

**EN TORNO A UNA CONCEPCIÓN ESTÉTICA UNITARIA:
LOS PRESUPUESTOS TEÓRICOS DE EDGAR ALLAN POE
SOBRE EL HECHO LITERARIO.**

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Abstract

Poe's general aesthetic is well known, mainly his insistence upon beauty as the chief aim in art. This paper paid attention to four aspects of the Poesque aesthetic doctrine: the hierarchical order Poe establishes in the field of letters and the specific conditions every literary work must have, the nature of poetry, the ideal principles of the short story and the relationship between poetry and prose.

La doctrina estética de Poe aparece recogida en tres niveles diferenciados. De una parte, figura de modo expreso en sus ensayos y anotaciones sobre el hecho literario; de otra parte, se encuentra aplicada y desarrollada en su amplia colección de reseñas críticas, y también se refleja, de forma práctica, en sus poemas y relatos. Se trata de una concepción literaria sobre la que se han formulado a lo largo del tiempo numerosas apreciaciones, diferentes en tono, profundidad e intenciones y, así, mientras en algunos casos el ideario estético del escritor norteamericano no parece merecer otros calificativos que los de mimético, parcial, ineficaz y estrecho, en otras ocasiones, en cambio, es considerado como una doctrina relevante, firmemente arraigada en el escritor, un ideario que intenta ser una respuesta personal y sincera tanto a las cuestiones superficiales como a la esencia misma del arte de escribir y cuya característica más relevante reside en su carácter unitario y glo-

bal. Es una doctrina literaria que bebe manifiestamente en la teoría de las grandes personalidades del romanticismo británico, en especial del "Preface" a *Lyrical Ballads* de Wordsworth, la *Biographia Literaria* de Coleridge, y *A Defence of Poetry* de Shelley. Asimismo, Poe tiene en cuenta el romanticismo alemán y aprovecha la noción del efecto único de las enseñanzas de Schlegel sobre el arte dramático y la literatura ¹. Pero, a pesar de la amplia y reconocible huella de los presupuestos del romanticismo europeo, también se trata de una formulación teórica que es, en cierto modo, novedosa y que tiene mucho de elaboración personal. En este sentido, no hay que olvidar que, en el campo de la narrativa breve, las consideraciones doctrinales que Poe formula sobre esta especialidad literaria lo convierten en el primer teórico del género.

En el ideario poeiano destacan de modo especial tres aspectos: la concepción jerarquizada de las creaciones, las características específicas de las mismas y la interrelación de los distintos géneros.

1. *El código creativo*

"There is, first, the Literature of Knowledge; and, secondly, the Literature of Power. The function of the first isto teach; the function of the second isto move: the first is a rudder; the second, an oar or a sail. The first speaks to the mere discursive understanding; the second speaks ultimately, it may happen, to the higher understanding or reason, but always through affections of pleasure and sympathy."

DE QUINCEY, *The Literature of Knowledge and the Literature of Power*.

Poe no considera los diferentes productos literarios al mismo nivel y establece explícitamente una ordenación estimativa y preferencial en este campo ². La base de esta pirámide jerárquica viene ocupada por las obras realistas, que están basadas en "that evil genius of mere matter-of-fact" y contra cuyas "groveling and degrading assumptions" tiene el crítico que luchar con todos los medios a su alcance ³. En la parte central, Poe coloca el cuento, que considera el género idóneo dentro de la prosa para que un escritor desarrolle sus posibilidades:

"The tale proper affords the fairest field which can be afforded by the wide domains of mere prose, for the exercise of the highest genius. ... Were I called upon, however, to designate that class of composition which, next to such a poem as I have suggested, should best fulfil the demands and serve the purposes of ambitious genius, should offer it the most

advantageous field of exertion, and afford it the fairest opportunity of display, I should speak at once of the brief prose tale.”⁴

Por último, el escritor sitúa el poema en la cúspide, considerándolo la composición más pura, espiritual y de mayor esfuerzo:

“Were I bidden to say how this genius could be most advantageously employed for the best display of its powers, I should answer, without hesitation, “in the composition of a rhymed poem ...”⁵

Junto a esto, las creaciones deben tener, según el criterio de Poe, una naturaleza irrenunciable, unas condiciones específicas, que se relacionan seguidamente.

Libertad. La obra literaria debe circunscribirse a sí misma y estar ajena, por tanto, a elementos y presiones exteriores a ella. Como premisa imprescindible en todo el proceso creativo, Poe reclama la total libertad del autor, que no debe verse comprometida o condicionada por la sociedad, las esferas del poder, las corrientes de opinión, o la propia obra. En dos apartados de *Marginalia* puede comprobarse la posición del escritor a este respecto. En uno de ellos, Poe comenta la relación directamente proporcional que existe entre el porcentaje de libertad y el resultado final de la creación⁶, y en el otro apartado, a propósito de la frase de Novalis “The artist belongs to his work, nor the work to the artist”, declara que en modo alguno el artista es esclavo de su creación, sino que en manos del verdadero artista, el tema o la obra no son más que una masa de arcilla, que la voluntad y maestría se encargan de moldear y dar forma: la arcilla es la esclava del artista y le pertenece⁷.

Pureza. El producto literario necesita ser puro y esta pureza se consigue despojándolo de todo aquello que pueda resultar innecesario, que pueda empobrecer el proyecto y que le impida el logro de su finalidad y plenitud⁸.

Armonía. Todos los elementos que se disponen en la creación han de presentar una actuación y relación caracterizadas por la armonía⁹.

Universalidad. La obra literaria no tiene un alcance limitado, sino que su ámbito es el universo y universal es su valor. La creación auténtica nada tiene que ver con las barreras del tiempo, la lengua y la cultura, ni tampoco con las fronteras de las naciones¹⁰.

Génesis a partir de un efecto. El proceso creativo parte de un efecto preconcebido, singular y único, que se desea conseguir a través de la obra. Desde este punto ineludible se traza un plan y el escritor habrá de idear los sucesos y elementos, tratándolos de forma conveniente para obtener el efecto pretendido:

“An excellent magazine paper might be written upon the subject of the progressive steps by which any great work of art—especially of literary art—attained completion. How vast a dissimilarity always exists between the germ and the fruit—between the work and its original conception!

Sometimes the original conception is abandoned, or left out of sight altogether. Most authors sit down to write with no fixed design, trusting to the inspiration of the moment; it is not, therefore, to be wondered at, that *most* books are valueless. Pen should never touch paper, until at least a well-digested *general* purpose be established. In fiction, the *dénouement*—in all other composition the intended *effect*, should be definitely considered and arranged, before written the first word; and *no* word should be then written which does not tend, or form a part of a sentence which tends to the development of the *dénouement*, or to the strengthening of the effect".¹¹

Poe adjudica una gran importancia a esta condición y por ello advierte que, en caso de que el fragmento inicial de la obra no se redacte teniendo en cuenta la preparación y producción final del efecto deseado, ello significa que la creación queda frustrada desde el comienzo y que el autor ha equivocado el proceso¹².

