

E. A. Poe, I. L. Caragiale, Philosophy, and Wine

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*“Democracy is a very
admirable form
of government—for dogs.”*



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1. Starting Point

E. A. POE had a particular view on philosophers and philosophy, leading critics of his work to conclude that he held a rather negative opinion of this spiritual realm and of those studying it. However, at a closer look, one can notice a few nuances, such as the difference between metaphysicians and philosophers, the former making up a category within the wider borders of philosophy. Nevertheless, in his writings, Poe would often refer to profound philosophical ideas, sometimes mystical, whereas, in some cases, he would also descend from the higher spheres and highlight more worldly domains, of practical philosophy, such as... gastronomy or oenology, or even the pleasure of consuming wine during heated debates. With regard to publications (of general circulation, as well as more specialized ones), or journalists, the American author's opinions seem rather reserved. He would not refrain from ironizing writers in his prose; however, this may be a misleading aspect. The explanation is simple: Poe himself was a highly successful editor, practiced (literary-artistic) jour-

nalism with great fervor, and, furthermore, was often inspired in writing his tales by topics found in newspapers (Szabo 2013a). Regarding his views on democracy, one can accept the well-established idea that the American writer did not care much for this type of governing system. Failing to find appreciation for other models, as Poe vigorously rejected despotism, one can assume that he preferred an enlightened authoritarianism. The arguments to support this idea are insufficient, however. Poe valued wine and was a connoisseur of wine varieties and of the occasions for enjoying them. This beverage would be an important ingredient and narrative element in his literary works, a stimulus for delving into the spiritual realm and for raising questions regarding the meaning of the world. Wine would also be a companion during the much more familiar moments of dozing in front of the fireplace.

2. Culture, Philosophy and Metaphysics

EA. POE granted metaphysics and metaphysicians a special place among his interests, some of them literary rather than philosophical. He would, however, prove to possess advanced philosophical knowledge, and to be a profound thinker. Analysts of his work would show that, including in poetry, the American author would channel his essentially exuberant imagination through logical structures, subsumed to a rational trend. In his day, philosophy meant a wide field of human existence, a science of sciences, as well as a field narrowed down to thinkers and the spiritual world. These dimensions would not elude the writer, who would approach philosophy from various aspects (thus rendering his work even more spectacular). In his early writings, cultural references (not only philosophical) abound, marked by a certain lack of distinction between the artistic and the philosophical, as highlighted in “A Tale of Jerusalem,” first published in the *Philadelphia Saturday Courier*, on 9 June 1832. There are several Romanian versions, but it was first translated by I. L. Caragiale, based on the French version by Charles Baudelaire. This is a relatively difficult text, because, despite the simple narrative and anecdotal topic, Poe introduces biblical references, as well as customs and rituals specific of old Jerusalem.

The complex meaning of philosophy in Poe’s work (literary in nature!) would gradually develop throughout his career. In the short stories “Hans Pfaall”¹ and “The Balloon Hoax”² he would censure the journalistic exaggerations, as well as the mystical speculations regarding extraordinary journeys (terrestrial or cosmic), in an age known for air transportation development and balloon adventure frenzy. Here, the philosophical approach remains satirical, going beyond the challenges posed by adventure fiction and the newspaper reports on new dis-

coveries (geographical and scientific), and even turns towards science fiction, which was still a young literary genre. Science is the new engine for narrative development, as are the reactions of the people (the heroes of his writings) having to cope with remarkable situations, never before encountered. There are hints that allow one to decipher these tales written in postmodern key. The term hadn't been coined yet in Poe's time, nor had a philosophical or literary theory (cultural, in its profound meaning) been developed. However, in Poe's case, one can decipher numerous elements that allow for an analysis in the postmodern context, with surprising results (Szabo 2013b).

