

VASILIOS C. TSAROUCIS, M.A.

A CRITICAL SURVEY OF RECENT CRITICISM ON
EDGAR ALLAN POE'S *EUREKA*.

«To the dreamers and those who put faith in dreams as in
the only realities»-- POE (*EUREKA*)

«Eureka, eureka» cried Archimedes when he made his great discovery. Poe in *Eureka*, published in 1848, claims that he, too, has discovered the secrets of the universe, assuring us in his dedicatory paragraph, that «What I here propound is true:--therefore it cannot die...¹» But, at the same time, Poe warns us, in the same place, that his work should not be taken only on scientific bases; it is also, and perhaps primarily, a work of art, «A Prose Poem».

This dual claim has led the criticism on *Eureka* into different directions since its day of publication. To some critics the work is the key to Poe's writings; to others it is the most valuable revelation of Poe's state of mind. Many see it as a great contribution to modern science, while others see it as a fairy tale-journey of the imagination.

Tracing down the different directions of criticism on *Eureka* during the last decade (1970-1980) is the aim of the present essay. It seems necessary at this point, as a prolegomena to this study, to sketch the undergone process of compiling the critical bibliography on which this essay is based. The scope, due to the limits of time and space, is limited to the criticism of the last ten years. Again, I had to make a limit within the limit--that is, I have tried to find and use only the criticism that appeared in magazine and journal articles and essays. Therefore, I have excluded all the numerous and valuable critical material that has been

1. *Eureka*, *The Complete Works of Edgar Allan Poe*, ed. James A. Harrison (N.Y., 1902; rpt. New York: Ams Press Inc., 1965), XVI, 183. Hereinafter cited in my text as *Works*.

written in the last ten years and has been included as chapters and paragraphs in different books. I have used only, besides the articles and essays, a few abstracts from unpublished Dissertations relative to my purpose. Not all of the articles and essays on *Eureka* written during these years were, for one reason or another, made available. Yet, the material which I was able to trace and gather is, I think, very representative of the last decade's criticism on Poe in general, and on his *Eureka* in particular; a criticism which year by year grows richer in new insights and in a more thorough investigation of Poe's mind and art. One reason for this ever increasing interest in his work is, according to his own words in the dedicatory paragraph of *Eureka*, the fact that it, «cannot die:—or if by any means it be now trodden down so that it die, it will 'rise again to the Life Everlasting'».

Eureka, though it is considered by many critics and scholars Poe's masterpiece, it is not widely read. Except for the devoted students of Poe and the scholars who have to read all the works written by Poe, if they want to be fair and objective in their criticism on him, not too many other people, even students at our Universities, read it today. The reason may be found in the fact that *Eureka* is of the less frequently anthologized works of Poe. From its day of publication, it has been reprinted only two or three times-- the last, and I say this with a small suspicion, being in 1950 when W.H.Auden in his collection of Poe's writings included *Eureka* too¹. But, in spite of the above fact, as has already been mentioned, the critical philologia about *Eureka*, especially the last years amounts to volums. W. H. Auden, as he is quoted in *Eight American Authors*, explains why. It is Poe's, he says, «very daring and original notion to take the oldest of the poetic themes...the story of how things came to exist as they are...[and to attempt] in English in the nineteenth century what Hesiod and Lucretius had done in Greek and Latin centuries before»². In other words, it is Poe's design to speak of «the Physical,

1. Two new editions of *Eureka* are in the process of publication. One is still in the form of an unpublished dissertation by Ronald Nelson (see Nelson in Bibliography), the other has been referred to by Perry F. Hogerg in his essay discussed in the text. It is edited by Richard Benton and bears the title *Eureka: A Prose Poem* (Hartford, CT: Transcendental Books, 1973). It is a reprint edition of C.P. Putman, 1848, with «line numbers, exploratory essay, and bibliographical guide.» I have a suspicion that both editions are not but only one and the same--that of the latter. If so, it means that we are fortunate to have a new edition of *Eureka*, which, unfortunately, I was not able to find.

2. *Eight American Authors*, ed. James Woodress (N.Y.: W.W Norton and Comp. Inc., rev. ed. 1971), pp. 3-36.

Metaphysical, and Mathematical--of the Material and Spiritual Universe:--of its Essence, its Origin, its Creation, its Present Condition and its Destiny» (*Works*, XVI, 185), themes and questions that will always interest and puzzle the human mind.

Taking issue with Auden, Patrick F. Quinn, «*Eureka* and criticism»¹ (*ALS* 1963), talks about how «in discussing Poe's work as a whole or in part it is becoming increasingly 'de rigueur' to take *Eureka* into account»². He also points out another relatively new development, that of an emphasis on Poe as a satirist. In a similar view, S. L. Mooney says that «'Behind all of Poe's doors lurks the ghost of the hoaxer, secretly working toward the construction of fantastic ironies to plague the literalist' (*MLN* 1961)»³.