Unidad o totalidad de impresión. Poe considera que la unidad de impresión es el requisito esencial y el punto de mayor importancia en la obra literaria. La creación debe mantener una línea sostenida, una deliberada y necesaria uniformidad en su desarrollo, que haga posible el logro del efecto, y lo potencie. Por ello, de acuerdo con el criterio de Poe, si se carece de unidad de impresión no es posible conseguir los profundos efectos que se persiguen, ya que "without a certain continuity of effort—without a certain duration or repetition of purpose—the soul is never deeply moved"¹³. Todo esto lo resume en una frase precisa: "There must be the dropping of the water upon the rock".¹⁴

Extensión equilibrada. Es una condición que se desprende de la anterior. La unidad de impresión incide sobre el factor de la extensión de la obra y lo determina, puesto que esta unidad no se puede conseguir plenamente en creaciones cuya lectura no sea posible realizarla de una sola vez. Así, la excesiva longitud de la obra literaria es para Poe una falta imperdonable, ya que atenta claramente contra la deseada unidad o totalidad, posición que lo lleva, en el caso de la poesía, a afirmaciones como "a long poem is a paradox" y "Epics were the offspring of an imperfect sense of art, and their reign is no more"¹⁵. De igual forma, la brevedad extremada tampoco es admisible, porque la emoción no recibe un tratamiento gradual y armónico. Se impone, pues, un concepto equilibrado de la extensión, que permita a la producción literaria la consecución de la unidad de impresión, de forma que ésta no se vea amenazada por elementos exteriores o internos, como el cansancio o la interrupción. Otro símil le sirve de perfecta síntesis de esto último: "There must be the steady pressing down of the stamp upon the wax".¹⁶

Elaborada ejecución. Es el requisito que completa el proceso creativo. La realización del producto literario debe llevarse a cabo a través del análisis constante de las emociones, reacciones y efectos, y del continuo trabajo de la palabra y del lenguaje, siguiendo un minucioso proceso, que en ningún momento puede olvidar

la intención última que se pretende y la necesaria totalidad de impresión. El plan general que sustenta el desarrollo de la obra ha de ser profundamente meditado y su ejecución tiene que ser precisa y acabada, todo ello comparable a los pasos y resolución de un problema matemático.

Junto al cuidadoso tratamiento de la creación se encuentra el concepto poeiano de la originalidad literaria, que considera la más alta de las virtudes en este terreno:

“This true or commendable originality, however, implies not the uniform, but the continuous peculiarity —a peculiarity springing from everactive vigor of fancy— better still if from ever-present force of imagination, giving its own hue, its own character, to everything it touches, and, especially, *self impelled to touch everything*”.¹⁷

Poe está lejos de concebir la originalidad por la originalidad misma, o de considerarla la acumulación de efectos injustificados y desproporcionados, que únicamente buscan sorprender. Así, llega a señalar que no hay mayor error que suponer que la verdadera originalidad es sólo cuestión de impulso o de inspiración. Se trata de un constante reto de superación en el hecho creativo:

“With the vague opinion that to be original is to be unpopular, I could, indeed, agree, were I to adopt an understanding of originality which, to my surprise, I have known adopted by many who have a right to be called critical. They have limited, in a love for mere words, the literary to the metaphysical originality. They regard as original in letters, only such combinations of thought, of incident, and so forth, as are, in fact, absolutely novel. It is clear, however, not only that it is the novelty of *effect* alone which is worth consideration, but that this effect is *best* wrought, for the end of all fictitious composition, pleasure, by shunning rather than by seeking the absolute novelty of combination. Originality, thus understood, tasks and startles the intellect, and so brings into undue action the faculties to which, in the lighter literature, we last appeal. And thus understood, it cannot fail to prove unpopular with the masses, who, in seeking in this literature amusement, are positively offended by instruction. But the true originality —true in respect of its purposes— is that which, in bringing out the half-formed, the reluctant, or the unexpressed fancies of mankind, or in exciting the more delicate pulses of the heart’s passion, or in giving birth to some universal sentiment or instinct in embryo, thus combines with the pleasurable effect of apparent novelty, a real egoistic delight. The reader, in the case first supposed (that of the absolute novelty) is excited, but embarrassed, disturbed, in some degree even pained at his own want of perception, at his own folly in not having himself hit upon the idea. In the second case, his pleasure is doubled. He is filled with an intrinsic and extrinsic delight. He feels and

intensely enjoys it as really novel, as absolutely original with the writer — and himself. Henceforward, there is a bond of sympathy which irradiates every subsequent page of the book".¹⁸

En este sentido, en la reseña de *Peter Snook* (1836) también manifiesta que no hay mayor error que suponer que la auténtica originalidad es sólo una cuestión de impulso o de inspiración: "To originate, is carefully, patiently, and understandingly to combine".¹⁹

2. La poesía y sus principios ideales

"...poets...are not only the authors of language and of music, of the dance and architecture, statuary and painting; they are the institutors of laws, and the founders of civil society, and the inventors of the arts of life, and the teachers, who draw into a certain propinquity with the beautiful and the true..."

A poet is a nightingale, who sits in darkness and sings to cheer its own solitude with sweet sounds; his auditors are as men entranced by the melody of an unseen musician, who feel that they are moved and softened, yet know not whence or why. ...Poets are the unacknowledged legislators of the world."

SHELLEY, *A Defence of Poetry*.

Una atención muy especial dedica Poe a la consideración teórica de la poesía y ello se traduce en la existencia de numerosos textos relativos a esta cuestión. Los ensayos *The Poetic Principle* (1850), *The Philosophy of Composition* (1846) y *The Rationale of Verse* (1843, 1848) recogen mayoritariamente su doctrina poética, pero también éste es el tema de trabajos como *A Letter to B.*, de múltiples apartados de *Marginalia* (1844-1849), y de abundantes referencias a lo largo de toda su obra crítica.

Una buena parte de este esfuerzo teórico se dirige comprensiblemente al logro de una fórmula definitoria de la poesía. En su reseña de los autores neoyorquinos Drake y Halleck, publicada en 1836, Poe manifiesta que la poesía jamás ha sido definida a satisfacción de todas las partes, que su naturaleza intangible y puramente espiritual se niega a quedar encerrada en el amplio límite de los meros sonidos:

"But it is not, therefore, misunderstood —at least, not by all men is it misunderstood. Very far from it. If, indeed, there be any one circle of thought distinctly and palpably marked out from amid the jarring and tumultuous chaos of human intelligence, it is that evergreen and radiant

Paradise which the true poet knows, and knows alone, as the limited realm of his authority— as the circumscribed Eden of his dreams”.²⁰

Pero él intenta explicar la naturaleza del hecho poético. En 1842 en la reseña de *Ballads and Other Poems* de Longfellow, Poe propone una definición. La poesía es para él una respuesta insatisfactoria a la demanda de belleza que se da de modo natural e incontenible en el hombre, y comprende dos elementos específicos:

“Its first element is the thirst for supernal BEAUTY—a beauty which is not afforded the soul by any existing collocation of earth’s forms— a beauty which, perhaps, *no possible* combination of these forms would fully produce. Its second element is the attempt to satisfy this thirst by novel combinations, *of those combinations which our predecessors, toiling in chase of the same phantom, have already set in order.* We thus clearly deduce the *novelty*, the *originality*, the *creation* of BEAUTY, (for the terms as here employed are synonymous) as the essence of all Poesy”.²¹

En este escritor la definición de la poesía y el diseño teórico de su naturaleza son una misma cosa. Desde su perspectiva, la poesía solamente puede darse en el marco fijado por unas coordenadas específicas.

