving some earlier statements made by other scholars. If Stovall and Weekes argue that the women in Poe are either idealised versions of himself or used as placeholders for the male narrators, and Martens claims that the women have agency due to them eliciting reactions from the men, I will argue that by focusing on the parodic elements the female characters are protagonists in their own right and with their own stories without any significant link to the men. As we have seen, “Three Sundays” and “Spectacles” and their characters have been overlooked by the majority of scholars and critics, and little attention was paid to the parodic elements. I believe that this oversight has led to people misjudging Poe’s character in itself and his views on women, where his authorship has been deemed anti-female. By using contemporary parody as my own “spectacles”, my research has revealed a new way of reading Poe literature and to see its variation when it comes to the female character portrayals. As mentioned, hardly any research has been done on the subject of these two tales, and their impact has consequently been completely overlooked in several cases. I have shown that the *Poesque* woman is no

longer defined by her beauty nor death, but by the inclusion of variation in character and the celebration of female intellect.

Poe used parody to both criticise and as a way to show appreciation of a work of literature or person. He however also used it in a completely new way; as a means of bringing something to light that he felt was overlooked and wrong, like the view on women. Through contemporary parodic theory we are introduced to parody as a way of subversion. Hutcheon claims that parody can also be a “form of oppositional discourse against a dominant cultural, social or political force”(1992, 7). “Three Sundays” and “Spectacles” have been snubbed and seen as insignificant because the parodic gender performances have gone unnoticed and therefore their oppositional discourse disregarded. This lies in how Poe’s “more comical tales are not always seen as very good ones” (Martens 2013, 70) and thus these two works have been relegated to the same treatment without much exploration. Their potential of actually being progressive works of literature is very much ignored as they are considered “bad” works of comedy with no fully developed female characters. Kate and Madame Lalande, as mentioned, introduced a new way of portraying a woman in 1800s Victorian literature. Both these women, by not dying and by being smart, were not something that was seen often in writing of that time, especially in Poe. Kate and Madame Lalande having a happy ending as well is to some degree ground-breaking in Poe prose; nobody dies nor becomes lost to madness in these tales. This is where the divergence becomes even more noticeable, especially from the Dark Ladies, and they become their own category; what I will call *New Ladies* of Poe.

However, Madame Lalande and Kate differ from the Dark Ladies in more ways than just character and how the tales end. Firstly, the difference is in the relationship with the male narrators of the stories, Bobby and Simpson. The difference between the Dark Ladies like Morella and Ligeia compared to Kate and Madame Lalande lies in more than their relation to the male narrators as they are the ones who introduce us to these female characters through their perspective. Where they are alike in how the view of the women are mediated through them, the relationships are different. The relationship between Bobby and Kate is completely new, where he fades into the background and lets Kate take all the spotlight without complaint. The narrator in Morella begins to despise her for her intellect rather than support her in her learnedness. Simpson and Madame Lalande may be more similar to the Dark Ladies’ tales as it starts with ‘love’ and ends up with the male narrator being horrified. The twist of their familial relationship as well as the unexpected ending are more complex.

While the relationships between the male narrators and the women are significant, the portrayal of the female characters themselves is far more important. Kate and Madame Lalande have their own voice and through this we get to know them far better than the more often than not voiceless Dark Ladies. They are both “clever women, not identified by their appearance alone but moreover by their intelligence and wit” (Martens 2013, 45). The way they speak shows the level of agency they have which plays an important part in the plotline of their respective tales. Kate and Madame Lalande move the story along and through them the reader is introduced to a new way of reading stories about women. These *New Ladies* of Poe are the humorous antidotes of normal, everyday women who get one over on the men without malice.

Wicked or Whip-Smart Women?

