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Phrenology in Selected Stories of Edgar Allan Poe

Michael D. Engelhart
St. Cloud State University

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by

Michael D. Engelhart

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Robert Coard, Chairman.
Robert Coard

John Bovee
John Bovee

Eugene Perkins
Eugene Perkins

Lowell R. Gillett
Lowell R. Gillett
Dean, School of Graduate Studies

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Michael D. Engelhart

Edgar Allan Poe used terms and concepts of phrenology in his tales. This paper has a two-fold purpose: (1) to analyze these phrenological elements in several of Poe's tales and draw conclusions about the influence of phrenology on Poe's writing, (2) to impart some background in phrenology to the reader of Poe who knows nothing about phrenology.

Included in the background discussion of phrenological terms and concepts is a replica of George Combe's phrenological chart which gives the locations of the phrenological faculties discussed in relationship to Poe's characters.

The popularity of phrenology in the United States during the 1830's and later is reflected by the large number of books and magazine articles written on phrenology during this time. The fifth edition of George Combe's The Constitution of Man was printed in 1835, and Poole's Index to Periodical Literature (Volume I, 1802-1881) lists over one hundred and twenty articles on crainiology and phrenology.

Poe's acquaintance with phrenology can be traced after 1836, but definite indications in "Berenice," "Morella," and "King Pest"--all written in 1835--suggest that Poe may have known about phrenology before 1836. The physical descriptions of Poe's characters in these tales hint of phrenological motivation.

Edward Hungerford, in "Poe and Phrenology," American Literature, March 1931, has indicated that Poe first became familiar with phrenology in 1836 when he reviewed for The Southern Literary Messenger a phrenology text written by Mrs. L. Miles. After this review, more varied uses of phrenological concepts appeared in Poe's writings, including his phrenologizing of several contemporaries in "The Literati of New York City;" his humorous uses of phrenology in "The Business Man," "The Imp of the Perverse," and "The Man That Was Used Up;" and his use of the depression on Dirk Peters' head in The Narrative of A. Gordon Pym.

Many critics have noted that Poe's buildings and characters often bear a striking resemblance to each other. The possibility to be explored here is that the buildings in certain Poe short stories may be symbolic descriptions in phrenological terms and concepts of the character's mental condition. Tales which reflect this building-mind relationship are "Ligeia," "The Fall of the House of Usher," and "The Masque of the Red Death."

It is hoped that this study may be a corrective influence on interpretations of Poe made by the twentieth century reader who is unacquainted with phrenology.

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Robert Coard, Chairman
Robert Coard

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CHAPTER I

POE AND PHRENOLOGY

During the early and mid 1800's when Edgar Allan Poe wrote the majority of his tales, phrenology was the prevalent psychological theory. Phrenologists believed that specific areas of the human skull contained certain mental faculties. By observing the configuration of one's skull and his physical characteristics, phrenologists felt they could divine a man's character and mental attributes.

That Edgar Allan Poe used these concepts of phrenology in his short stories is a fact that most readers do, but should not, ignore. In most cases, this ignoring of Poe's uses of phrenology stems from unfamiliarity with the subject. A great part of the purpose of this study is to show that some knowledge of phrenology is important to the modern reader who wants a better understanding of Poe's tales but has neglected to read about the scientific endeavors of Poe's time.

In discussing Poe's relationship to the sciences (including phrenology) of the early 1800's, Stuart Levine in his book, Edgar Poe: seer and craftsman, stated, "What is important for us in all this is, very briefly, that Poe was very much in touch with scientific

developments, both 'pure' and 'applied,' and that his imagination was thoroughly involved."[1]

The importance of understanding some phrenology as a representative science of the 1800's when reading Poe's works is perhaps most easily shown by looking at the emphasis students of modern literature place on understanding psychology. What sincere student or teacher of literature would conceive of judging the relevancy of a modern work or the humanness of a main character without making some reference to psychological terms? The situation is the same when one is dealing with Poe and phrenology. Just as psychology and its terms are a useful key to a better understanding of a character's motivations in a modern story, phrenology and its terms are a necessary key to a better understanding of a character's motivations in many of Poe's tales.