Uno de estos requisitos es el de la extensión. Poe niega la existencia del poema extenso:

“...a poem deserves its title only inasmuch as it excites, by elevating the soul. The value of the poem is in the ratio of this elevating excitement. But all excitements are, through a psychal necessity, transient. That degree of excitement which would entitle a poem to be so called at all, cannot be sustained throughout a composition of any great length. After the lapse of half an hour, at the very utmost, it flags—fails—a revulsion ensues—and then the poem is, in effect, and in fact, no longer such”.²²

Estas palabras pertenecen a los párrafos iniciales de *The Poetic Principle*, pero se trata de un planteamiento que Poe recoge en otras obras suyas. En *The Philosophy of Composition* manifiesta que toda obra literaria no debe rebasar en cuanto a extensión un límite preciso: la extensión que permite una sola sesión de lectura:

“...although in certain classes of prose composition, such as “Robinson Crusoe”, (demanding no unity), this limit may be advantageously overpassed, it can never properly be overpassed in a poem. Within this limit, the extent of a poem may be made to bear mathematical relation to its merit—in other words, to the excitement or elevation— again in other

words, to the degree of the true poetical effect which it is capable of inducing.”²³

Por ello, géneros como la epopeya y obras como *Paradise Lost* y *La Iliada*, que rebasan ampliamente el centenar de versos, caen fuera de los límites establecidos:

“In poems of magnitude the mind of the reader is not, at all times, enabled to include in one comprehensive survey, the proportions and proper adjustment of the whole. He is pleased, if at all, with particular passages; and the sum of his pleasure is compounded of the sums of the pleasurable sentiments inspired by these individual passages in the progress of perusal.”²⁴

Los reparos que Poe hace a las composiciones de gran extensión se repiten en aquéllas de excesiva brevedad. Una brevedad inadecuada perjudica al poema porque un cierto grado de duración constituye un requisito indispensable para lograr un efecto cualquiera. Una pieza demasiado breve puede conseguir una impresión vívida y brillante, pero nunca una impresión profunda y duradera²⁵. Por lo tanto es indispensable que el poema tenga una extensión apropiada, justamente meditada, una extensión que permita, de una parte, que el escritor alcance satisfactoriamente su objetivo, y, de otra parte, que el lector abarque sin dificultad toda la obra y la goce de una manera completa y unitaria²⁶. La extensión de la obra es un elemento constructivo que está muy ligado a otros dos, los del efecto final y la unidad o totalidad de interés, que funcionan de modo interdependiente:

“There is a radical error, I think, in the usual mode of constructing a story. Either history affords a thesis —or one is suggested by an incident of the day— or, at best, the author sets himself to work, in the combination of striking events to form merely the basis of his narrative —designing generally, to fill in with description, dialogue, or authorial comment, whatever crevices of fact, or action, may, from page to page, render themselves apparent.

I prefer commencing with the consideration of an *effect*. ...Having chosen a novel, first, and secondly a vivid effect, I consider whether it can be best wrought by incident or tone —whether by ordinary incidents and peculiar tone, or the converse, or by peculiarity both of incident and tone— afterwards looking about me (or rather within) for such combinations of event, or tone, as shall best aid me in the construction of the effect.”²⁷

La consecución del efecto pretendido depende en gran medida del perfecto acabado de la obra, de la cohesión y adaptación de todos sus elementos y, muy es-

pecialmente, del respeto al principio schlegeliano de la unidad o totalidad de interés ²⁸.

Otro elemento constructivo de obligada presencia es el ritmo. En esta concepción personal la música es fundamental para la poesía y posee una fuerza poderosa para alcanzar los altos objetivos propuestos:

“Contenting myself with the certainty that Music, in its various modes of metre, rhythm, and rhyme, is of so vast a moment in Poetry as never to be wisely rejected —is so vitally important an adjunct, that he is simply silly who declines its assistance, I will not now pause to maintain its absolute essentiality. It is Music, perhaps, that the soul most nearly attains the great end for which, when inspired by the Poetic Sentiment, it struggles — the creation of supernal Beauty. It *may* be, indeed, that here this sublime end is, now, and then, attained *in fact*. We are often made to feel, with a shivering delight, that from an earthly harp are stricken notes which cannot be unfamiliar to the angels. And thus there can be little doubt that in the union of Poetry with Music in its popular sense, we shall find the widest field for the Poetic development.” ²⁹

Por ello, Poe llega a definir la poesía verbal —la que se hace con palabras, cercana pero diferente a la vez de las otras clases de poesía que se expresan a través de la pintura, la escultura, la arquitectura, la danza y la música— como “the *Rhythmical Creation of Beauty*”. La belleza es el dominio del poema, su atmósfera y esencia real:

“Beyond the limits of Beauty its province does not extend. Its sole arbiter is Taste. With the intellect or with the Conscience it has no dependence, unless incidentally, upon either Duty or Truth.” ³⁰

Estas palabras son especialmente significativas porque contienen la precisa discriminación que este escritor hace de los límites poéticos. La intención didáctica es algo que, para Poe, cae fuera de estos límites y, consecuentemente, él rechaza la creencia de que cada poema debe inculcar una enseñanza o moraleja, y que en la medida que esto se consiga, tal será el mérito poético de la composición ³¹. Sin embargo, la postura de Poe en este sentido no significa una absoluta negación del didacticismo o la moral en este ámbito literario. Así en más de una ocasión, llega a señalar que estos elementos pueden darse en el poema como “under-current of a poetical thesis”, pero sus efectos poéticos resultan invariablemente negativos cuando rebasan estas limitaciones y llegan a desplazar la finalidad legítima del poema, que es la belleza ³².

Tampoco hay lugar en el poema para la pasión. Pasión y poesía son elementos discordantes. La poesía, al exaltar, serena *el alma*, no tiene nada que ver con *el corazón* ³³:

"...the object Truth, or the satisfaction of the intellect, and the object Passion, or the excitement of the heart, are, although attainable, to a certain extent, in poetry, far more readily attainable in prose. Truth, in fact, demands a precision, and Passion a homeliness (the truly passionate will comprehend me) which are absolutely antagonistic to that Beauty which, I maintain, is the excitement, or pleasurable elevation, of the soul".³⁴

Como puede apreciarse, este modelo teórico únicamente admite como poéticas las composiciones propiamente líricas, las obras que nacen libre y desinteresadamente de la imaginación del escritor y que no están empapadas de doctrinarismo, artificialidad alegórica y arrebato apasionado, el poema que es un poema y nada más, el poema escrito por el poema mismo.

Los críticos se han referido extensamente a los estrechos límites en los que Poe encierra la poesía³⁵, en los que no pueden entrar la épica y la poesía dramática, ni tampoco obras como la *Divina Comedia* de Dante y el *Essay on Criticism* de Pope. Junto a este hecho del empobrecimiento y drástica reducción del ámbito de la poesía, también se ha señalado el relativo cumplimiento en la práctica de toda esta doctrina teórica. El análisis de las composiciones de Poe muestra que el mecanismo de composición es aparente y que la frialdad demiúrgica que debe presidir el acto creativo no se da en muchas ocasiones.