Representative of this new direction in the criticism on Poe is Harriet R. Holman's essay «Hog, Bacon, Ram, and Other 'Savans' in *Eureka*» (*Poe Studies*, 1969)⁴. Holman's article, the first of a series she wrote on Poe, chronologically does not belong to the period of our interest, but, because three years later she wrote another article on the same topic, I am presenting it here for the sake of the continuance of her thoughts. She claims in her first article that the intention of *Eureka* seems clearly satirical considering its placement of James Hogg alongside Aristotle and Euclid, its charge that Epicureanism is «the philosophy of swine»⁵, and its deliberate confusion of Ram Mohan with Petrus Ramus. The satiric evidence, she adds, is obvious from the beginning in the preface of *Eureka*, where Poe asks the reader to consider the author «not in the character of Truth-Teller» (*Works*, XVI, 183). The opening statement of *Eureka*, «It is with humility really unassumed--it is with a sentiment even of awe--that I pen the opening sentence of this work.... What terms shall I find sufficiently sublime in their simplicity--for the mere enunciation of my theme?» (*Works*, XVI, 185), places Poe, according to Holman, «in the satirist's classical role of *eirone*, the unpretentious little fellow who takes on the *alazon*, the imposing forces of those ranked against him, both those who misjudge their own abilities and the pretenders who try to appear other than they are»⁶. Poe, Holman

1. Patrick F. Quinn, «*Eureka* and Criticism,» in *American Literary Scholarship: An Annual*, 1968, p. 194.

2. *Ibid.*

3. Quoted in *Eight American Authors*, pp. 3-36.

4. Harriet R. Holman, «Hog, Bacon, Ram, and Other 'Savans' in *Eureka*: Notes toward Decoding Poe's Encyclopedic Satire», *Poe Studies*, 2, No. 3 (1969), 49-55.

5. *Ibid.*, p. 51.

6. *Ibid.*, p. 49.

argues, not only questions but is ironically mocking what he calls «the sagacity, of many of the greatest and most justly revered of men» (*Works*, XVI, 185). Most of those satirized--some two dozen of them--like Aristotle, who becomes Aries Tottle, or Francis Bason who is deliberately confused with Delia Salter Bacon, are encyclopedists or universalists whose «common denominator seems to be that they were pretenders to learning»¹ The underlying assumption of Holman is that Poe used encyclopedists to emphasize the nature of his encyclopedic satire. Miss Holman concludes accusing Poe of having employed the very devices he had mocked in «How to write a Blackwood Article,» and urges the scholars to move fast in decoding the puzzles of *Eureka*. Her mistake in not being able to take Poe seriously, as it is also evident in her second article, is the simple fact, I think, that she is determined not to do so. The puns and topical allusions that Poe uses she sees them as only making the style of *Eureka* «contorted and bombastic»

In her second article, «Splitting Poe's 'Epicurean Atoms,»² Holman, having already denied the assumption that Poe was perfectly serious in his claim that he had solved the riddle of the Universe in *Eureka*, takes great effort explaining the «satirical» and «comical» intent in Poe's cosmological essay. But Miss Holman's purpose is more than obvious when she suggests that Poe used Epicurean method, language, and ideas «to carry on his longstanding literary war against the writers of Boston, most particularly the Transcendentalists...»³. The fact that Poe wrote *Eureka* «in the isolation of the poor cottage at Fordham»⁴ instead of being part of the Boston coterie whose members, according to Holman's analysis of Poe's «conceit», were «attracted to each other in the same way that, according to Epicurus' discredited theory of Physics, atoms in space are attracted to each other...»⁵, does not justify the «cloudy miasma» of her article.

Another study similar in viewpoint to that of Holman's as to Poe's tone and attitude, suspects Poe's rhetorical flights to be partly a hoax. Peter C. Page, in his essay «Poe, Empedocles, and Intuition in *Eureka*»⁶,

1. *Ibid.*, p. 53.

2. Harriet R. Holman, «Splitting Poe's Epicurean Atoms': Further Speculation on the Literary Satire of *Eureka*» *Poe Studies*, 5, No. 2 (1972), 33-37.

3. *Ibid.*, p. 34.

4. *Ibid.*, p. 37.

5. *Ibid.* It is, at least, a naive thought to argue that Poe would have written *Eureka* to use it only as a satirical tool to carry on his literary war against the Transcendentalists of Boston.