Kate and Madame Lalande, the heroines of their stories, share both commonalities and differences. Whereas Kate is young and in love, Madame Lalande is old and done with love (for herself, though she does dabble in matchmaking). What has been most interesting to explore is how they differ in the way they execute their *plan of deception*, the main plotline of the tales. Madame Lalande is older and that is reflected in the intricacy of her plan. As there are many moving pieces to her plan, Madame Lalande through this is shown as very intelligent as the plan succeeds without fail. Getting Talbot along as well as the priest to not only help with the plot but also keep quiet about it is a feat she needs credit for. The complexity of the plan relies mostly on the foolishness and vanity of Simpson, who could have figured it all out if he had just invested in some eyeglasses. The fact that Madame Lalande hatches the plan in a matter of a day strengthens this impression of her, as well as when she herself tells Simpson of how the plan came to life. We, the readers, never get a full explanation from Kate of how she come up with the plan nor do we know how she managed to include the naval officers or even how she as a 15 year-old girl knows them. That does not mean, however, that Kate is less intelligent nor that her plan is worse. We still understand from the story that she was the one who concocted the whole thing and that Bobby was a supportive figure in the plan; he had to get the conversation started so she could jump in and end it with success. As mentioned, textual evidence like how Simpson says that “Kates ingenuity enabled”(Poe 2010, 265) them to deceive her father and Smitherton that “Kate has us completely” (Poe 2010, 267) leads us to understand that she was the mastermind behind the tale and the one who put it in motion. Kate’s and Madame Lalande’s plans show their intelligence as they managed to come up with these detailed plans in short time periods: Kate

used less than three weeks and Madame Lalande achieved to plan it all in one day, and their plans succeeded along with them having a happy ending.

Now, the women did not act completely on their own. Kate and Madame Lalande are similar in that they both needed help from male characters, Kate with the two naval officers as well as Bobby and Madame Lalande the help of Mr. Talbot. The view on this can be two-sided, where one could argue that for these female characters to need the help of men either removes their power as women with agency or gives them more of said power. That they are reliant on men introduces the view of women as powerless on their own, where they cannot be independent, even in their own minds. Simpson claims that Madame Lalande “concocted with Talbot a plot” (256), which in some ways takes away from her being the sole mastermind as she does not get the full credit. The argument that she needed Talbot and that without him she would have failed is underlying in this statement. I, however, will argue that she is the one who made the plans and Talbot agreed in helping rather than being a significant part of the planning. Simpson was so enamoured with her that when he could not reach Talbot, he started asking around in town and following her. Talbot’s presence in the tale could have been removed, but the ending would still have been the same. This is different for Kate as she needed the topic of travel over time zones to be relevant. However, they could have also brought it up without the naval officers there and thus the argument of needing men to succeed weakens. These women, Madame Lalande and Kate, are not bound by gender and their seeking help for their plan to succeed does not equal weakness nor powerlessness. It rather shows the control they have as they get these men to help in a way that not only benefits them but where the naval officers and Mr. Talbot gain nothing in return for helping. The men thus become pawns for Kate and Madame Lalande, and the tales show the power of female agency and resourcefulness.

While this thesis has mostly focused on the female characters in the two tales, the men also needed to be explored. The male characters are the narrators of the story, something that is per usual for Poe, and our female characters get mediated through them. Their portrayal is fascinating, however, especially that of Bobby. His depiction of being a supportive figure, someone who comes second plot wise, is something different than what is commonly expected in Poe prose. Usually, the women come second to the men as they are what Weekes claims “placeholder[s]” (2002, 150) for the male narrators themselves. Compared to that idea, I argue that Bobby becomes a breath of fresh air where Kate is not a placeholder but a character by herself which he does not stand in the way of. He comfortably lets Kate take the reins without any male chauvinist posturing that is usually present. This means that he does

not feel the need to prove himself as he is not threatened by her intellect. Poe portrayed him in a way where he is not the center of attention even as he is the narrator; his wishes become second place to what Kate wants such as when he states “all that Kate and myself wish” (Poe 2010, 264) where Kate comes first. She becomes the protagonist and the *heroine* of the tale, while he does not feel the need to take the credit for the duping of Rumgudgeon. Contrary to common belief, Poe’s female characters are not always measured in importance by how they affect the male narrators, but in how they themselves are.