En cualquier caso, al propio escritor no se le escapan los rasgos singulares de su teoría y se da cuenta de los límites que ésta establece. Por ello pone al tiempo como el inapelable y competente tribunal que ha de juzgar la validez de sus afirmaciones en este sentido:

"That our definition will necessarily exclude much of what, through a supine toleration, has been hitherto ranked as poetical, is a matter which affords us not even momentary concern. We address but the thoughtful, and heed only their approval —with our own. If our suggestions are truthful, then "after many days" shall they be understood as truth, even though found in contradiction of all that has been hitherto so understood. If false shall we not be the first to bid them die?"³⁶

3. *Los fundamentos teóricos del relato*

"In energetic minds, truth soon changes by domestication into power, and from directing in the discrimination and appraisal of the product, becomes influencive in the production. To admire on principle, is the only way to imitate without loss of originality."

COLERIDGE, *Biographia Literaria*, IV.

La doctrina de Poe sobre el relato viene recogida en el juicio crítico que éste hace de *Twice-Told Tales* de N. Hawthorne, primeramente aparecido en *Graham's Magazine* en mayo de 1842, y que luego, revisado, completado y con el título de "Tale Writing-Nathaniel Hawthorne", fue publicado en *Godey's Magazine and Lady's Book*, en noviembre de 1847³⁷. A esta fuente teórica principal se unen numerosas referencias dispersas en su obra crítica y en sus *Marginalia*.

En esta reseña de Hawthorne, los aspectos teóricos generales de la creación literaria (libertad, pureza, génesis de la obra a partir de un efecto que se pretende lograr, unidad de impresión, brevedad, y elaborada y original ejecución), ya comentados, son tratados bajo la perspectiva específica del cuento, y se completan con otros elementos propios de esta variedad narrativa. Poe plantea un tratamiento novedoso del relato, caracterizado por la búsqueda de un efecto en cada creación, el control integral del proceso, la supeditación de los elementos constructivos a estrictos presupuestos de economía funcional y la apelación a todos y cada uno de los sentidos impresionables del lector.

De acuerdo con Poe, el relato ha de ser breve, y su lectura debe tener lugar entre media hora y dos horas:

"the ordinary novel is objectionable, from its length, for reasons analogous to those which render length objectionable in the poem. As the novel cannot be read at one sitting, it cannot avail itself of the immense benefit of *totality*. Wordly interest, intervening during the pauses of perusal, modify, counteract and annul the impressions intended. But simple cessation in reading would, of itself, be sufficient to destroy the true unity. In the brief tale, however, the author is enabled to carry out his full design without interruption."³⁸

La breve extensión del relato favorece las intenciones del autor, y durante el tiempo de la lectura el alma del lector está bajo el control del escritor. Este aspecto del sometimiento del alma del lector a la voluntad del literato es especialmente sugestivo y se puede considerar como otra característica definitoria más del género.

El obligado punto de partida del relato es el deseo de lograr un efecto determinado, singular y único. Este factor condiciona el desarrollo de la obra. Este efecto singular se consigue dotando a la obra de unidad de impresión, lo que garantiza el adecuado y coherente progreso de la narrativa en la consecución del efecto:

"A skilful artist has constructed a tale. He has not fashioned to accommodate his incidents, but having deliberately conceived a certain *single effect* to be wrought, he then invents such incidents, he then combines such events, and discusses them in such tone as may best serve him in establishing this preconceived effect. If his very first sentence tend not to the out-bringing of this effect, then in his very first step has he committed a blunder. In the whole composition there should be no word

written of which the tendency, direct or indirect, is not to the one pre-established design. And by such means, with such care and skill, a picture is at length painted which leaves in the mind of him who contemplates it with a kindred art, a sense of the fullest satisfaction. The idea of the tale, its thesis, has been presented unblemished, because undisturbed—an end absolutely demanded, yet, in the novel, altogether unattainable.”³⁹

De manera reiterada, Poe insiste en el hecho de la completa y meditada elaboración del plan de la obra antes de comenzar a escribir. Para él resulta obvio que todo plan o argumento merecedor de tal nombre debe ser desarrollado hasta el desenlace final antes de empezar a escribir⁴⁰, puesto que sólo con el *dénouement* a la vista no se puede proporcionar al argumento su indispensable atmósfera de consecuencia, de causalidad, haciendo que los incidentes y, sobre todo, el tono general tiendan a vigorizar la intención⁴¹:

El cuento se concibe y se realiza bajo definidas perspectivas de economía. Se trata de una estructura funcional mínima, en la que cada elemento está plenamente justificado y en la que el efecto pretendido se logra mediante la menor complicación temática y el menor esfuerzo lingüístico posibles. Estos criterios de economía se polarizan y concentran en una expresión verbal efectiva y justificada, y en un proceso o desarrollo narrativo directo e inmediato. Por ello, resulta necesario alcanzar un delicado y continuado equilibrio armónico entre ambos niveles, en un difícil pero imprescindible juego literario.

Todo esto hace que Poe destaque la importancia y la necesidad de la construcción en el relato:

“In the tale proper —where there is no space for development of character or for great profusion and variety of incident—mere *construction* is, of course, far more imperatively demanded than in the novel. Defective plot, in this latter, may escape observation, but in the tale, never. Most of our tale-writers, however, neglect the distinction. They seem to end; and their ends, generally —like so many governments of Trincolo— appear to have forgotten their beginnings.”⁴²

Es por todo ello por lo que la composición de un cuento de calidad —uno que tenga en cuenta estas condiciones y que en consecuencia alcance los objetivos fijados— requiere según el criterio de Poe tanta o más capacidad que la que se necesita para escribir una novela. Por su naturaleza específica, el cuento constituye indudablemente un ejercicio literario de singular exigencia.

En esta formulación teórica, alegoría y unidad de efecto son elementos que se excluyen. El comentario de las narraciones de Hawthorne permite a Poe señalar su valoración de la presencia de la alegoría en el relato:

“In defence of allegory (however, or for whatever object, employed), there is scarcely one respectable word to be said. Its best appeals are made to the fancy—that is to say, to our sense of adaptation, not of matters proper, but of matters improper for the purpose, of the real with the unreal; having never more of intelligible connection than has something with nothing, never half so much of effective affinity as has the substance for the shadow. The deepest emotion aroused within us by the happiest allegory, *as* allegory, is a very, very imperfectly satisfied sense of the writer’s ingenuity in overcoming a difficulty we should have preferred his not having attempted to overcome. The fallacy of the idea that allegory, in any of its moods, can be made to enforce a truth—that metaphor, for example, may illustrate as well as embellish an argument—could be promptly demonstrated: the converse of the supposed fact might be shown, indeed, with very little trouble—but these are topics foreign to my present purpose. One thing is clear, that if allegory ever establishes a fact, it is by dint of overturning a fiction.”⁴³

Debido a su acción negativa, la alegoría solamente puede ser admitida en el terreno de la narrativa en una circunstancia específica: cuando el sentido alusivo fluye a través del sentido obvio en una corriente bastante profunda, de modo que no interfiera nunca con la corriente superficial—a menos que así se desee—y que no llegue a mostrarse, a no ser que el autor decida llevarlo a la superficie. Poe continúa señalando a este respecto que, en las mejores circunstancias, la alegoría siempre interfiere con la unidad de efecto, que para el artista vale todas las alegorías del mundo. Pero donde la alegoría actúa de un modo especialmente negativo es en la verosimilitud, un nivel de singular importancia en el terreno de la narrativa.