6. Peter C. Page, «Poe, Empedocles, and Intuition in *Eureka*», *Poe Studies*, 11, No. 2 (1978), 21-26.

finds that the influence of Empedocles on Poe's cosmological work is significant in several ways. Page as a critic belongs to that group of people who, as Stauffer says, «feel that Poe was ridiculing the idea of being able to Know intuitively the ultimate nature of things while seemingly taking pains to explain it»¹. In the tone of Holman's, but being more moderate, Page suspects that «Poe does not mean his speaker to be taken seriously and that his stance toward his intuited cosmology is as derisive as his attitude toward Emerson's Transcendentalism, to which it bears a resemblance»². Poe's «general proposition» at the very start of *Eureka*, «In the Original Unity of the First Thing lies the Secondary Cause of All Things, with the Germ of their Inevitable Annihilation» (*Works*, XVI, 185-186), is, according to Page, an enshrining of Empedocle's cycle. He goes on explaining how Poe follows Empedocles' cycle of periods of primal unity alternating them with periods of diffusion. The reliance upon intuition as a way of knowing is another important connection between Poe's *Eureka* and Empedocles' speculations, as Page demonstrates them by citing a fragment of Empedocles' ideas of epistemology, as they are given by Anthon³. The fact that Poe uses Empedocles' speculations so heavily is, for Page, «a matter for further investigation»⁴. He furthermore elaborates on the distinction between Poe and his *persona* as cosmologer in *Eureka*, with the corresponding differences in attitude toward *intuition*, respectively. Page arrives at some conclusions, «inferred», as he says, from «Poe's apparent duplicity in *Eureka*»⁵. Citing from Poe's «The Poetic Principle» Page concludes that «Poe would seem to be theory-mad in *Eureka*. And perhaps this madness is the result of an over-used intuition»⁶. Finally, though he states that *Eureka* can also be seen as a key to Poe's other works, yet, he warns us that we should view it only with «strict attention to paradox, ambiguity, *double entendre*, misplaced allusion, total tension, and other tell-tales of the ironist»⁷.

It seems that what both Holam and Page have produced in their articles is what Austin Warren calls «a pedestrian criticism,» for they just

1. Donald B. Stauffer, «Poe», in *American Literary Scholarship*, 1978, pp. 40-41

2. Page, p. 24.

3. Charles Anthon, *Classical Dictionary* (New York: Harper and Bros., 1843), pp. 467-470.

4. Page, p. 22.

5. *Ibid.*, p. 24.

6. *Ibid.*

7. This final conclusion of Page is taken from his unpublished dissertation, «Poe's Ironic Universe: Art and Alienation in *Eureka* and the Prose Works,» *DAI*, 40 (1980), 5054 A (Marquette).

did not attempt the «*saltus*, [that] precipitate leap of both faith and imagination». Opening his outstanding essay with the above quote from Warren, Barton Levi St. Armand, «'Seemingly Intuitive Leaps': Belief and Unbelief in *Eureka*» (ATQ 1975)¹, adds that «In this [saltus], the scholar, would only be following Poe himself, whose *Eureka* was an admittedly bold attempt to demonstrate the axiom that 'true Science.... makes its most important advances--as all History will show--by seemingly intuitive leaps'⁹. It is in this spirit that St. Armand concerns himself with the overriding question of what *Eureka* reveals about Poe's world-view, and finds throughout its pages a positive vision. «I place» he says, «*Eureka* in a tradition of speculative writing which justifies Poe's original and fruitful view of the human imagination while it also links that work to standard theological arguments from design rather than to Romantically radical acts and gospels»³. St. Armand argues against those who see *Eureka* as nihilistic and blasphemous, and very persuasively shows how Poe «left the act of creation to God, and affirmed that the artist's duty was to study that creation by use of his human faculties of imagination and intuition»⁴. According to Poe «We have attained a point where only the *Intuition* can aid us» (*Works* XVI, 205). Even Baudelaire, according to St. Armand, who wished to claim Poe as the archetypal Romantic poet, «was too careful a critic not to recognize Poe's rejection of the prime Romantic doctrine of inspiration»⁵. Poe, by abandoning the Romantic doctrine of inspiration as the source of art, adopted, according to St. Armand, a more practical philosophy of intuition and insight, in which God is the only Creator. Under this light, then, «*Eureka* is a criticism, in the widest possible sense, of the universe itself»⁶ and should be placed, St. Armand adds, in the tradition of Natural Theology and Apologetics, particularly the works of William Paley, whose *Natural Theology* bears a subtitle that fully describes the method of the entire movement: *Evidences of the Existence and attributes of the Deity collected from the Appearances of Nature*; a movement which, as St. Armand says, «tried to illuminate the general and continuing revelation of nature through a pious accumulation of scientific knowledge»⁷.

1. Barton Levi St. Armand, «'Seemingly Intuitive Leaps': Belief and Unbelief in *Eureka*», ATQ, 26 (1975), 4-15.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 4.

3. *Ibid.*

4. *Ibid.*, p. 8.

5. *Ibid.*, p. 7.

6. *Ibid.*, p. 8.

7. *Ibid.*

At the same time St. Armand rejects the arguments of those who see *Eureka* as an outgrowth of Coleridge's Romanticism, and those who see it as impious, or Poe as pantheist or a polytheist. «Poe in fact, «he argues,» rejected the prime Romantic theory of the imagination [which identified itself with the creative power of the Godhead] for a conception of 'Fancy' that Coleridge had tried to relegate to a philosophical dustbin. In thus refurbishing 'Fancy' to stand for a unitary, non-discriminatory, non-mystical concept of imagination, Poe also avoided that aesthetic schizophrenia which has continued to characterize Romantic applications of 'creativity' and 'inspiration' to individual works of art»¹. *Eureka*, then, was to Poe an act of faith--a faith founded in the souls whose equality Poe affirms as an expression of the primacy of God:

No thinking being lives who... has not felt
himself lost amid the surges of futile efforts
at understanding, or believing, that anything
exists *greater than his soul....and* no one
soul is inferior to another--that nothing is, or
can be, superior to any one soul--that each soul
is, in part, its own God--its own Creator:--in
a word, that God--the material *and* spiritual God
--now exists solely in the diffused Matter and
Spirit of the Universe; and that the regathering
of this diffused Matter and Spirit will be but
the reconstitution of the purely Spiritual and
Individual God (*Works*, XVI, 312-313).