Simpson, on the other hand, is portrayed in a different manner from Bobby but still in his own new way. For once, the male narrator is not someone the readers sympathise with but rather in some way judge. At least this is what happens if we read it from the point of view where Madame Lalande is the protagonist of the tale. With Simpson being the focalizer, the readers’ perspective becomes intertwined with his subjective perspective. The readers believe it to truly be a tale of love, but one based on money and beauty. That, coupled with the ending, shows how he is not the hero but a foolish man who puts appearances before anything else. Bobby lacks Simpson’s vanity and does not care about the money but rather Kate. Simpson claims to love Madame Lalande to an almost obsessive degree but changes his tone quickly when she reveals who she really is. In the end, when Simpson reveals how Madame Lalande has made him “her sole heir” (Poe 2010, 257) and that he still gets to marry a beautiful woman, he doesn’t seem bothered more than having learned to wear spectacles. The question, however, is whether Simpson actually learned his lesson. It seems that he still got what he wanted in the end, and rather than learning from the experience, the only thing he took from it was to wear spectacles, so he does not get duped again. This introduces somewhat of a *duality* in the tale with the perspective change. The readers are invited to see it from two points of view, that of Simpson, the man in love who gets tricked in the end, and Madame Lalande, the old grandmother who wants to teach her vane grandson a lesson so he can better himself. This notion of duality is something that is new in Poe reading, and with this analysis of the tale, the invitation to reread other tales of Poe with female characters is introduced.

Simpson and Bobby are furthermore depicted in two very different ways. Poe’s male narrators, especially those of the Dark Ladies, are often similar in how they are portrayed. Their lives often revolve around the women, sometimes to an obsessive degree, and they either hate or love them. I believe that in these two tales the typical male narrator has been split into two, where Bobby has gotten some of the traits and Simpson the others. Simpson has the usual obsessiveness with beauty that the male narrators in the Dark Ladies tales have.

The beauty of these female characters always changes into something horrific in the end, be it Morella's deteriorating form or Ligeia's resurrected supernatural form. This transformation from beauty to horror is also depicted in "Spectacles" which introduces a link of commonality between these male narrators and Simpson. The move from love to resentment comes quick in these tales, Simpson goes from madly in love to being mad. Compared to this, Bobby has to some degree gotten the other part of the Poesque male narrators; the one with the appreciation for intelligence without the darkness that usually follows. Bobby does not state how Kate looks other than "sweet" and "good". He prefers personality over looks, something that is not often found in Poe's stories. While Dark Ladies' narrators often comment on the personality of the female characters such as their erudition, they often change their minds towards the end. They also connect the body aesthetic to the mind, these women need to be beautiful or mystical for them to notice their learnedness. I will suggest that Bobby's depiction is all new in Poe prose, and that he took a trait he liked in his other male narrators and enlarged it.

The male narrators in the Dark Ladies tales moreover often end up resenting the women for this very trait they claim to adore, something that is not reflected in Bobby. On the contrary, he praises and loves Kate more due to her wit. On one side, that can be argued to be so due to her aiding in something that he himself benefits from. The only reason then for her intellect to figure "out its mathematics" (Freeman 1998, 877) is to legitimate Bobby's desire. However, while her plan does lead to Bobby getting to marry her and ensures his 'future happiness', it also benefits her. I disagree with this claim and through my research have shown the value of Kate as a person rather than as a placeholder for the male narrator. Other textual evidence contradicts the notion of him using her and proves he values her more than just an object; such as the discussion of her "plum". He truly adores her for her, not for her beauty nor her sexuality. In relation to Bobby, Simpson does not care much for Madame Lalande's personality and intellect, he even claims that she is naïve and that he finds this "charming" (Poe 2010, 251). Through this we can see that not only are the female characters different from the typical Poesque woman, but also the men vary in personality and character.

