



Poetry and Tales

Edgar Allan Poe , Patrick F. Quinn (Editor)

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Read throughout the world, admired by Dostoyevsky and translated by Baudelaire, Edgar Allan Poe has become a legendary figure, representing the artist as obsessed outcast and romantic failure. His nightmarish visions, shaped by cool artistic calculation, reveal some of the dark possibilities of human experience. His enormous popularity and his continuing influence of literature depend less on legend or vision than on his stylistic and formal accomplishments as a writer of fiction and a great lyric poet.

In this complete and uniquely authoritative *Library of America* collection, well-known tales of “mystery and imagination” and his best-known verse are collected with early poems, rarely published stories and humorous sketches, and the ecstatic prose poem *Eureka*.

But his enormous popularity and his continuing influence on literature depend less on legend or vision than on his stylistic and formal accomplishments as a writer of fiction and as a great lyric poet (“always for all lands,” as Yeats said), famous for the sensuous musicality of “To Helen,” “The City in the Sea,” and “Annabel Lee” and for the hypnotic, incantatory rhythms of “The Raven” and “Ulalume.”

“The Fall of the House of Usher” and “The Cask of Amontillado” show Poe’s mastery of Gothic horror; his “The Pit and the Pendulum” is a classic of terror and suspense. He invented the modern detective story, as in “The Murders in the Rue Morgue,” and developed the form of science fiction that was to influence, among others, Jules Verne and Thomas Pynchon.

Poe was also adept at the humorous sketch of playful jeu d’esprit, such as “X-ing a Paragraph” or “Never Bet the Devil Your Head.” All his stories reveal his high regard for technical proficiency and for what he called “ratiocination.”

Poe’s fugitive early poems, stories rarely collected (such as “Bon-Bon,” “King Pest,” “Mystification,” and “The Duc De L’Omelette), his only attempt at drama, “Politian”—these and much more are included in this comprehensive collection, presented chronologically to show Poe’s development as a writer, his oeuvre culminates in his vision of an indeterminate universe, *Eureka: A Prose Poem*, his culminating vision of an indeterminate universe, printed here for the first time as Poe revised it and intended it should stand.

A special feature of this volume is the care taken to select an authoritative text of each work. The printing and publishing history of every item has been investigated in order to choose a version that incorporates all of Poe’s own revisions without reproducing the errors or changes introduced by later editors. Here, then, is one of America’s and the world’s most disturbing, powerful, and inventive writers published in “the first truly dependable collection of Poe’s poetry and tales.”

Poetry and Tales Details

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Lesley says

I read him every time the weather gets gray and damp, probably because I think about him every time the weather gets gray and damp. Think New England cemeteries, spooky daguerreotypes, stately houses reflected in perfectly still bodies of water, unrequited and lost loves, tuberculosis, and that perverse urge to leap in front of a subway train.

Maria Papadopoulou says

Edgar Allan Poe is overwhelmed with emotions. Sadness for what was lost and for what didn't have the chance to live for long, anger for what could have been prevented, disappointment for what has been proven to be a lie. Painful experiences with which the readers can identify with, one way or the other. A unique work of art that you cannot help but love deeply.

Keith says

Other than Murder on the Rue Morgue, I don't think I've read any Poe since my high school days. Now that I am, ahem, a little bit older I thought I'd re-examine this American icon.

What other poet can say he/she inspired the name of an NFL team? Only Poe, so I guess we Americans are stuck with Poe the Poet and his Raven evermore, though some of us might wish otherwise.

In many ways, Poe contains a genius. The variety and scope of his writing is amazing – his invention of the detective novel, his explorations of cryptology and even science fiction, humor writing, and of course his gothic writings.

Yet I can't really buy into what Poe is selling. I'm not a fan of the gothic genre, and, take the detective stories for example, while they may be revolutionary, he seems to miss the mark with them. Like late Mark Twain, I get the sense of a writer producing works with a gun to his head.

As I re-read his works:

The Fall of the House of Usher – A story in which everything is atmospheric. Everything is told through this atmosphere and through the narrator. The story is full of conversations between Usher and the narrator, but it is interesting to note that the reader only gets two direct quotes from Usher in the entire story. All other conversations are explained through the prism of the narrator and the atmosphere. There is a good build up to the terror at the end, but I thought fall of the House of Usher was rather sudden.