Por otra parte, las limitaciones que Poe establece en su doctrina teórica de la poesía no se dan en igual grado en la del relato, donde se admite una amplia gama de temas, tonos y lenguaje:

“We have said that the tale has a point of superiority even over the poem. In fact, while the rhythm of this latter is an essential aid in the development of the poet’s highest idea—the idea of the Beautiful—the artificialities of this rhythm are an inseparable bar to the development of all points of thought or expression which have their basis in *Truth*. But Truth is often, and in very great degree, the aim of the tale. Some of the finest tales are tales of ratiocination. ...The writer of the prose tale, in short, may bring to his theme a vast variety of modes or inflections of thought and expression—(the ratiocinative, for example, the sarcastic, or the humorous) which are not only antagonistical to the nature of the poem, but absolutely forbidden by one of the most peculiar and indispensable adjuncts; we allude, of course, to rhythm. It may be added here, *par parenthèse*, that the author who aims at the purely beautiful in a prose tale is laboring at great disadvantage. For Beauty can be better treated in the

poem. Nor so with terror, or passion, or horror, or a multitude of such other points.”⁴⁴

A este respecto, Poe no deja de señalar que estos rasgos específicos del relato lo convierten en una clase de composición que, aunque no es tan exquisita como la poesía y no puede ocupar un lugar tan elevado en la montaña del espíritu como al que a ésta le corresponde, sin embargo posee un campo manifiestamente más amplio que el dominio de la poesía. El relato no constituye una obra tan rica como el poema pero posee una singular variedad y es un producto literario especialmente apreciado por la mayoría de la humanidad.

Hasta aquí llega la doctrina que sobre el relato formula Poe explícitamente. Pero también existe una doctrina “implícita”, la que se deduce de su trabajo literario con el cuento, y que es más interesante, detallada y rica que la recogida teóricamente en sus ensayos.

Esta labor de formulación teórica y de creación literaria va a influir significativamente en la posterior evolución del relato y en la caracterización de esta especialidad narrativa. Este concepto de “short story” que Poe propone está firmemente apoyado en la noción del efecto único, un condicionante constructivo que unos autores aceptan y que otros rechazan⁴⁵. Entre los últimos, I. Reid⁴⁶ no admite que la unidad de impresión sea esencial a la naturaleza misma del género y considera que la concepción poética es manifiestamente restrictiva porque deja fuera muchas obras en las que no se da esta condición, llegando a señalar, además, que la conciencia e intención casi matemática que Poe exige no siempre se dan en los escritores.

4. *La cercanía genérica relato-poema*

“...it would be a most easy task to prove...that not only the language of a large portion of every good poem, even of the most elevated character, must necessarily, except with reference to the metre, in no respect differ from that of good prose, but likewise that some of the most interesting parts of the best poems will be found to be strictly the language of prose, when prose is well written.”

WORDSWORTH, *Preface to Lyrical Ballads*.

A lo largo de toda su obra crítica y en sus ensayos sobre el hecho literario Poe se refiere en numerosas ocasiones a las peculiaridades genéricas de la poesía y de la prosa, y establece en todo momento una nítida discriminación de ambas especialidades. Así, por ejemplo, en *A Letter to B.* señala:

“A poem, in my opinion, is opposed to a work of science by having, for its *immediate* object, pleasure, not truth; to romance, by having got its object an *indefinite* instead of a *definite* pleasure, being a poem only so far as this object is attained; romance presenting perceptible images with definite, poetry with *indefinite* sensations, to which end music is an *essential*, since the comprehension of sweet sound is our most indefinite conception. Music, when combined with a pleasurable idea, is poetry; music without the idea is simply music; the idea without the music is prose from its very definitiveness.”⁴⁷

Además, a estos rasgos se pueden añadir los que figuran recogidos en la reseña de Hawthorne, y que ya se han citado. Aquí podemos ver que, a diferencia de la poesía, el cuento admite una gran variedad de tonos, variedad que la propia naturaleza del poema y la presencia indispensable del ritmo no permiten en la creación lírica. Junto a esto, la verdad, que es un elemento impropio del poema, constituye un objetivo posible en la narrativa, y esto se advierte en el hecho de que un buen número de los mejores cuentos están estructurados bajo la perspectiva del razonamiento. Por otro lado, el ritmo es un elemento técnico necesario en el poema y la belleza es un elemento consustancial al mismo, y por ello el autor que quiere acercarse a la belleza pura a través del relato se encuentra ante un gran inconveniente, porque la belleza se puede tratar mejor en el poema. Así, la poesía es una creación sublime, restringida y exigente, que contrasta con los esquemas más amplios de la narrativa.

Sin embargo, al margen de estas diferencias, la relación genérica entre prosa y poesía, entre relatos y poemas, resulta evidente en Poe, en el doble ámbito de la teoría y la creación literaria. Diversas circunstancias fundamentan este rasgo.

En primer lugar está el hecho de que Poe llega a subtítular o identificar su ensayo *Eureka* (1848) como *A Prose Poem*, algo que es especialmente significativo. Además, en las últimas líneas del prefacio de esta obra ruega que ésta sea enjuiciada como un poema, lo que también resulta aplicable a muchos de sus relatos. La carga poética de un notable conjunto de los relatos de Poe es apreciable. El lenguaje narrativo ofrece en estos casos una manifiesta riqueza, con tratamiento rítmico de los períodos sintácticos, vocabulario elevado y elaboración lingüística, que son elementos característicos de la poesía. Los siguientes fragmentos, que pertenecen respectivamente a *Silence*, *The Oval Portrait*, *Eleonora*, *Metzengerstein* y *MS. Found in a Bottle*, son una muestra ilustrativa de ello:

“The waters of the river have a saffron and sickly hue; and they flow not onwards to the sea, but palpitate forever and forever beneath the red eye of the sun with a tumultuous and convulsive motion. For many miles on either side of the river’s oozy bed is a pale desert of gigantic water-lilies. They sigh one unto the other in that solitude, and stretch towards the heaven their long and ghastly necks, and nod to and fro their everlasting

heads. And there is an indistinct murmur which cometh out from among them like the rushing of subterrene water. And they sigh one unto the other.