Poe's authorship and his characters are consequently more varied than many assume, and the usage of parody shows how even he believed his characters lacking. By dividing personality traits of the Dark Ladies' male narrators between Bobby and Simpson, he highlights this. The traits by themselves are weak, but by only focusing on them in different characters, Poe expands them and sees their potential. The love for the women and their brains is no longer connected to the male narrator's plight of understanding the soul or being condescended for their lack of erudition, but it is about loving the women and supporting

them on their intellectual journeys. In other words, the “limits of the original [have] become exposed” (Kenny 2009, 222). The original in this sense are the male characters, where their portrayal before can be argued to have been restricted. The self-parody used in “Three Sundays” and “Spectacles” can thus be argued to have been Poe having seen the limits of his male characters. The limits have not only been exposed but I argue that they have been improved as well. The obsessiveness and vanity of the male characters are made even bigger but with a consequence in the end, and the love turns into support without hate.

The Significance of Subversion

Poe’s women can no longer be reduced to that one stereotype of the beautiful, dead maiden. Instead, there is a whole variety of women and each of them deserves to be acknowledged – especially since this brings up a more positive image of the Poesque woman. (Martens 2013, 71)

The Poesque woman thus has lost her meaning in the sense that she no longer has a set of characteristics that define her. A Poesque woman is now just a female character found in Poe writing, and with the analyses of Kate and Madame Lalande, I demonstrate that Poe’s women are not all the same. While Martens is right in her claim of the variation in female characters, I explore *how* and *why* Kate and Madame Lalande are different through a parodical lens. Their significance is more than what Martens implies and even their similarities are important to note. One can speculate that by viewing his authorship through parody, it moves from being misogynistic to be about an author with multiple female characters, at least when it comes to the portrayal of Kate and Madame Lalande. Kot for example argues that Poe was no misogynist but rather demonstrated “subversion of gender identity” (Kot 1996, 398) but she does not state how nor mention parodical theories. As the previous chapters’ analyses show, Kate and Madame Lalande are not passive objects in their tales, but active with agency. While Kot is right that subversion is something Poe took use of, I also believe that he proved the existence of common everyday women. Madame Lalande introduces subversion, but she also shows the folly of men.

One can speculate that the female characters are important but so is the depiction of the men in relation to them. As the previous chapters’ analyses show, Kate and Madame Lalande are not passive objects in their tales, but active with agency. While Poe “depicts the

male imagination as attempting to objectify women” he also “depicts the failure of these attempts (Kot 1996, 391). Simpson tried to objectify Madame Lalande based on her perceived appearance and wealth, but in the end, she would not let him succeed. In the transformation from a beautiful young widow to an old lady, she takes away his power over her as an object where she was not what he tried to make her. The same can be said about Kate where Rungtudgeon tries to put her and her ‘plum’ into a box and she breaks away from this. She is not an object like he believes her to be and he has no power over who she gets to be with. Consequently, “Poe demonstrates that an artistic process built on robbing women of their autonomy ultimately robs men of theirs” (Kot 1996, 391). Kate goes from being called a “huzzy” (Poe 2010, 266) by her father to him using her first name. The change here is that Kate gains agency as a person rather than an object in the eyes of her father where he loses the control he believes to have over her. Simpson, compared to this, loses his autonomy to some degree as Madame Lalande now controls his new way of life; meaning that she married him to Stephanie, and he is going to always wear spectacles in the future. These women “occupy the superior position” (Martens 2013, 69) where they manage to influence the narratives of the tales themselves. While Martens too sees the new female character roles in these two tales, I will argue that there is more at stake. By using a theory of parody, I suggest that not only do the women achieve agency and have the superior position, parody also introduces equality. Kate and Bobby are in a relationship that is level, he does not objectify her and she doesn’t try to rob him of his autonomy. Kate and Madame Lalande show us anecdotes from their regular, everyday lives without it being about the men as the enemies. They are each introduced to a hurdle and humorously overcome it. When reading the tales again with this knowledge, the perspective change of whom the main character makes it more interesting.