Sometimes, Poe would attribute a more aesthetic-utilitarian meaning to the term 'philosophy', as outlined in works such as "Philosophy of Furniture," "The Landscape Garden" or "Landor's Cottage." The three works reveal an introvert and contemplative Poe; the undertaking is primarily descriptive, with a faintly outlined narration. The explicit title of the prose piece "Philosophy of Furniture" describes precisely what the text contains, i.e. an aesthetics of the dwelling, in the sense of landscape aesthetics, a highly practical sense of the science of beauty and the sublime, of interior and exterior design, as well as of landscaping. A constant opponent of vague and useless speculation, a supporter of the rational principle even when tackling the realm of the imaginary, Poe would make another distinction in the vast field of philosophy. He would isolate the field of metaphysics, drawing a negative image of it; irony and satire would be the structural elements of the texts written on such topics.

3. Philosophers, Journalists and Parrots

THE DIFFERENCE between metaphysicians, making up a separate category, and philosophers, a general term, can be found in "The Bargain Lost," one of Poe's first short stories. Although the title makes one think of a commercial deal, the theme is in fact the deal with the Devil, selling one's soul, a very familiar topic, often employed in folk as well as in mainstream literature. Poe would bring an innovation to it, in the sense that the deal is not carried out. The Devil, good-natured and jolly, is the one who refuses it, as opposed to the cultural pattern of this theme, where the Devil seems desperate to come into possession of souls by any means, even through corruption and the exploitation of human vanities. The explanation is given by the fact that the Devil does not like the souls of philosophers, but those of literary men, his pleasure lying in consuming them cooked in various ways. The debate is also an opportunity to make a distinction between the two Platons known to Antiquity: "There was the soul of Cratinus—passable! Aristophanes—racy! Plato—exquisite! Not

your Plato, but Plato the comic poet—your Plato would have turned the stomach of Cerberus—faugh!” (Poe 1978a, 91).

The character in dialogue with the Devil, carrying out scholarly debates over a glass of wine, is Pedro Garcia, identified by the author as a professional metaphysician, living in 18th century Venice. The colloquial interaction between the two should not deceive us. Poe would maintain, within certain limits, the conventions of folk literature, of the fairy tale, in order to demystify what he saw as useless metaphysical speculation. Using the suggestions made by Thomas Ollive Mabbott, great editor and reviewer of Poe’s writings, L. Cotrău would remind the reader of the fact that the American writer was undergoing a period of great contempt for philosophy and philosophers, an aspect also revealed by his correspondence of that time (Poe 1990, 611–619). Satire is present throughout the text, as seen in the fragment found in the beginning, where the author presents Pedro Garcia’s philosophical outlook: “The doctrines of our friend were not very generally understood, although by no means difficult of comprehension. He was not, it is true, a Platonist—nor strictly an Aristotelian—nor did he, with Leibnitz, reconcile things irreconcilable. He was, emphatically, a Pedronist. He was Ionic and Italic. He reasoned a priori and a posteriori. His ideas were innate, or otherwise. He believed in George of Trebizond, he believed in Bossarion. Of his other propensities little is recorded. It is said that he preferred Catullus to Homer, and Sauterne to Médoc” (Poe 1978a, 86).

However, one does not learn much about Garcia’s philosophical system, the author suggesting that it is merely a mixture of ideas against a rather obscure background. The character’s name—Spanish, quite common—contributes to outlining this sarcastic universe, suggesting that we are witnessing a less scholarly mystification, common even among those with lower expectations. Using another suggestion made by Th. O. Mabbott, L. Cotrău would note that the hero’s name is not fit for a nobleman. This would be the (assumed!) reason for replacing it with Bon-Bon in the homonymous literary work representing a version to “The Bargain Lost.” One cannot ignore that suggestion, nor can one agree with it completely. If the name is unbecoming of a representative of the upper class, it is, however, appropriate for a philosopher (let us remember Bacon!), but, above all, it serves the writer’s satirical purposes.

Garcia the metaphysician’s universe of ideas is eclectic and nebulous, evidently lacking originality, and his appearance is even more eccentric. A trend anticipating postmodern developments runs through the author’s description: “I might say that the hair of our patrician was worn short, combed smoothly over his forehead, and surmounted with a violet-colored, conical cap with tassels—that his green fustian jerkin was not after the fashion of those worn by the nobility of Venice at that day—that the sleeves were more deeply slashed than the reign-

ing costume permitted—that the slashes were faced—not, as usual in that barbarous period, with parti-coloured silk, but with the beautiful red leather of Morocco” (Poe 1978a, 86).