But there is a boundary to their realm — the boundary of the dark, horrible, lofty forest. There, like the waves about the Hebrides, the low underwood is agitated continually. But there is no wind throughout the heaven. And the tall primeval trees rock eternally hither and thither with a crashing and mighty sound. And from their high summits, one by one, drop everlasting dews. And at the roots strange poisonous flowers lie writhing in perturbed slumber. And overhead, with a rustling and loud noise, the gray clouds rush westwardly forever, until they roll, a cataract, over the fiery wall of the horizon.”⁴⁸

“She was a maiden of rarest beauty, and not more lovely than full of glee. And evil was the hour when she saw, and loved, and wedded the painter. He, passionate, studious, austere, and having already a bride in his Art; she a maiden of rarest beauty, and not more lovely than full of glee; all light and smiles, and frolicsome as the young fawn; loving and cherishing all things; hating only the Art which was her rival; dreading only the pallet and brushes and other untoward instruments which deprived her of the countenance of her lover. It was thus a terrible thing for this lady to hear the painter speak of his desire to pourtray even his young bride. But she was humble and obedient, and sat meekly for many weeks in the dark high turret-chamber where the light dripped upon the pale canvas only from overhead. But he, the painter, took glory in his work, which went on from hour to hour and from day to day. And he was a passionate, and wild and moody man, who became lost in reveries.”⁴⁹

“And life arose in our paths; for the tall flamingo, hitherto unseen, with all gay glowing birds, flaunted his scarlet plumage before us. The golden and silver fish haunted the river, out of the bosom of which issued, little by little, a murmur that swelled, at length, into a lulling melody more divine than that of the harp of Aeolus — sweeter than all save the voice of Eleonora. And now, too, a voluminous cloud, which we had long watched in the regions of Hesper, floated out thence, all gorgeous in crimson and gold, and settling in peace above us, sank, day by day, lower and lower, until its edges rested upon the tops of the mountains, turning all their dimness into magnificence, and shutting us up, as if forever, within a magic prison-house of grandeur and of glory.”⁵⁰

“The rich although faded tapestry hangings which swung gloomily upon the walls, represented the shadowy and majestic forms of a thousand illustrious ancestors. *Here*, rich-ermined priests, and pontifical dignitaries, familiarly seated with the autocrat and the sovereign, put a veto to the wishes of a temporal king, or restrained with the fiat of papal supremacy the rebellious sceptre of the Arch-enemy. *There*, the dark, tall statures of the Princes Metzengerstein — Their muscular war-courses plunging over

the carcasses of fallen foes — startled the steadiest nerves with their vigorous expression; and *here*, again, the voluptuous and swan-like figures of the dames of the days gone by, floated away in the mazes of an unreal dance to the strains of imaginary melody.”⁵¹

“But it is the singularity of the expression which reigns upon the face — it is the intense, the wonderful, the thrilling evidence of old age, so utter, so extreme, which excites within my spirit a sense — a sentiment ineffable. His forehead, although little wrinkled, seems to bear upon it the stamp of a myriad of years. His gray hairs are records of the past, and his grayer eyes are Sybils of the future. The cabin floor was thickly strewn with strange, iron-clasped folios, and mouldering instruments of science, and obsolete long-forgotten charts. His head was bowed down upon his hands, and he pores, with a fiery unquiet eye, over a paper which I took to be a commission”.⁵²

Por ello, no tiene nada de extraño que Philip Van Doren Stern, en su edición de la producción de Poe haya presentado las piezas narrativas *Silence* y *Shadow* no en la formulación prosística con que fueron originalmente publicadas por el escritor norteamericano, sino en formulación versal y bajo el rótulo de “prose poems”⁵³.

En segundo lugar hay que señalar la inclusión de poemas en su obra narrativa. Así ocurre con “The Haunted Palace” en *The Fall of the House of Usher*⁵⁴, “To One in Paradise” en *The Assignment*⁵⁵ y “The Conqueror Worm” en *Ligeia*⁵⁶. Utilizada por una personalidad tan crítica y selectiva como la de Poe, esta mezcla genérica en una misma creación en modo alguno es gratuita y su existencia se explica en la finalidad última de la obra, donde todas las referencias convergen⁵⁷.

En tercer lugar está la clara cercanía que existe entre la doctrina poética, desarrollada en *The Philosophy of Composition* y *The Poetic Principle*, y la teoría del relato, reflejada en su reseña de Hawthorne. James M. Garrison se refiere acertadamente a ello:

“Poe’s own comments on the craft of short fiction in the reviews and notices of Hawthorne’s tales would suggest, moreover, that genre classification, as far as his own writing was concerned, was very artificial and arbitrary; in fact the only determinants he supports uniformly and systematically are the principles of originality, brevity, totality and single effect. Many of the observations in his discussions of Hawthorne’s fiction are even appropriated from the early essays on poetry, such as the “Letter to B” and “Drake-Halleck”. His definition of the kind of tale which can provide “the fairest field which can be afforded by the wide domains of mere prose, *for the exercise of the highest genius*” (XIII, 151; italics mine) differs from his conception of the poem only in the intensity with which it can excite the soul. The objective of the stimulus is in both cases the same,

the transmission of pleasure; and this is "the end of all fictitious composition" (XIII, 145)." ⁵⁸

Además, Garrison ve en el énfasis con el que Poe trata la cuestión de la originalidad, dentro de los presupuestos ideales del relato, una evidencia adicional que confirma la similitud entre el marco teórico del poema y el del cuento. En este sentido, Garrison señala que Poe llega a conceder a W. C. Bryant los más altos honores poéticos porque éste ofrece en sus obras concepciones originales que son "of the very loftiest order of true Poesy" ⁵⁹, y también la originalidad es una de las exigencias enumeradas en la reseña de *Ballads and Other Poems* de Longfellow. Junto a esto hay que situar las propias palabras de Poe cuando manifiesta que su primer objetivo al escribir "The Raven" era la originalidad ⁶⁰. Asimismo, los argumentos relativos a la brevedad, la totalidad y el efecto único, recogidos en la reseña de *Twice-Told Tales* de Hawthorne en 1842, también muestran en opinión de Garrison que su teoría poética contiene los principios básicos que van a condicionar su definición del relato:

"His discussion of these criteria draws explicit parallels between the characteristics of the two genres. The argument for brevity is a case in point: "The ordinary novel is objectionable, from its length, for reasons analogous to those which render length objectionable in the poem already stated in substance. As it cannot be read at one sitting, it deprives itself, of course, of the immense force derivable from *totality*" (XI, 107). The fact that Poe used an extensive discussion of his poetic principles as the introduction to this reviews of Hawthorne's tales offers of course the most substantial evidence that he considered the "brief prose tale" in its highest order an appropriate vehicle for the poetic sentiment, perhaps second only to the synthesis of poetry and music in verse." ⁶¹

Desde una posición cercana a la de Garrison, E. H. Davidson refleja que Poe intenta en muchos de sus cuentos salirse del mundo natural y dejar atrás el ámbito de lo evidente para explorar en otros niveles, por lo que algunos de sus relatos "are indeed poems", y también señala que "Poe always remained a poet even when he was contributing some of his most uninspired narrative to the periodicals." ⁶²

Notas

1. Tanto Friedrich Schlegel (1772-1829) como su hermano August W. Schlegel (1767-1845) influyen en Poe. Pero la influencia más amplia viene del mayor de los Schlegel y, en especial, de su obra, *Vorlesungen über dramatische Kunst und Literatur*, publicada en 1817. En este sentido, cfr. Klaus Doderer, "Die angelsächsische *short story* und die deutsche Kurzgeschichte", *Die Neuren Sprachen*, Band 2, 1956, pp. 422-423.