Kate and Madame Lalande are neither “not clearly individualized” (Stovall 1925, 204) nor dull like many scholars have claimed. These women change the perception of Poe’s authorship in terms of his view on women. They are women with their own personalities, with erudition, and they end up happy, even if Kate’s personality is less represented in “Sundays”. Poe thus gives voice to these women and through this demonstrate subversion of the gender norms present in society. As Kenny claims, we need to try “to ‘open up’ the way we think about traditional, taken-for-granted categories like ‘male’ and ‘female’; sex and gender are not ‘givens’ but observable aspects of the exercise of particular forms of power” and that “*parody* plays a key role in opening up these traditional categories; aping and critiquing them, and highlighting their contingency” (2009, 223). “Three Sundays” and “Spectacles” are tales

that introduce such a new type of women and men. The women are not merely objects but in control of their own lives, and just because they are intelligent does not mean that they are badly written or indeed wicked. The traditional passive woman to some degree no longer exists, instead we are introduced to an ordinary woman with characteristics that are usually attributed to men but is not perceived negatively due to this. Poe's female characters are not as categorically same as it is commonly held in Poe scholarships. By using contemporary parody theory, we can revision Poe's tales and get a better understanding of what he truly was trying to convey with his writing.

Bibliography

- Abrams, Meyer Howard, and Geoffrey Harpham. 2011. *A Glossary of Literary Terms*: Cengage Learning.
- Baldick, Chris. 2015. *The Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms*. Vol. Fourth Edition. New York, United States of America: Oxford University Press.
- Bechtold, Rebeccah. 2018. "Poe's Silent Music." *Poe Studies* 51 (1):E30-E33.
- Bundgård, Lasse. 2013. "Gender Roles in Edgar Allan Poe - A Study of Oracles in "Ligeia" and "Berenice"." Dissertation.
- Cherry, Fanny N. 1930. "The Source of Poe's "Three Sundays in a Week"." *American Literature* 2 (3):232-235.
- Dayan, Joan. 1994. "Amorous Bondage: Poe, Ladies, and Slaves." *American Literature* 66 (2):239-273. doi: 10.2307/2927980.
- Du Gay, Paul. 2007. *Organizing identity: Persons and organizations after theory*: Sage.
- Duarte, João Ferreira. 1999. "'A Dangerous Stroke of Art': Parody as Transgression." *European Journal of English Studies* 3 (1):64-77.
- Edmiston, William F. 1989. "Focalization and the First-Person Narrator: A Revision of the Theory." *Poetics Today* 10 (4):729-744. doi: 10.2307/1772808.
- Freeman, Elizabeth. 1998. "Honeymoon with a Stranger: Pedophilic Picaresques from Poe to Nabokov." *American Literature* 70 (4):863-897. doi: 10.2307/2902394.
- Gibian, Peter. 2011. "The Image and its Discontents: Hawthorne, Poe, and the Double Bind of 'Iconoclasm'." *Journal of the Short Story in English. Les Cahiers de la nouvelle* (56).
- Gordon, Rae Beth. 2000. "Poe: Optics, Hysteria, and Aesthetic Theory." *Cercles* 1:49.
- Griffith, Clark. 1954. "Poe's «Ligeia» and the English Romantics." *University of Toronto Quarterly* 24 (1):8-25.
- Hammond, Alexander. 1976. "Edgar Allan Poe's Tales of the Folio Club: The Evolution of a Lost Book." *Poe at Work: Seven Textual Studies*:13-43.
- Hannoosh, Michele. 1989. "The Reflexive Function of Parody." *Comparative Literature* 41 (2):113-127. doi: 10.2307/1770971.
- Hantiu, Ecaterina. 2010. "Humor and Satire in Edgar Allan Poe's Absurd Stories." *The Edgar Allan Poe Review* 11 (2):28-35.
- Hubbell, Jay B. 1969. "The Literary Apprenticeship of Edgar Allan Poe." *The Southern Literary Journal* 2 (1):99-105.