Agreeable to this reading of *Eureka* is also Eric W. Carlson's observation in an article entitled «Poe's Vision of Man» (see Bibliography), as it is quoted by St. Armand, that «The central theme in Poe's work... is not so much death and annihilation, as the spiritual rebirth or rediscovery of the lost psychal power essential to every man and artist seeking his fullest self-realization»².

The year 1975 has been a prolific one as to Poe's studies. As Stauffer informs us (*ALS* 1975, p. 53), Richard P. Benton assembled an interesting symposium on Poe by ten scholars. The outcome of that symposium is a number of very interesting and valuable essays on Poe's *Eureka*, published in one issue of the *ATQ* (26 [1975]: 1-68). The value

1. *Ibid.*, p. 13.

2. *Ibid.*

of *Eureka* as a revelation of Poe's mind rather than as a contribution to modern science is the topic that David Ketterer discusses in his «Protective Irony and 'The Full Design' of *Eureka* (ATQ: 46-55)¹. Ketterer bases his analysis on the assumption that Poe offered *Eureka* as a «Book of Truths,» an account of «the Beauty that abounds in its Truth,» and «as a Romance; or if I be urging too lofty a claim, as a Poem» (*Works*, XVI, 183). Not accepting St. Armand's² theory of Poe's «Fancy», he believes that Poe «slides over the distinction between reason and imagination by using the concept of 'intuition'» (ATQ: 47). Ketterer finds *Eureka* as a work of «complex irony» and «contradictions,» especially when Poe defines intuition:

We have attained a point where only *Intuition*
can add us:--but now let me recur to the idea
which I have already suggested as that alone
which we can properly entertain of intuition.
It is but *the conviction arising from those*
inductions or deductions of which the processes
are so shadowy as to escape our consciousness,
elude our reason, or defy our capacity of expression
(*Works*, XVI, 206).

A contradiction, which, according to Ketterer, reveals Poe «torn between the desire to throw out reason entirely in favour of imagination or to accommodate reason, in disguise, by an ambiguous conception of intuition» (ATQ: 49). Speculating on Poe's earlier metaphysical works², Ketterer attributes to Poe the notion of the artist as creator, or even as God, «the role which Poe elects for himself in his cosmology» (ATQ: 47). He further clarifies Poe's notion of intuition provided by a letter which was «found corked in a bottle,» and since it was dated «the year *two thousand eight hundred and forty-eight*» (*Works*, XVI, 188), and which contains the information included in the letter-tale «Mellonta Tauta», we are to assume, Ketterer adds, that subsequent history has vindicated Poe. Though Poe in one place in *Eureka* explains that «but

1. David Ketterer, «Protective Irony and 'The Full Design' of *Eureka*», ATQ, 26 (1975), 46-55. Hereinafter references to the articles appeared in the above issue of ATQ will be cited in my text as ATQ and page reference.

2. Ketterer refers here to the following works by Poe: «Shadow: A Parable» (1835), «Silence: A Fable» (1838), and «The conversation of Eiros and Charmion» (1839) with «The Colloquy of Monos and Una» (1841).

two practical roads to Truth» (*Works*, XVI, 188) existed, the deductive or *a priori* method associated with Aries Tottle (Aristotle) and the inductive or *a posteriori* method associated with Hog (Bacon), yet a page further Poe, according to Ketterer, contradicts himself by stating that the greatest advances in science are made by «seemingly intuitive leaps» (*Works*, XVI, 189). The notion of Poe's irony is Ketterer's next concern. This irony, which for him can be «proven,» according to G.R. Thompson, with whom Ketterer takes issue, «mocks...a positive belief in a transcendent state of unity....[that makes him [Poe]....a proponent of nihilist absurd» (*ATQ*: 49). While discussing Poe's approach towards the present condition of the universe, Ketterer makes some interesting speculations on Melville having read *Eureka* before writing *Moby-Dick*, and on the idea that, as Stauffer points out, «*Eureka* may be read as a poetical or historical 'allegory' of the 'many into one' of the United States» (*ALS* 1975, p. 56). Under this new direction then, Ketterer concludes, «The areas of literary satire directed at the Transcendentalists, which may be tricked out of the punencrusted and devious text of *Eureka* [see Holman, Page], should be understood as an aspect of this historical dimension» (*ATQ*: 54).