The description, in the same detached-satirical register, continues with the hero’s trousers and robe. The appearance, largely reflecting the particularities of the age described, is more likely that of a showman, as suggested by Poe in the wider context of the Venetian Carnival. Still, Pedro Garcia does not wear a mask, but a cap with a pompon, making one think of the outfit worn by sorcerers, by the busy magicians of the noble courts. The image of the metaphysician with obscure ideas and an eccentric outfit is rounded off with a comparison to a parrot. Pedro Garcia is thus outlined as a carnival character, unworthy of being taken seriously. The Devil’s outfit would not be very different, leading us to believe that the author is playing a farce in “The Bargain Lost.”

In this context, Poe’s scorn of philosophers is not singular, as he would apply the same treatment to journalists as well. In the short story “The Mystery of Marie Rogêt,” when asked to carry out an analysis of an article printed in the *Le Soleil* newspaper, the famous Auguste Dupin will not shy away from voicing more comprehensive opinions, his views including the general behavior of the press: “That it is a vast pity its indicter was not born a parrot—in which case he would have been the most illustrious parrot of his race. He has merely repeated the individual items of the already published opinion; collecting them, with a laudable industry, from this paper and from that” (Poe 1978b, 751).

4. The Devil Does not Love Philosophers

THE THEME of selling one’s soul occurs both in folk literature, as well as in high literature. Approaches vary greatly, ranging from the comical to the tragic register of existential depths. Poe chooses a surprising path, involving both contexts. He starts off from the folk framework of the transaction, maintains the comical tone, but ends up revealing profound aspects. He would present a congenial, detached, colloquial Devil, otherwise very efficient in his effort of harvesting souls. Naturally, the satire’s deep layer is focused on unveiling the shallowness and mystification in the actions and cognitions of individuals such as Pedro Garcia. The author also introduces another theme specific to folk culture, that of the Devil feasting on the harvested souls, grilling them or preparing a soufflé or a stew. Thus, the opportunity is given to present unusual considerations on the lives and work of spiritual people, of philosophers, but also of poets, historians or geographers. As seen, philosophers are the most despised people in this miniature treatise on soul gastronomy. But the truly

genuine idea in this work, mentioned in the title, is the fact that the deal with the Devil does not take place, the novel reason being that Satan does not wish it...

Poe skillfully structures the narrative and the exchange of cues, portraying a devil very fond of wine. Pedro Garcia does not seem intimidated and places on the table, along with his important manuscript containing metaphysical ideas, a bottle of Sauternes wine (sweet white wine from Southern France). Thus a new chapter in the geography of oenology is recorded in the work of the American writer. The wine is consumed, but the deal is not sealed, despite all of Garcia's efforts. The finale is triumphal: "Here the stranger bowed and withdrew, in what manner our philosopher could not exactly ascertain; but, in a well concerted effort to discharge a bottle at the scoundrel, the slender chain was severed that hung from the ceiling, and the metaphysician prostrated by the downfall of the lamp" (Poe 1978a, 93).

The incident of the lamp crash isn't credible, for it contradicts the laws of physics. The bottle thrown by the hero followed a semicircular path, as it was not thrown straight upwards, therefore, the lamp could not have fallen on him, but beside him...

The story will be resumed by Poe in "Bon-Bon," the consistent resemblances revealing that the two literary works are very similar, practically variations on the same theme. There are critics, such as Th. O. Mabbott, who consider "Bon-Bon" to be superior to the previous tale—"The Bargain Lost." The arguments supporting this idea are not convincing, each text maintaining its own originality, stemming from a superior literary execution. The hero is no longer a professional metaphysician, but a French restaurant owner, a gifted cook and a lover of wine (Moffitt 1972). He has philosophical concerns, but his great talent turns out to lie in wine tasting. Poe puts together a large oenological context: "In his seclusions the Vin de Bourgogne had its allotted hour, and there were appropriate moments for the Cotes du Rhone. With him Sauterne was to Médoc what Catullus was to Homer. He would sport with a syllogism in sipping St. Peray, but unravel an argument over Clos de Vougeot, and upset a theory in a torrent of Chambertin" (Poe 1978a, 98–99).