It is not completely accurate to apply concepts of a more modern science, such as psychology, to fictional writings of a pre-psychology era. However, much meaning in older writings stems from the reader's understanding of the older culture. Edward Hungerford, in his article "Poe and Phrenology," applied this idea to interpreting older poets by modern standards: "Yet while he [the critic] applies to some bygone poet the terminology of some recent learning, many subtleties of interpretation wait upon his willingness to re-explore the half lost

meanings of the old."[2] It is much the same for the reader of Poe. If much can be gained by studying Poe's tales without any knowledge of phrenology as many have done, much more should be gained by studying Poe's tales with the help of phrenology. Chapter two will be a short discussion of phrenology, explaining the terms and concepts relevant to the study of Poe's tales.

Edward Hungerford explored this Poe-phrenology relationship in "Poe and Phrenology," American Literature, March, 1931. Hungerford's article is a most conclusive study, documenting well Poe's involvement with phrenology. However, he does not touch upon the possible symbolic interpretation of Poe's tales through the concepts of phrenology. The increasing use of symbolic interpretation since Hungerford's article was written is one reason for restudying Poe's uses of phrenology in his tales.

After quickly tracing the history of phrenology in the United States, Hungerford devotes a section of his article to phrenology's influence on Poe's theory of poetry. The most important point Hungerford makes in proving that Poe was familiar with phrenology is that Poe became familiar enough with the language of phrenology to make use of phrenological terms in his criticism of his contemporaries. About The Literati of New York City, 1846, a series of articles in which Poe criticized his contemporaries in prose and poetry, Hungerford says:

> Poe's philosophizing is peppered and salted with the new terms: [phrenology] 'We do not hesitate to say that a man highly endowed with the powers of causality . . . that is to say, a man of metaphysical acumen--will, even with a sufficient share of Ideality . . . compose a finer poem . . . than one who, without such metaphysical acumen, shall be gifted, in the most extraordinary degree, with the faculty of Ideality.'[2]

Hungerford then devotes the rest of his article to the discussion of phrenology in Poe's tales, employing the following nine tales to illustrate conclusively Poe's use of phrenology: "The System of Dr. Tarr and Professor Feather," "The Business Man," "Some Words with a Mummy," "Colloquy of Monos and Una," "The Black Cat," "The Imp of the Perverse," "The Murders in the Rue Morque," "The Fall of the House of Usher," and "Ligeia."

Of these nine tales, Hungerford devotes the most space to "The Fall of the House of Usher," pointing out what a sound phrenological character Roderick Usher is and how well his actions are a mirror of his physical development from a phrenological viewpoint. However, in his article Hungerford states that there is no reason to believe that Poe was acquainted with phrenology before he reviewed a book on the subject written by Mrs. L. Miles in 1836 because he, Hungerford, has found ". . . no definite indication of any concern with the subject before 1836."[3] It does seem rather unlikely that a man who was as widely read as Poe was and who had as

deeply-seated an ambition to publish a magazine of his own as Poe had could keep from reading at least one magazine article about phrenology. Chapter three will be an exploration of the possibility that Poe was acquainted with phrenology before the 1836 date that Hungerford suggests. There seem to be definite indications in "Berenice," "King Pest," and "Morella"--all written in 1835--that Poe may well have been acquainted with phrenology before he reviewed Mrs. Miles' book. A Poe-phrenology chronology concludes chapter three.

In his study, Hungerford has proven conclusively that phrenology has a definite function in Poe's writings after Poe reviewed Mrs. Miles' book in 1836. Chapter four will be a supplement to Hungerford's study, extending his examination of Poe's humorous uses of phrenology from "The Business Man" and "The Imp of the Perverse" to "The Man That Was Used Up." Chapter four also includes a brief summary of Madeline Stern's article, "Poe: 'The Mental Temperament for Phrenologists," American Literature, May, 1968. Stern looks at the Poe-phrenology relationship from the phrenologist's angle, exploring their interest in Poe as a subject for phrenologizing.

Chapter five will be an exploration of the possibility that the buildings inhabited by Poe's characters were somehow symbolic of the characters' phrenological state of mind and can be interpreted in

phrenological terms. If this is true, then studying Poe's buildings carefully may help one gain additional insights into the actions of Poe's characters.