- Hutcheon, Linda. 1992. "Foreword: Parody and Romantic Ideology." In.: Associated University Presses, Inc.
- Hutcheon, Linda. 2000. *A Theory of Parody: The Teachings of Twentieth-Century Art Forms*. Vol. 874: University of Illinois Press.
- Irwin, John T. 2016. *American Hieroglyphics: The Symbol of the Egyptian Hieroglyphics in the American Renaissance*: JHU Press.
- Kennedy, J Gerald, and Scott Peeples. 2019. *The Oxford Handbook of Edgar Allen Poe*: Oxford University Press, USA.
- Kenny, Kate. 2009. "'The Performative Surprise': Parody, Documentary and Critique." *Culture and Organization* 15 (2):221-235.
- Kot, Paula. 1996. *Feminist "Re-Visioning" of the Tales of Women*. A Companion to Poe Studies ed: Greenwood Publishing Group.
- Lockwood, Louise. 2013. *Edgar Allan Poe: Love, Death and Women*. England: BBC.
- Mabbott, Thomas. 2000. "Edgar Allan Poe: Tales and Sketches 1831-1842." *Urbana, University of Illinois Press*.
- Martens, Elien. 2013. "The Representation of Women in the Works of Edgar Allan Poe." Dissertation, Gent University. 2012-2013.
- Maurer, Christian. 2014. *Love and Its Objects: What Can We Care For?:* Springer.
- May, Charles Edward. 1994. *The New Short Story Theories*: Ohio University Press.
- McAdams, Charity. 2017. *Poe and the Idea of Music: Failure, Transcendence, and Dark Romanticism*: Rowman & Littlefield.
- Miquel Baldellou, Marta. 2007. "A Series of Mere Household Events: Evoking and Questioning Nineteenth-Century Ethics of Victorian Family Life in Edgar Allan Poe's Tales."
- Nussbaum, Martha. 1999. "The Professor of Parody." *The new republic* 22 (2):37-45.
- Person, Leland S. 1988. *Aesthetic Headaches: Women and a Masculine Poetics in Poe, Melville, and Hawthorne*: University of Georgia Press.
- Poe, Edgar Allan. 1846. Philosophy of composition *Graham's Magazine*, vol. XXVIII.
- Poe, Edgar Allan. 2010. *Edgar Allan Poe: Complete Tales and Poems with Selected Essays*. Edited by American Renaissance Books. United States of America: CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform.
- Poe, Edgar Allan, Thomas Ollive Mabbott, and Eleanor D Kewer. 2000. *Tales and Sketches: 1843-1849*. Vol. 2: University of Illinois Press.

- Poe, Edgar Allen. 1902. "Introduction to the Tales of the Folio Club." In *The Complete Works of Edgar Allan Poe — Vol. II: Tales - part 01*, edited by J. A. Harrison, xxxv-xxxix.
- Pollin, Burton R. 1965. "'The Spectacles' of Poe-Sources and Significance." *American Literature* 37 (2):185-190.
- Propp, Vladimir. 2010. *Morphology of the Folktale*. Vol. 9: University of Texas Press.
- Pruette, Lorine. 1920. "A Psycho-Analytical Study of Edgar Allan Poe." *The American Journal of Psychology* 31 (4):370-402. doi: 10.2307/1413669.
- Rabinovitch-Fox, Einav. 2017. "New Women in Early 20th-Century America." In *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of American History*.
- Stovall, Floyd. 1925. "The Women of Poe's Poems and Tales." *Studies in English* (5):197-209.
- Urakova, Alexandra. 2018. "Undying Enigmas in 'Ligeia'." *The Oxford Handbook of Edgar Allan Poe*:304.
- Wayne, Tiffany K. 2007. *Women's Roles in Nineteenth-Century America*: Greenwood Publishing Group.
- Weekes, Karen. 2002. "Poe's Feminine Ideal." In *The Cambridge Companion to Edgar Allan Poe*, edited by Kevin J. Hayes, 148-162. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.