Though it is obvious that the metaphysician-restaurant owner was much better liked by the author, the character's looks are still those of a showman, with some insignificant differences. Bon-Bon also works on a manuscript that he intends to hand in for printing the following day. The night is deep and snowy, but the metaphysician works in front of the fireplace, watched over by the bottles of wine. Poe's attack on philosophers becomes unforgiving in this excerpt, and is carried out in culinary register: "In the corner diagonally opposite, appeared, in direct family communion, the properties of the kitchen and the bibliotheque. A dish of polemics stood peacefully upon the dresser. Here lay an ovenful of

the latest ethics—there a kettle of *duddecimo melangés*. Volumes of German morality were hand and glove with the gridiron—a toasting-fork might be discovered by the side of Eusebius—Plato reclined at his ease in the frying-pan—and contemporary manuscripts were filed away upon the spit” (Poe 1978a, 101).

The meeting with the Devil unfolds in the same fashion, including the lamp crashing on the owner’s head. There is also a great variety of wines, as the sweet Sauternes is accompanied by the bubbly Chambertin.

5. Amontillado and Médoc, Poe and Caragiale

THE TALE “The Cask of Amontillado” centers on the wine variety mentioned in the title, but the Médoc wine also receives a prominent role. This is an element that reveals Poe’s influence on the Romanian writer I. L. Caragiale, but its transposition is peculiar, involving the transmission of information. With Poe, the action unfolds exclusively in the fictional realm, the author imagining, in a wide cellar, the road to Fortunato’s death, buried alive by the narrator. The journey described is also an opportunity to parade quality wines. The barrel of Amontillado would be invoked in order to attract Fortunato into the long and damp galleries, unhealthy to man. He is driven forward by the mirage of the barrel containing this superior wine. The trap is deepened through manipulation, by using the famous Médoc wine, which the victim richly enjoys while walking through the galleries. From his poetic cellar, the Romanian writer I. L. Caragiale would extract his own Médoc. The name of the famous wine was given to Plevén, in a well-known episode of press history.

Caragiale himself would recount the incident, in 1899, in a humorous piece of writing. In 1877, during the Balkan war, which led to the independence of the United Romanian Principalities, Frédéric Damé, a renowned press editor present in Bucharest at the time, suggested to Caragiale that he edit the *Națiunea română* (Romanian Nation) publication. The newspapers already on the market were quickly outperformed, and therefore, the newsroom afforded to hire a correspondent. They found him in the city of Turnu-Măgurele on the Danube, where an important military command center had been set up. From here the unfortunate correspondent would send a famous telegram: “Médoc fini. Votca, Tzuica, dedans.” The translation is provided by the author himself, who would re-enact the event in 1899, in a different publication: “I read it through ten times, with the dictionary of clues beside me: *Médoc–Plevén; fini–taken; Votca–Russians; Tzuica–Romanians; dedans–inside*. What shall I do? Sit and edit an issue and deliver the news in the evening? Impossible! This joyous piece of news will be received

by others as well; it will spread throughout the city in the morning, and we will deliver it after it has blown over” (Caragiale 1997, 437).

The news would be made public, and the consequences would emerge just as quickly! In fact, the tenacious correspondent had taken for granted the information given by drunken Russian officers... The citizens of Bucharest called the journalists to account, and the business went belly up. Caragiale recounts:

The public barges into the dead end street; hooting, pounding, breaking windows.

“Run!” shouts a boy from the printing office, entering through the back door. “Run! They’ll kill you!”