This concept of relating physical scenery in Poe's tales to his characters' minds is not entirely new. Different critics mention this type of real world-mind relationship in Poe's stories. In his discussion of "The Imp of the Perverse," Levine observes this relationship in the narrator's run through the city: "This is no city. . . . The narrator is mad; this is the landscape of his mind."[5] Richard Wilbur, in his article, "The House of Poe," applied this relationship to "The Haunted Palace," writing, "The interior represents the man's mind engaged in harmonious imaginative thought."[6]

In Chapter five this real world-mind relationship will be explored further using phrenological terms and concepts to illustrate the character's state of mind.

NOTES TO CHAPTER I

[1]Stuart Levine, Edgar Poe: seer and craftsman (Deland, Florida: Everett/Edwards, Inc., 1972) p. 130.

[2]Edward Hungerford, "Poe and Phrenology," American Literature, 2 (March, 1931), p. 209.

[3]Ibid., pp. 214-215.

[4]Ibid., p. 212.

[5]Levine, op. cit., p. 210.

[6]Richard Wilbur, "The House of Poe," in Poe: A Collection of Critical Essays, ed. Robert Regan (New Jersey: Prentice Hall, Inc., 1967), p. 106. Originally delivered as a lecture at the Library of Congress, 1959.

CHAPTER II

BACKGROUNDS IN PHRENOLOGY

The purpose of this chapter is to acquaint the reader with some phrenological concepts and terms that Poe could have used in describing the characters in his tales. In the late 1830's, it took George Combe, a noted phrenologist, a series of sixteen two-hour lectures to acquaint his audiences with phrenology. Seven of these lectures, printed in The Southern Literary Messenger in 1839, appeared in the middle of Poe's career--between 1832 when "Five tales appeared in the Philadelphia Saturday Courier"[1] and 1849 when he died--and are a source for much of the following information.

A second source is Phrenology, A Practical Guide to Your Head, by O. S. and L. N. Fowler, prominent phrenologists of the middle and late 1800's. Fowler's book contains phrenological charts of the faculties and pictures or diagrams illustrating the locations and relative sizes of the faculties. In the Preface to this work, Fowler has set out a two-fold purpose for the volume. 1. "To teach learners those organic conditions which indicate character is the first object of this manual."[2] 2. "To record character is its second object."[3]

Fowler approached phrenology as a science that should help society by improving the individuals who made up that society. This volume, then, Fowler wrote to guide people into knowing themselves, their capabilities and desires, better. For this reason he included ". . . specific directions [on] how to perfect . . . characters and improve children."[4]

Phrenologists believed, much as modern psychologists believe, that they could read a patient's mind or tell what mental characteristics he possessed. But the phrenologist used none of the deep-probing questions a modern psychologist would use. Phrenologists believed that the body held the clues to what was in the mind, that outward appearances and shapes reflected inner thoughts and abilities. Their examination of the body served the same function that the tests and questions of the modern psychologist serve--allowing the examiner to see into the mind of the patient.

One important part of the phrenologists' examination was the examination of the skull. Phrenologists presumed that each of thirty-five human characteristics, or "faculties" as they were called by the phrenologists, was housed in a certain area of the human skull.

These areas were much like little houses, each the home of just one faculty. Combe was cautious, however, in his lectures to stress that this concept had

yet to be proven. He said,

> It is often asked, whether in the brain there are distinct lines of separation observable between the organs. We say no. We presume that in the brain such distinctions do exist, though our present means of observation are too imperfect to detect them.[5]

They also believed that the human skull formed itself to the shape of the brain. Thus the form or shape of the skull would be the same as the shape of the brain. This fact was used in this way: a protuberance or bump on the skull would indicate that the faculty in that chamber was larger than usual, causing the bump; a slight hollow in the skull would indicate that the faculty in that chamber was smaller than usual. Then, by comparing the relative amounts of each faculty that a patient possessed as indicated by the bumps and hollows on the skull, the phrenologist could read the mental make-up of the patient.