William Wilson – A doppelganger story of a man killing his own conscience. Meh.

The Murders on the Rue Morgue – A classic detective story – possibly one of the first. The murderer is somewhat unusual.

Never Bet the Devil Your Head – A funny story but I don't understand the connection with/satire of transcendentalism. Definitely worth reading.

The Oval Portrait – Perhaps I'm spoiled by Poe, but this seems a rather standard gothic tale imitated many times.

Masque of the Red Death – Another gothic tale of morality and death.

The Pit and the Pendulum – Very sensual. It was pretty much as I remembered.

The Mystery of Marie Roget – Even though Poe invented the mystery, he didn't perfect it. This is a rather uninteresting rambling of uninteresting details. Poe goes to great pains (and I mean painful to the reader) to explain in minutia Dupin's thought process. Later mystery writers, I think, learned that it's better to have the mystery unraveled in an entertaining manner (even if it meant leaving some holes.)

The Tell-Tale Heart – Much shorter than I recalled. The part where he's driven mad by the heartbeat is only about two paragraphs long. He cracked pretty quickly.

The Gold Bug – Kind of a detective story told backwards. Another innovative story by Poe, but like his detective stories, he spends a long time explaining how Legrand uncovered and solved each clue.

The Black Cat – A classic gothic tale with a gruesome ending.

The Purloined Letter – Like his other detective stories, this is drawn out a bit too long. Otherwise, I like it more than Marie Roget and it's as good as the Murder on the Rue Morgue.

Leonard Gaya says

Edgar Allan Poe is probably (with Washington Irving) the greatest initiator of the short story tradition in American literature, later followed by Scott Fitzgerald, Bradbury, Asimov, or King in the present day. To be sure, the tales included in this volume are fascinating and explore a wide range of genres. All are told in first person, maybe to convey a sense of intense realism and immediacy. I'll only (and briefly) review a few of them to give a rough idea of the subject and scope of these tales:

MS. Found in a Bottle and *A Descent into the Maelström* are tales of the sea, which depict sublime (romantic) and terrifying pictures of man's derelict state when confronted with the extreme fury of the elements. These tales are in a vein not unlike *The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym*, and probably were later an inspiration to Melville and Verne.

The Pit and the Pendulum, *The Facts in the Case of M. Valdemar*, *The Cask of Amontillado* and *Hop-Frog* are mainly suspense and horror stories, where some deathly or gruesome events take primacy and are described in detail within the narrative. These tales have infused most of the gothic mouvement, from Shelley to Wilde to Stoker to Lovecraft and, (again) in present time, to King. (I can't help but think that Valdemar gave J. K. Rowling the initial idea for the character of Voldemort.)

The Murder in the Rue Morgue and *The Purloin Letter* are, as it is well known, the forerunners of the detective story genre. As a result, looking back two centuries away, these stories feel a bit clumsy and

verbose. Auguste Dupin (the French detective in Poe's tales) is the ancestor of Sherlock Holmes (Conan Doyle), Hercule Poirot (A. Christie), Don Isidro Parodi (Borges), Sam Spade (Hammett) and so forth. *The Man of the Crowd* is an odd example of the same genre.

A striking aspect of these tales is that they are midway between Poe's poems (through the precision of the composition) and his philosophical work, namely *Eureka* (through the somewhat fantastical conjectures and speculations). In any event, these tales are at the root of most of contemporary literature and a genuine delight (although sometimes a nightmare) to read.

Carmen says

Poe is the crazy little voice inside one's head, the urge to scream out something inappropriate at a fancy dinner. His world is seemingly unreal and airless, yet it is full of very real fears, paranoia, and obsessions. Like a chiaroscuro, it's all very dark, with brief flashes of bright light, a literary Caravaggio. "Masque of the Red Death" is my favorite, along with "Tell-Tale Heart" and "William Wilson." For Poe, sure the world can be a scary place, but ultimately, it is you who are your own worst enemy. There is no escaping, and the innkeeper is mad.

Hamish says

The problem is that my edition (the Library of America one) is the COMPLETE Poe. 1400 pages of Poe. That is far, far too much Poe.

If you took the very best stories and poems from here and put them in one edition, you would for sure have a five star book on your hands. But he was hardly the master of consistency and you're left with a mass of B and C material that bogs the whole thing down.