I saw Damé yellow as a corpse; I don’t know what I must have looked like to him. I didn’t wait for any other explanation and followed without argument the boy’s command. What had happened? Unfortunately, Médoc was not yet fini, nor were the Votca and the Tzuica dedans yet. During the night, our correspondent had partied heavily with some Russians who had assured him that, as they were drinking, Osman Pasha was capitulating to the armies of the Cross. At dawn, intoxicated with champagne, he sent us the telegram containing references to other beverages... the Națiunea română publication had lived its life... (Caragiale 1997, 438)

Shortly before this account, the Romanian author had published his version of the short story “The Cask of Amontillado,” the Médoc wine having triggered these memories. In “X-ing a Paragrab,” Poe would also describe an attack on a newsroom, which, however, was not a real event, but pure fiction. In fact, the angry mob would head to the editor’s house, where the newsroom was, with the aim of giving the man a lashing. But the editor fled in time, and the uproar would soon die down:

The uproar occasioned by this mystical and cabalistical article, is not to be conceived. The first definite idea entertained by the populace was, that some diabolical treason lay concealed in the hieroglyphics; and there was a general rush to Bullet-head’s residence, for the purpose of riding him on a rail; but that gentleman was nowhere to be found. He had vanished, no one could tell how; and not even the ghost of him has ever been seen since. Unable to discover its legitimate object, the popular fury at length subsided; leaving behind it, by way of sediment, quite a medley of opinion about this unhappy affair: (Poe 2004, 386–387)

6. Publications and Self-Education in “Hans Pfaall”

THE SHORT story “Hans Phaall” is one of Poe’s most complex literary works and one of his most important artistic achievements. The tale’s success is due to Poe’s ability to imagine an unusual adventure, with the emphasis on rendering states and emotions experienced by the hero in his voyage from the Earth to the Moon. We once again encounter the author’s particular method of finding inspiration for his prose in newspaper articles, employing these elements in a superior manner. Poe provides a tour de force, juggling with the term ‘journal,’ revealed here under several meanings, in different but closely related contexts. The first is that of a printed journal, the second is that of an intimate, handwritten diary, and the third is that of a letter. The term ‘journal’ itself raises various questions, as the author attributes more uses to the items thus defined. The first is a familiar use, of a printed paper meant to inform and entertain. The second, much more prominent here, is that of a type of building material. The hot air balloon presented in the short story is made out of newspapers, moreover, from dusty, rather shabby ones, thus defying the onlookers’ common sense:

In the meantime, however, lower and still lower toward the goodly city, came the object of so much curiosity, and the cause of so much smoke. In a very few minutes it arrived near enough to be accurately discerned. It appeared to be—yes! it was undoubtedly a species of balloon; but surely no such balloon had ever been seen in Rotterdam before. For who, let me ask, ever heard of a balloon manufactured entirely of dirty newspapers? No man in Holland certainly; yet here, under the very noses of the people, or rather at some distance above their noses was the identical thing in question, and composed, I have it on the best authority, of the precise material which no one had ever before known to be used for a similar purpose. (Poe 2004, 499–500)

They are, as one can see, rather durable newspapers, since they withstood the hardships of space and lasted for five years on the Moon, then serving for yet another trip to Terra and another ascent to its natural satellite! It would also serve as an ironical reference to the nature of the press, with political implications, as Harry Levin would highlight (Levin 1958, 105). Satire is conspicuously present throughout the tale, which unfolds in between ironical jabs. Not only are the Moon-dwellers idiots, but so are many of the Earthlings, and an analogy is very subtly established in the opening part of the text. We speak of the experience of the serious and pedantic mayor Von Underduk, a name that can also be interpreted as an ironical reference to “a great Dutchman.” He is the receiver of the missive arrived from the Moon, and its reception gives birth to an amusing incident, as he is knocked

down several times by the ballast thrown by the airman from the basket. Even Hans Phaall's face emerges as somewhat of a caricature in this carnivalesque world, stabilized by the seriousness of the fretful creditors. Their harassment determines Hans to flee, his escape also meaning the death of the three money lenders. The sensationalist journalistic insertions actually go against the facts described by the hero in his epistolary journal, which, thrown from the basket, hits the mayor over the head, confirming the idea that there is a mystification involved, that the four men, Pfaall and his creditors, are in fact alive: "Fourthly. That Hans Pfaall himself, the drunken villain, and the three very idle gentlemen styled his creditors, were all seen, no longer than two or three days ago, in a tippling house in the suburbs, having just returned, with money in their pockets, from a trip beyond the sea" (Poe 2004, 530–531).