2. Cfr. Joseph Wood Krutch, "The Philosophy of Composition", en Robert Regan (ed.) *Poe. A Collection of Critical Essays*, Prentice-Hall, Inc., Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey, 1967, p. 22 y ss.
3. Cfr. la reseña de *Undine*, obra del barón de la Motte Fouqué, vol. X, p. 30. Las referencias de los textos de Poe corresponden a *The Complete Works of Edgar Allan Poe*, colección de 17 volúmenes conocida como "Virginia Edition" y publicada por James A. Harrison en New York en 1902. Manejamos la edición facsímil realizada por AMS Press, Inc., New York, 1965.
4. Cfr. la reseña de *Twice-Told Tales* de N. Hawthorne, vol. XI, pp. 106 y 107. En adelante se citará "Hawthorne".
5. *Ibidem*.
6. Cfr. vol. XVI, p. 30: "A man of genius if not permitted to choose his own subject, will do worse, in letters than if he had talents none at all. And *here* how imperatively is he controlled! To be sure, he can write to suit himself—but in the same manner his publishers print. From the nature of our Copy-right laws, he has no individual powers. As for his free agency, it is about equal to that of the dean and chapter of the see-cathedral, in a British election of Bishops— an election held by virtue of the king's writ of *congé d'élire*, and specifying the person to be elected."
7. Cfr. vol. XVI, pp. 98-99: "The artist belongs to his work, not the work to the artist — Novalis. In nine cases out of ten it is pure waste of time to attempt extorting sense from a German apothegm;—or, rather, any sense and every sense may be extorted from all of them. If in the sentence above quoted, the intention is to assert that the artist is the slave of his theme, and must conform to it his thoughts, I have no faith in the idea, which appears to me that of an essentially prosaic intellect. In the hands of the *true* artist the theme, or "work", is but a mass of clay, of which anything (within the compass of the mass and quality of clay) may be fashioned at will or according to the skill of the workman. The clay is, in fact, the slave of the artist. It belongs to him. His genius, to be sure, is manifested very distinctively in *the choice* of the clay. It should be neither fine nor coarse—just so plastic or so rigid— as may best serve the purposes of the things to be wrought— of the idea to be made out, or, more exactly, of the impression to be conveyed. There *are* artists, however, who fancy only the *finest* material, and, who, consequently, produce only the *finest* ware. It is generally very transparent and excessively brittle."
8. Cfr. las reseñas recogidas en los volúmenes VIII, IX, X, XI, XII y XIII. De modo especial remitimos a las siguientes: "Tortosa, the Usurer", vol. X, pp. 27-30; "The Damsel of Darien", vol. X, pp. 49-56; "Voices of the Night", vol. X, pp. 71-80; "Mercedes of Castile", vol. X, pp. 96-99; "Night and Morning", vol. X, pp. 115-133; "The Old Curiosity Shop, and Other Tales", vol. X, pp. 142-155.
9. Cfr. *The Philosophy of Furniture*, vol. XIV, p. 102: "We speak of the keeping of a room as we would of the keeping of a picture — for both the picture and the room are amenable to those undeviating principles which regulate all varieties of art; and very nearly the same laws by which we decide on the higher merits of a paintings suffice for decision on the adjustment of a chamber."
10. Cfr. "Exordium", vol. XI, pp. 1-2: "Time was when we imported our critical decisions from the mother country. For many years we enacted a perfect farce of subserviency to the *dicta* of Great Britain. At last a revulsion of feeling, with self-disgust, necessarily ensued. Urged by these, we plunged into the opposite extreme. In throwing *totally* off that "authority", whose voice had so long been so sacred, we even surpassed, and by much, our original folly. But the watchword now was, "A national literature!"—as if any true literature could be "national"— as if the world at large were not the only proper stage for the literary *histrío*."

A este respecto, cfr. también la reseña que Poe hace de *The Culprit Fay, and Other Poems*, de J. R. Drake y *Alwrick Castle, with Other Poems* de F. G. Halleck, vol. VIII, p. 277: "We are becoming boisterous and arrogant in the pride of a too speedily assumed literary freedom. We throw off, with the most presumptuous and unmeaning hauteur, *all* deference whatever to foreign opinion—we forget, in the puerile inflation of vanity—that the world is the true theatre of the biblical *histrío*—we get up a hue and cry about the necessity of encouraging native writers of merit—we blindly fancy that we can accomplish this by indiscriminate puffing of good, bad, and, indifferent, without taking the trouble to consider that what we choose to denominate encouragement is thus, by its general application, rendered precisely the reverse."

11. Cfr. "A Chapter of Suggestions", vol. XIV, p. 188.
12. Cfr. *Marginalia*, vol. XVI, p. 18: "How many good books suffer neglect through the inefficiency of their beginnings! It is far better that we commence irregularly—immethodically—than that we fail to arrest attention; but the two points, method and pungency, may always be combined. At all risks, let there be a few vivid sentences imprimis, by way of the electric bell to the telegraph."
13. Cfr. "Hawthorne", vol. XIII, p. 153.
14. Cfr. "Hawthorne", vol. XIII, p. 152.
15. Cfr. "Hawthorne", vol. XI, p. 107.
16. Sobre la extensión de la obra literaria, cfr. *The Poetic Principle*, vol. XIV, p. 266 y ss; *The Philosophy of Composition*, vol. XIV, p. 196; y "Hawthorne", vol. XIII, pp. 151-152.
17. Cfr. "Hawthorne", vol. XIII, p. 143.
18. Cfr. "Hawthorne", vol. XIII, pp. 145-146.
19. Cfr. vol. XIV, p. 73.
20. Cfr. vol. VIII, pp. 280-281.
21. Cfr. vol. XI, p. 73.
22. Cfr. *The Poetic Principle*, vol. XIV, p. 266.
23. Cfr. vol. XIV, pp. 196-197.
24. Cfr. vol. XI, p. 78.
25. Cfr. *The Philosophy of Composition*, vol. XIV, p. 197; *The Poetic Principle*, vol. XIV, pp. 268-269; y "Hawthorne", vol. XIII, p. 152.
26. Cfr. *The Philosophy of Composition*, p. 197; y la reseña de *Ballads and Other Poems* de Longfellow, vol. XI, pp. 78-79.
27. Cfr. *The Philosophy of Composition*, pp. 193-194.
28. Cfr. vol. XI, pp. 78-79.
29. Cfr. *The Poetic Principle*, p. 275. Asimismo, véase la reseña de Longfellow ya citada, p. 75.
30. Cfr. *The Poetic Principle*, p. 275. Asimismo, véase la reseña de Longfellow ya citada, p. 75.
31. Cfr. *The Poetic Principle*, p. 272: "With a deep reverence for the True as ever inspired the bosom of man, I would, nevertheless, limit, in some measure, its modes of inculcation. I would limit to enforce them. I would not enfeeble them by dissipation. The demands of Truth are severe. She has no sympathy with the myrtles. All *that* which is so indispensable in Song, is precisely all *that* which *she* has nothing whatever to do. It is but making her a flaunting paradox, to wreath her in gems and flowers. In enforcing a truth, we need severity rather than efflorescence of language. We must be simple, precise, terse. We must be cool, calm, unimpassioned. In a word, we must be in that mood which, as nearly as possible, is the exact converse of the poetical. *He* must be blind, indeed, who does not perceive the radical and chasmal differences between the truthful and the poetical modes of inculcation. He must be theory-mad beyond redemption who, in spite of these differences, shall still persist in attempting to reconcile the obstinate oils and waters of Poetry and Truth."
32. Cfr. la reseña del poema "Alciphron" de Thomas Moore, vol. X, pp. 60-71, y la reseña ya mencionada de Longfellow, pp. 68-71 y 79.
33. Cfr. la reseña sobre William Cullen Bryant, vol. XIII, p. 131.
34. Cfr. *The Philosophy of Composition*, p. 198.
35. Cfr. los siguientes trabajos reunidos y editados por Eric W. Carlson *The Recognition of Edgar Allan Poe. Selected Criticism since 1839*, The University of Michigan Press, 1970: Wystan Hugh Auden, "Introduction", pp. 226-227; Charles Baudelaire, "New Notes on Edgar Poe", pp. 52-60; Aldous Huxley, "Vulgarity in Literature", pp. 160-167; Yvor Winters, "Edgar Allan Poe: A Crisis in the History of American Obscurantism", pp. 178-190; T. S. Eliot, "From Poe to Valéry", pp. 211-212. Asimismo, cfr. Robert Regan, "Introduction", en su edición *Poe. A Collection of Critical Essays*, ya cit., pp. 4-6; Joseph Wood Krutch, "The Philosophy of Composition", ya cit; F. Stovall, "The Conscious Art of Edgar Allan Poe", en R. Regan (ed.) *Poe. A Collection of Critical Essays*, ya cit., pp. 177-178.
36. Cfr. la reseña de Longfellow, vol. XI, pp. 75-76.