Rounding the numerous directions of the reactions that *Eureka* raised, Burton R. Pollin in his «Contemporary Reviews of *Eureka*: A Checklist» (*ATQ*: 26-30), goes far beyond the expectations of a checklist with his annotations of the 30 reviews he has assembled. A favorable response to Poe's masterpiece, I would rather say, one of the favorable responses, is Dawson Gaillard's «Poe's *Eureka*: The Triumph of the Word» (*ATQ*: 42-46). Poe's faith, as he puts it, that only by «saying can we initiate the experience of being in a universe of divine immanence, animates [Poe's] momentous synthetic task in *Eureka*» (*ATQ*: 42). Gaillard goes on saying that language to Poe is «a power and a responsibility: the one from God and the other man's obligation through it to reach God» (*ATQ*: 42). Through biblical allusions--many to be found in *Eureka*--Gaillard establishes «the triumph of the *Word* (underlining mine) with which Poe «challenge[s] the conclusions, and ... question[s] the sagacity, of many of the greatest and most revered of men» (*Works*, XVI, 185). The Apostle John, as Gaillard cites him, wrote: «In the beginning was the Word: the Word was with God and the Word was God.» Alluding to this, Poe writes:

'In the beginning' we can admit-- indeed we can

comprehend--but one *First Cause*-- the truly ultimate *Principle*-- the Volition of God. The primary act-- that of Irradiation from Unity-- must have been independent of all that which the world now call 'principle'-- because all that we so designate is but a *consequence* of the reaction of that primary act:.... But this primary act itself is to be considered as *continuous Volition*. The Thought of God is to be understood as originating the Diffusion-- as proceeding with it--and, finally, as being withdrawn from it upon its completion. *Then* commences Reaction, and through Reaction, 'Principles,' as we employ the word» (*Works*, XVI, 237-238).

By citing more from *Eureka* to support his argument, Gaillard shows how Poe in order to «retain the graduated impression and the amplitude of language, emphasizes word usages that prepare us for ideas on which he will later elaborate» (*ATQ*: 45). It is, according to Poe, with words like God, spirit, and infinity, or what Gaillard calls «expansive language» that «one human being might put himself in relation at once with another human being and with a certain *tendency* of the human intellect» (*Works*, XVI, 200). Gaillard seems to agree with St. Armand and Ketterer that Poe moved more and more from a rational and logical toward an intuitive mode of thinking and expression.

«Expansive» language is also a part of the title in our next article, complementing in a way Gaillard's essay. Allan C. Golding, in «Reductive and Expansive Language» (*PS* 1978)¹, explains, as Stauffer points out, how Poe «first points out to his reader the limits of simple (reductive) language for explaining ideas lying beyond its capacities and then goes on to use a figurative, 'expansive' language which points toward the sublime»². Commenting on Golding's article, Stauffer adds: «This is a well-written, closely reasoned essay which builds on recent rhetorical studies of *Eureka* and is consistent with the general view that Poe as an artist moves away from the realistic and the precise toward the poetic and the vague»³.

1. Allan C. Golding, «Reductive and Expansive Language: Semantic Strategies in *Eureka*», *Poe Studies*, 11 (1978), 1-5. My comments on this article are taken from Stauffer (see note 16).

2. Stauffer, p. 40.

3. *Ibid.*

Two more essays deal with the rhetorical strategies of Poe, though from a different perspective. John P. Hussey, in «Narrative Voice and Classical Rhetoric in *Eureka*» (*ATQ*: 37-42)¹ claims that Poe's art is «grounded not only in the specific injunctions of the handbooks, but in their fundamental conception of the interrelationship between the character of the speaker, the quality of his work, and the well-being of his audience» (*ATQ*: 37). He also reminds us that Poe's view of the artist requires a self-control, if he wants to shape effectively his own «*personae*». Hussey goes on saying that the narrator of *Eureka* is «the most triumphant of Poe's heroes,» and he adds, a character who is at once «calm, lucid, humane, and oracular» (*ATQ*: 39). Arguing that Poe's knowledge of the classical rhetoric is based on the patterns of Blair's *Lectures on Rhetoric*, he finally concludes by asserting *Eureka* to be Poe's «ultimate attempt at creating a vision and a voice which would clarify all his earlier work, and force us to acknowledge that he had spent his life endeavoring not to terrify but to heal his audience, and that he was not wallowing in madness and murder but, instead, showing us the way out of it» (*ATQ*: 42).

Julia W. Mazow, «The Undivided Consciousness of the Narrator in *Eureka*» (*ATQ*: 55-60), as the title indicates, also focuses on the narrator, but as Stauffer points out, she is more concerned with the «correspondence between the cyclical rhythms of the narrator's rhetorical progress and the cyclical aspect of the cosmology he describes»². The underlying assumption of Mazow's concept of the narrator-guide (using Wayne Booth's theory) is that one survives by following the lead of various characters or concepts representing guidance, which derives «from the morality play guidance,» and since the narrator of *Eureka* «has internalized the concept of guidance... is 'reliable' and a dramatized spokesman for the implied author, i.e., guidance personified» (*ATQ*: 56, 59). Finally, Mazow asks if in the world of *Eureka* the individual is annihilated. To this Poe answers: «the sense of individual identity will be gradually merged in the general consciousness --that Man, for example, ceasing imperceptibly to feel himself Man, will at length attain that awfully triumphant epoch when he shall recognize his existence as that of Jehovah» (*Works*, XVI, 314-315).