Of interest here is the fact that the hero is self-educated: "Hans Phaall, a mender of bellows from Sauerkraut Street (i.e. 'Sour cabbage' street), suddenly acquires a taste for aeronautics, discerning its secrets on his own with the help of handbooks" (Cotrău 1990, 29). Poe imagines a fantastic evolution, as Pfaall transforms from a not so able craftsman, who loves a good drink, lazy and with no resources, into a savant capable of putting into practice profound knowledge gained in a very short time, building a state of the art aerostat and maneuvering it in his long and perilous trip to the Moon. We are no longer in the presence of metaphysicians with obscure views, as was the case in "The Bargain Lost" or "Bon-Bon." Philosophy acquires a practical, applicative aspect, coagulating knowledge from various fields, ranging from astronomy and chemistry to economy and politics. Poe would identify to great extent with Hans Pfaall. The shortage of finances and the money lenders' harassment, as well as the tendency for consuming alcoholic beverages, are indeed real elements. However, the successful escape from this world is fictional, Poe having to stay with his feet on the ground.

7. Pundita Has Opinions on Democracy

"MELLONTA TAUTA" would be the tale that Poe himself declared to be science fiction. He even set the date: 1 April 2848. This day is by no means arbitrary. The journalistic aspect is much less obvious, whereas the anticipative elements and ironical elements become prominent. The entire adventure is seen through the eyes of a lady, who draws up an epistolary journal. However, the author's anticipative vision is modest. The year 2848 would not be marked by remarkable progress, by technological developments, as one might expect. The sky is filled with balloons; the ladies take long journeys, which, in the reality of 1849, the year of the book's first publication, did not happen. Nevertheless, zeppelins are still rudimentary in Poe's prose, even

though they are enormous. They offer leisure space on decks installed above the balloons, but guide ropes are still being used, those long and heavy ropes hanging from the airship all the way down to the surface of the Earth, playing a significant role in maintaining altitude and stability.

Poe would also show a lack of inventiveness regarding the railroads. Because the sidetrack had not yet been invented—the mechanism that allows shifting from one track to the other, extremely necessary in railway stations, when railway cars cannot pass by each other—the author thinks up a context where the traffic is intense, but along separate tracks. A total number of 12 or more lines are used, and they are not only numerous but also very wide. In “Mellonta Tauta,” the writer mentions, through the voice of the female character appointed to narrate the facts, that in 2848 a railcar is fifty feet, i.e. over 15 meters, wide. Traffic takes place at high speed, at over a hundred miles an hour, i.e. a common speed in our time. It is an image hard to validate in practice, but for a literary author there are no constraints in imagining such a framework. Referring to the archaeological remains of a primitive railroad, the narrator Pundita makes subtle differentiations: “The track, it appears, was double only; ours, you know, has twelve paths; and three or four new ones are in preparation. The ancient rails were very slight, and placed so close together as to be, according to modern notions, quite frivolous, if not dangerous in the extreme. The present width of track—fifty feet—is considered, indeed, scarcely secure enough” (Poe 2004, 365).

But what makes Poe unequalled as an author is his literary idea, his integrative and stylistic abilities. The manner of writing, the subtly incremental effects, the talent in devising characters and describing them using a wide range of means, are the author’s strong points. The writer has the opportunity to express himself, combining satire with fine irony, employing both language and situational humor. The female character Pundita would describe a (possibly) deadly accident, treated with great indifference: “Talking of drag-ropes—our own, it seems, has this moment knocked a man overboard from one of the small magnetic propellers that swarm in ocean below us—a boat of about six thousand tons, and, from all accounts, shamefully crowded. These diminutive barques should be prohibited from carrying more than a definite number of passengers. The man, of course, was not permitted to get on board again, and was soon out of sight, he and his life-preserver” (Poe 2004, 365).