37. Cfr. "Hawthorne", vol. XI, pp. 102-113, y vol. XIII, pp. 141-155. Esta última reseña incluye comentarios sobre *Moses from an Old Manse*.
38. Cfr. "Hawthorne", vol. XIII, pp. 152-153.
39. Cfr. "Hawthorne", vol. XIII, p. 153.
40. Cfr. *The Philosophy of Composition*, p. 193.
41. Cfr. "A Chapter of Suggestions", vol. XIV, p. 188.
42. Cfr. *Marginalia*, vol. XVI, pp. 171-172. Asimismo, véase p. 152: "I hardly know how to account for the repeated failures of John Neal as regards the *construction* of his works. His art is great and of a high character — but it is massive and undetailed. He seems to be either deficient in a sense of completeness, or unstable in temperament; so that he becomes wearied with his work before getting it done. He always begins well — vigorously — startlingly — proceeds by fits — at much random — now prosing, now gossiping, now running away with his subject, now exciting vivid interest; but his conclusions are sure to be hurried and indistinct; so that the reader, perceiving a falling-off where he expects a climax, is pained, and, closing the book with dissatisfaction, is in no mood to give the author credit for the vivid sensations which have been aroused *during the progress* of perusal. Of all literary foibles the most fatal, perhaps, is that of defective climax."
43. Cfr. vol. XIII, p. 148.
44. Cfr. "Hawthorne", vol. XI, pp. 108-109.
45. Cfr. Vincent Buranelli, *Edgar Allan Poe*, Twayne Publishers, New York, 1961, pp. 64-71; Fred L. Pattee, *The Development of the American Short Story*, Harper & Brothers, New York, 1923, pp. 134-138; Fernando Galván Reula, *Estudio lingüístico de las "short stories" de Doris Lessing*, Secretariado de Publicaciones de la Universidad de La Laguna, 1982, pp. 134-140; Yvor Winters, "Edgar Allan Poe: A Crisis in the History of American Obscurantism", ya cit., pp. 194-197; Eugene Current-García y Walton R. Patrick, *What is the short story?*, Scott, Foresman & Co., Glenview (Illinois), 1961, p. 5 y ss., y Ian Reid, *The Short Story*, Methuen & Co., Ltd., London, 1977, pp. 54-55.
46. Cfr. *op. cit.*, pp. 54-55.
47. Cfr. vol. VII, p. xliii.
48. Cfr. vol. II, pp. 220-221.
49. Cfr. vol. IV, pp. 247-248.
50. Cfr. vol. IV, p. 239.
51. Cfr. vol. II, p. 188.
52. Cfr. vol. II, pp. 12-13.
53. Cfr. *The Portable Poe*, selected and edited with an introduction and notes by Philip Van Doren Stern, The Viking Library, Penguin Books, U. S. A., 1981, pp. 588-598.
54. Cfr. vol. III, pp. 284-286.
55. Cfr. vol. II, pp. 120-121.
56. Cfr. vol. II, pp. 256-257.
57. Cfr. W. Wordsworth, *Preface to Lyrical Ballads*: "...I have shown that the language of prose may yet be well adapted to poetry; and I have previously asserted that a large portion of the language of every good poem can in no respect differ from that of good prose. I will go further. I do not doubt that it may be safely affirmed, that there neither is, nor can be, any essential difference between the language of prose and metrical composition. We are fond of tracing the resemblance between poetry and painting, and, accordingly, we call them sisters: but where shall we find bonds of connection sufficiently strict to tipify the affinity betwixt metrical and prose composition? They both speak by and to the same organs; the bodies in which both of them are clothed may be said to be of the same substance, their affections are kindred and almost identical, not necessarily differing even in degree; poetry sheds no tears 'such as Angels weep', but natural and human tears; she can boast of no celestial ichor that distinguishes her vital juices from those of prose; the same human blood circulates through the veins of them both." Asimismo, cfr. S. T. Coleridge, *Biographia Literaria*, XVIII: "For the question is not, whether there may not occur in prose an order of words, which would be equally proper in a poem; nor whether there are not beautiful lines and sentences of fre-

quent occurrence in good poems, which would be equally becoming as well as beautiful in good prose; for neither the one nor the other has ever been either denied or doubted by any one. The true question must be, whether there are not modes of expression, a *construction*, and an *order* of sentences, which are in their fit and natural place in a serious prose composition, but would be disproportionate and heterogeneous in metrical poetry; and, vice versa, whether in the language of a serious poem there may not be an arrangement both of words and sentences, and a case and selection of (what are called) *figures of speech*, both as to their kind, their frequency, and their occasions, which on a subject of equal weight would be vicious and alien in correct and manly prose. I contend that in both cases this unfitness of each for the place of the other frequently will and ought to exist."

58. Cfr. "The Tales as Poems", en William L. Howarth (ed.) *Twentieth Century Interpretations of Poe's Tales*, Prentice-Hall, Inc., Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey, 1971, p. 33.
59. Cfr. vol. IX, p. 302. Estas palabras de Poe se refieren al poema "Oh, Fairest of the Rural Maids" y se encuentran en la reseña que él hace, en enero de 1837, de los *Poems* de Bryant.
60. Cfr. *The Philosophy of Composition*, vol. XIV, p. 203.
61. Cfr. "The Tales as Poems", p. 34.
62. Cfr. *Poe. A Critical Study*, The Bellknap Press of Harvard University Press, Cambridge (Mass.), 1969, p. 154.

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