Poe wrote *Eureka* to save himself from his drift into disintegration and despair, and yet, when he finished his ultimate work, he wrote to

1. John P. Hussey, «Narrative Voice and Classical Rhetoric in *Eureka*», *ATQ*, 26 (1975), 37-42. (see note 32 for cited references to the *ATQ* essays).

2. See Stauffer in *ALS* 1975, p. 57.

Maria Clemm on July 7, 1849: «I must die. I have no desire to live since I have done '*Eureka*'. I could accomplish nothing more»¹. This is the overwhelming tone in William Drake's essay, «The logic of Survival: *Eureka* in Relation to Poe's Other Works» (ATQ: 15-22). Based on Baudelaire's, Krutch's, and Wilbur's ideas and views on Poe, and ignoring the current scholarship on *Eureka*, Drake elaborates on Poe's masterpiece contrasting it, in what it seems to be a superficial way, to Poe's earlier poems, particularly «Al Aaraaf,» «The Lake,» and «The Raven». Accepting the fact that Poe with his work fulfilled the quest for unity that was his life-goal, *Eureka* is not the «end-product of patient system-building over the years, but rather a burst of glorious intuitive vision» (ATQ: 16).

The personal identity comes again as a theme in a persuasively elaborated article by Kevin M. McCarthy. In «Unity and Personal Identity in *Eureka*» (ATQ: 22-26), McCarthy traces Poe's ideas of unity and personal identity back to John Locke's *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*. «My purpose,» he says, «is to show how *Eureka* employs the points about unity and personal identity used in these tales ['Ligeia', 'Morella,' and 'Berenice'] and how Poe borrowed them from Locke» (ATQ: 22). Poe's statement in *Eureka* that «no two bodies are absolutely alike» (*Works*, XVI, 213) in connection to his conclusion that there is one soul in the world all of which «has been effected by forcing the originally and therefore normally *One* into the abnormal condition of Many» (*Ibid.*, p. 207) clearly refers, according to McCarthy to Locke's «There can, from the nature of things, be no absurdity at all to suppose that the same soul may at different times be united to different *bodies*, and with them make up for that time one *man*» (ATQ: 24). Arguing with such examples he, finally, concludes that *Eureka* then is a compendium of ideas Poe borrowed from Locke...» (ATQ: 25). McCarthy's argument is not clearly and convincingly argued, partly because its most part is devoted to Poe's other stories, with very few references to *Eureka*.

From Locke's theories we go to Kabbalism, to Hinduism, to Jung, and the Greek folk tales to discover that Poe is a «self-appointed shaman» as Perry F. Hoberg urges us to do in his «Poe: Trickster-Cosmologist» (ATQ: 30-37). Claiming from the beginning of his essay that Poe's «cosmological 'poem'» is of «questionable literary and/or scientific merit»

1. This fragment of Poe's letter is quoted in Drake's essay.

(ATQ: 30), Hoberg reveals the shortcomings of anthropological and Jungian criticism, and explores Poe's social and psychological development as it is revealed in *Eureka*. He attributes to Poe the task both to exorcise and heal a psychically ailing society, calling him with the satirical titles of «Shaman-trickster» of neolithic tradition and «cosmological speculator» (*Ibid.*). Hoberg, using the principle of negation (destruction) as a force of metamorphosis (real change), sees Poe's excursions into the Shamanic way of performance and thinking as «represent alternative traditions for responding to social crisis» (ATQ: 31). Portraying the role of Shaman-Trickster as seen under the spectrum of Sabbatianism, Jungian psychology, Greek folk tales, Hinduism, and the views of Goethe and Dante, he concludes that Poe's preoccupation with various problem-solving 'games' which he carried over into *Eureka* comprises a pattern of behavior that suggests an affinity with the trickster technique in the overall role of the Shaman» (ATQ: 32). What characterizes Hoberg's article is, besides being an interesting «story» (quotations mine), an overall lack of evidence from Poe's own writings.

Poe the «Shaman-Trickster» being at odds with Sabbatai Zevi, et al., clings, now, to a Lucretian vision of matter and motion. It is a common secret, Curtis M. Brooks asserts in his remarkable essay, «The Cosmic God: Science and the Creative Imagination in *Eureka*» (ATQ: 60-68), that Poe made it his task in *Eureka* to speak of the «secrets which God did not intend for man to probe» (ATQ: 60). Writes Poe: «The class of terms to which 'Infinity' belongs-the class representing *thoughts of thought*... the Deity has not *designed* ... to be solved,» and turning away from those «who busying themselves in attempts at the unattainable, acquire very easily, by dint of the jargon they emit...a kind of cuttlefish reputation for profundity» (*Works*, XVI, 203-204), sets out, according to Brooks, «to reconcile his mechanistic universe (matter) with his poetry (spirit)--that is, to convert Keat's disjunctive, 'either poetry or science' into the conjunctive 'both poetry and sciencé» (ATQ: 60). Starting his discussion with «The Island of the Fay» and «Mesmeric Revelation,» Brooks claims that the logic that led Poe from the latter to *Eureka*, «begins with the premise that scientific theories can be beautiful as well as true and that artistic constructs can be true as well as beautiful» (ATQ: 61). Poe tells us, as Brooks reminds us that «the mathematics afford no more absolute demonstrations than the *sentiment* of his Art yields to the artist. He not only believes, but positively *knows*, that such and such apparently arbitrary arrangements of matter... con-