But this character is not the only one perceiving this disappearance as a relief; it would be a general attitude. Further on, the author of the travel journal speaks about the benefits of... the plague in Asia. Overpopulation is a topic that concerned Poe (at a time when the first urban conglomerations were born, but the global population was still low), and plagues and any other “methods” to reduce the surplus were seen as salutary. One can also notice the fact that the small ships had magnetic propulsion, a yet unaccomplished anticipation.

Instead, this technique is used in railroad transportation. The atmosphere created by Poe in this literary piece is specific of the steampunk (sub)genre, extremely lively at the beginning of the third millennium.

On the other hand, Poe has the possibility to subtly express his own ideas. In “Mellonta Tauta” he is the arbiter between the philosophers Aristotle (under the name Aries Totel) and Francis Bacon. Other names present in his work (quite transparent, for that matter) are Neuclid (i.e. Euclid) and Cant (even Kant), his editors noticing some confusions, often intentional: “Poe makes a deliberate confusion between the English philosopher Francis Bacon (1561–1626) and the Scottish poet James Hogg (1770–1835), nicknamed ‘the Ettrick Shepherd,’ as in ‘bacon’ vs. ‘hog’” (Cotrău 2005, 405). Then he would declare the democratic system bankrupt, due to voting fraud. Pundita finds the idea of self-governance absurd, advocating a certain type of authoritarianism, imposed by the savage conditions. Poe is not explicit, in the sense that he would not draw up a detailed report on the way he thought the world should be ruled in the future. Therefore, we must tread carefully when formulating the idea of a global dictatorial society. The storyteller concludes that democracy is admirable to puppies, as goes a folk culture idiom: “Democracy is a very admirable form of government—for dogs.” She also rejects despotism, which would have taught humankind a lesson: “The matter was put to an abrupt issue by a fellow of the name of Mob, who took every thing into his own hands and set up a despotism, in comparison with which those of the fabulous Zeros and Hellofagabaluses were respectable and delectable. This Mob (a foreigner, by-the-by), is said to have been the most odious of all men that ever encumbered the earth. He was a giant in stature—insolent, rapacious, filthy, had the gall of a bullock with the heart of a hyena and the brains of a peacock. He died, at length, by dint of his own energies, which exhausted him” (Poe 2004, 366).

A bizarre game of destiny is represented by the fact that Poe died in unclear circumstances, related precisely to election fraud, Poe voting several times, under the influence of alcohol.



Notes

1. Poe brought several alterations to the text, as well as to the title. The spelling of the hero's name also varies: Hans Phaall, Phaal or Pfaall. His editors would also hesitate in this respect. In 1850, the literary work considered to be the reference version would bear the title “The Unparalleled Adventure of One Hans Pfaall.” It seems to be an alteration brought by the author himself, or with his consent, but this hasn't been established with certainty, as Poe was already deceased at the time the volume was published. Caution is needed because the titles written in a sensation-

al register are not typical of the author, although the age was indeed very keen on the sensational.

2. Published for the first time in *The Extra Sun* on 13 April 1844. The following day it was also published in the *New York Sunday Times*, with some alterations. This is important because it reflects the unusual habit of the age to run a circuit of literary works in several publications, as well as Poe's strictly journalistic work method in this case, the following day's text containing alterations meant to update the topic.

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Abstract

E. A. Poe, I. L. Caragiale, Philosophy, and Wine

E. A. Poe and I. L. Caragiale, both writers and journalists, were also editors of important publications. The journals that came under their supervision knew great success, though neither of the two was able to last for very long in an editorial office. Undoubtedly, the American author had an effect on his Romanian counterpart. Caragiale translated much of Poe's literary work, based on French translations, inaugurated by Charles Baudelaire. They shared a fondness for satire and the grotesque, as well as for exploring the depths of the soul, oftentimes in fantastic outbursts. Wine was also a bonding element for the two writers, as they had a taste for the same wine varieties, both in real life and in their writings.

Keywords

E. A. Poe, I. L. Caragiale, journalism, metaphysicians, wine, newsroom, democracy