Most of the stories are actually comedies and frankly I don't find Poe to be very funny. Also there's a sameness to the material that is especially tiresome. There are a shit-ton of hoax/travel stories presented as fiction all recounting similar details of travel with the same preface about how it's totally true and Poe is just the editor and blah blah it's just too much at once. The mysteries particularly annoyed me as they're just this giant mass of exposition and I suppose we're supposed to think the protagonist is oh so clever but half the clues aren't even given in the first place until they're brought up as part of the solution and it's all rather boring.

The poetry is actually much more consistent. There's some weak early stuff, but it's all pretty solid. And the best stories (especially the Pit and the Pendulum) are fantastic. But go buy a small selected stories edition or something and leave this to Poe aficionados.

Also an orangutan did it. A fucking orangutan.

Alex Barry says

Whew! A long read, all the prose and poetry of this master of American letters. Poe was far more than a

spinner of tales of the macabre, and this collection reveals the full extent of his great eloquence and erudition, his imaginative wit, his scientific, historical and classical knowledge, and his prowess as a mystery writer. The book could be read in intermittent visits, one short story now and then, but I chose to read the works cover to cover, and thereby became fully immersed in this masterful author's world of dreams, romance, humor, adventure, mystery and terror.

Clint says

Man, Edgar Allan Poe is way better than you'd probably think he is! The popular stories are awesome, the not-so-popular stories are awesome (maybe the two hot air balloon stories aren't quite as awesome, but still way the hell more interesting than the last thing you probably read), the descriptions of the macabre absolutely unequalled. If you don't like Edgar Allan Poe you're probably a communist.

Nils Samuels says

Read first when we were young, Poe's stories tend to be forgotten among grownups, which is a shame. Shame is also the buried theme of most of his non-detective stories, worked out in the trembling prose of first-person narratives who try to come to terms with feelings felt but not fully comprehended. Beauty and terror overwhelm Poe's characters, embodied, he wrote, most perfectly in the death of a beloved woman. "Ligeia," "Berenice," "The Black Cat" stand out, but also such lost gems as "The Man of the Crowd" and "Hop-Frog." Fits America's shrinking attention span, then and now.

Susan says

A no-nonsense anthology. Only extra feature was a chronology of Poe's life. This suited my purpose of reacquainting me with Poe's writings.

Aja Ancheta says

This book was really deep, but it was very long. I don't really have much time to read such a lengthy book, and I wish I could've read through it all.

Bob G says

I remember Poe from the short stories, and, of course, the Raven. What I did not realize until reading this was how accomplished a poet he was. This book includes poetry, prose poems, unfinished plays, tales, tales, longer fiction, and essays on poetry. I particularly like two of his essays where he defines and describes poetry in a way I had never thought about. Interestingly, he refers to Aristotle in one of them, and I can see the influence there, in how Poe analyzes the purpose of poetry. From memory (possibly flawed) -- poetry deals with the beauty (for the soul), not passion (for the heart), not logic, and not morals. Beauty. A couple of

his longer works were in the form of log books (including a voyage to the South Pole and another to the Moon via balloon!) and one that describes a journey on the Missouri River prior to Lewis & Clarke. Both fiction. The last piece in this book (Eureka) is a description of his view about the universe which is very much like the later big bang theory. Amazing.

Joshua Jones says

Someone should read this book because there is different poems in it. The raven is a good poem There is a lot of ghostly ideas in this poem.

To F____s S. O____d is another good poem. There are more softer and more hopeful side and he is not depressed. He don't get worked up over anything.

To one Paradise is another good poem. He lost a loved one in the poem.

Bridal ballad is another good poem. Bridal ballad is more about marriages and love.

Sonnet-To Zanteis another good poem. Sonnet-To Zaneteis is a calm story.

Neri. says

Interesting and chilling compilation of various scary tales which made me shiver. Some of them weren't as good as the others were, but nevertheless, interesting selection.

Steve says

Not only is this a helpful, comprehensive collection of Poe stories and poems, it also contains (as all LOA editions do) extremely helpful endnotes. The binding and paper are of very high quality as well. Reading this collection in its entirety (in college) introduced me to the Poe that is more funny than most any other American author and helped me to understand why it is that he's one of our nation's most treasured authors.