stitute... true Beauty»¹. In *Eureka*, Brooks also finds «Poe's last and best answer to the question which had so haunted him [Poe]: How is it possible that atoms should dream and think, and what, ultimately, do these dreams and thoughts come to?» (ATQ: 63). Poe's answer came through «that chain of *graduated impression* by which alone the intellect of Man can expect to encompass the grandeurs of which I speak, and, in their majestic totality, to comprehend them» (*Works*, XVI, 277). In what I consider one of the most exquisitely remarkable conclusions, Brooks writes: «*Eureka* is a poem, a romance, a dream, an exercise of the creative imagination, an intuitive leap toward the center of truth. Reading it heightens awareness, makes our pulses beat faster, plunges us into the sublime terror of first and last things» (ATQ: 64-65). In the above statement Brooks has revealed the ultimate truth about Poe's ultimate book. But, the closer one gets to the ultimate truth, the further away she seems to be. Thus the need for the door of our center «where the meanings are» to be open for any new light that it may arrive.

The new light that the main points of *Eureka* may shed on the nature and function of art and the artist is the topic that Charles W. Schaefer disusses in his article «Poe's '*Eureka*': The Macrocosmic Analogue» (JAAC: 353-365)². In what he calls «an analogical interpretation,» and disregarding the view that Poe, though he discusses in his work logic, philosophy, and scientific theory, has not posited anything new concerning these, Schaefer argues from the beginning that Poe has «espoused feeling as a more valid approach to truth than empirically based thought, and has asserted that truth is more important to man for its beauty than for its matter of fact» (JAAC: 354). Spending much of his space discussing in general terms art and the artist, and repeating what already has been presented in this essay, Schaefer comes to a very interesting conclusion: «*Eureka*, then, in its own way, is an affirmation of the faith which led Keats to say, 'Beauty is truth, truth beauty,--that is all / Ye know on earth, and all ye need to know.'» (JAAC: 364).

The universe of *Eureka* as presenting an image of the processes that control Poe's work as a whole, and as picturing the scheme of things as a constantly repeated destruction and re-formation, is the theme of T.J. Reiss in his «The Universe and the Dialectic of Imagination in Edgar

1. *The Landscape Garden*, *Works*, IV, 266.

2. Charles W. Schaefer, «Poe's '*Eureka*': The Macrocosmic Analogue,» *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, 29 (1971), 353-365.

Allan Poe» (*Etudes Anglaises*: 16-25)¹. As for the first point, Reiss asserts that the universe of *Eureka* suggests «just such a destruction before the intellect of the poet as the structure of most of the tales manifests before the intellect of the reader» (*Etudes*: 17). The above argument affirms what Poe wrote in *Eureka*: «But are we here to pause? Not so. On the Universal agglomeration and dissolution, we can readily conceive that a new and perhaps totally different series of conditions may ensue....a belief...that the processes we have here ventured to contemplate will be renewed forever, and forever, and forever... (*Works*, XVI, 314). Reiss, buttressing the universe of *Eureka* with references to the microcosms of Poe's other tales, finds it without a considerable variety, and sees the «dominion of the imagination» as an intense search for some ideal unity, for some point where «being and nothingness coincide» (*Etudes*: 25), in what Poe calls, «a novel universe swelling into existence and then subsiding into nothingness at every throb of the Heart Divine» (*Works*, XVI, 311).

An increasing number of dissertations, lately, is devoted to Poe's aesthetic theory and his work. Their common denominator, one might say, is that they examine Poe under his own theory of the universe as it is exposed in *Eureka*. For the merit of cyclical information--though not quite cyclical, for I haven't included in my presentation the material on Poe's cosmology found in books-- I will briefly discuss a few dissertations, quoting from the *DAI*.

Dennis W. Eddings' dissertation, «The Infernal Twoness: Poe's Vision of Duplicity» (*DAI* 1980)², is an «investigation...concentrating on *Eureka* to establish Poe's concept that the physical universe is of necessity dublicious, and that this dublicious nature is also inherent in man» (*Ibid.*). Eddings bases his conception of Poe's work on the assumption that Poe is an «artistic confidence man whose tales are elaborate hoaxes» (*Ibid.*).

That Poe had to write his ultimate work in order to understand the true impact of his own aesthetic theory argues in his dissertation Lawrence G. Dotolo. In «Edgar Allan Poe's Quest for Supernal Beauty» (*DAI* 1980)³, Dotolo claims that Poe finds, finally, his answer to his

1. T.S. Reiss, 'The Universe and the Dialectic of the Imagination in Edgar Allan Poe», *Etudes Anglaises*, 27 (1975), 16-25.

2. Dennis W. Eddings, «The Infernal Twoness: Poe's Vision of Duplicity», *DAI*, 34 (1973), 7746A (Oregon).

3. Lawrence G. Dotolo, «Edgar Allan Poe's Quest for Supernal Beauty», *DAI*, 40 (1980), 5054A (Marquette).

artistic search only in the Universe. Poe's «uniqueness,» according to him, «lies in the emphasis on the 'struggle' to recreate supernal beauty», as it is exemplified in *Eureka* and his other works.

Another dissertation entirely on Poe's «cosmological poem» is Joseph M. Kirkland's «Poe's Universe: A Critical Study of *Eureka*» (*DAI* 1976)¹. Kirkland states in his opening paragraph a true remark, that «[Poe's] theory of the universe, *Eureka*, is frequently ignored or condemned.» He agrees with this essay's belief that there is an increasing scholarly attention on Poe's masterpiece. In *Eureka* he finds a «chronological growth» of Poe's ideas as they were formulated through his other works.

Following Holman's mode, Roberta Ilane Sharp's dissertation, «The Problem of knowledge in Poe's Scientific Pose» (*DAI* 1977)², finds *Eureka* as the «atypical work» which Poe «claimed as his masterpiece», and which «cleverly masks its satire as an astronomical study, though it is not but a 'fairy-talé» (*Ibid.*). According to Sharp, Poe uses science as a fair game for his «mockery». The fact that Miss Sharp writes in the same mode as Miss Holman I hope is a mere coincidence, and not a deliberate feministic attitude.

Finally, as an epilegomenon, contributing to Poe's studies, especially on *Eureka*, comes Ronald W. Nelson's dissertation, «The Definitive Edition of Edgar Allan Poe's *Eureka: A Prose Poem*» (*DAI* 1975)³. «Having the demands... this study,» writes Nelson, «sets forth... a definitive text of Poe's *Eureka* which is indicative in every way of what is perceived today as the ideal form intended by the author».

It is a principle of the canon of literary criticism not to demand from any work of art something else than that which it presents itself as being, doing, or offering. Paraphrasing and applying it to the present essay, I hope, it becomes obvious why I have not «let myself in» as it was suggested to me when I was given the assignment. Yet, here and there, one can pinpoint my feelings and my thoughts toward the ethereal poet of *Eureka*. I have tried, to the best of my sensitive temper --when it comes to Poe--, to be within the above axiom keeping at the

45. Joseph M. Kirkland, «Poe's Universe: A Critical Study of *Eureka*», *DAI*, 37 (1976), 970A (Texas Christian).

46. Roberta Il. Sharp, «The Problem of knowledge in Poe's Scientific Pose», *DAI* 38 (1977), 1395 A (Kansas State).

47. Roland W. Nelson, «The Definitive Edition of Edgar Allan Poe's *Eureka: A Prose Poem*,» *DAI*, 35 (1975), 4445A (Bowling Green).

same time in mind the scope, purpose, and function of the present essay, which, after all, is a survey of critical bibliographical material on Poe's *Eureka*.

As for the critical essays presented here, not all of them seem to have taken the above stated principle seriously. Poe himself offered *Eureka* as, above all, a «Prose Poem,» and as such it could be seen. On the other hand, it is true, Poe discusses in his cosmological poem philosophy, logic, and scientific theory. He may have not added anything, from the scientific point of view, to our existent knowledge of the universe, as many critics argue, but no one will deny the fact that he succeeds in making us, through the pages of *Eureka*, feel some of the passion that inspired and led Aristotle, Newton, and Laplace, to mention only a few, in their search for the ultimate Truth. And any critic of good faith will agree to that Poe's work is full of life and consciousness, as well as that some of the scientific principles as we know them today were foreshadowed in his work.

Poe's cosmogony asserted him above all as the poet of the first order. The poet who satisfies both the ears and the eyes of the reader's mind--as long as the ears are ready and willingly to listen to his angelic voice, and the eyes are prepared to perceive him as such. Is then Poe a poet for the few, the gifted? I would answer indirectly: Poe is not for everyone. As essentially a philosophical poet, he asks for an audience appreciative of intellectual poetry. He asks for readers who are ready to accept what *Eureka* affirms: that the universe and the mind able to imagine its design are one; that the human consciousness will understand the universe only intuitively as it is understood by the Creator. In other words, it is only through dreams and the imagination, Poe believes, that man can gain a vision of the ethereal world beyond. Finally, Poe asks us to look into our hearts, for there only we will be able to find sufficient reason for hope, happiness, and creativity.

It may be said that what Poe seeks in *Eureka* seems above and beyond the human capacity. But, at the same time it can be said that a closer attention and a more sensitive appreciation, as his mind and work demand, will assert the greatness of what Poe found in *Eureka*:

The Heart Divine--What is it? *It is our own.*

...each soul is, in part, its own God--its

own Creator: in a word, that God--the Material

and Spiritual God--*now* exists solely in the diffused

Matter and Spirit of the Universe...

(*Works*, XVI, 311, 313).

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A Note to the Bibliography. Some of the sources listed under the «Working Bibliography on *Eureka*,» have not been used in the present essay, for the reason that they were unavailable to me.