Because of this aspect of phrenology, examining the skull, phrenology was also called crainology. And scoffers went so far as to dub it "Bumpology," although the bumps and hollows were not the complete object of the phrenologist's examination. According to Madeleine B. Stern in Heads and Headlines, the phrenologist ". . . looked for distances between the various organs."[6] She described an examination by the Fowlers in these words:

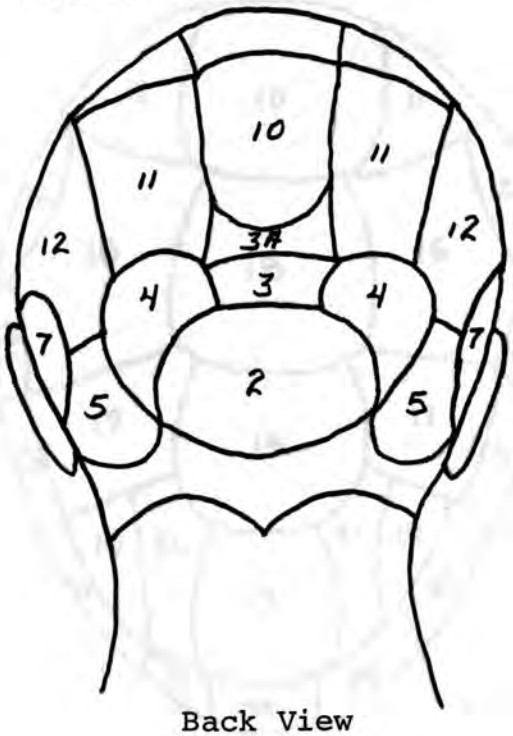
> Placing their hands upon the sides of the subject's head, they investigated its shape. With one hand on the forehead and the other on the 'basilar portion,' they proceeded to study the relative developments of those regions. Applying the balls of their fingers, they moved the scalp slightly, becoming thoroughly familiar with the head they were examining.[7]

From this type of examination, phrenologists felt that they could identify the criminally insane or counsel patients as to their best job potential. At the end of Phrenology, A Practical Guide to Your Head, Fowler included a section called "DEVELOPMENTS FOR PARTICULAR PURSUITS" in which he discussed phrenological implications for the following professions: lawyers, statesmen, physicians, clergymen, editors, merchants and mechanics. The following is Fowler's phrenological sketch of the ideal mechanic.

> Mechanics require strong constitutions, to give them muscular power and love of labor; large Constructiveness and Imitation, to enable them to use tools with dexterity, work after a pattern, and easily learn to do what they may see others do; and large perceptive faculties, to give the required judgment of matter and the fitness of things.[8]

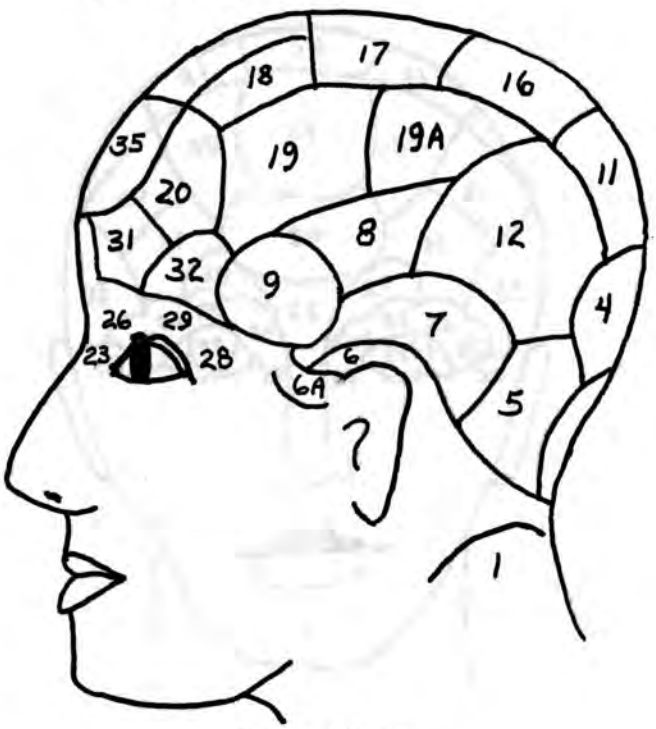
The following four figures, patterned after the phrenological chart included by George Combe in the introduction of his book, Notes on the United States of America, 1841,[9] show the phrenologists' placement of the faculties in the skull.

FIGURE ONE



Back View

FIGURE TWO

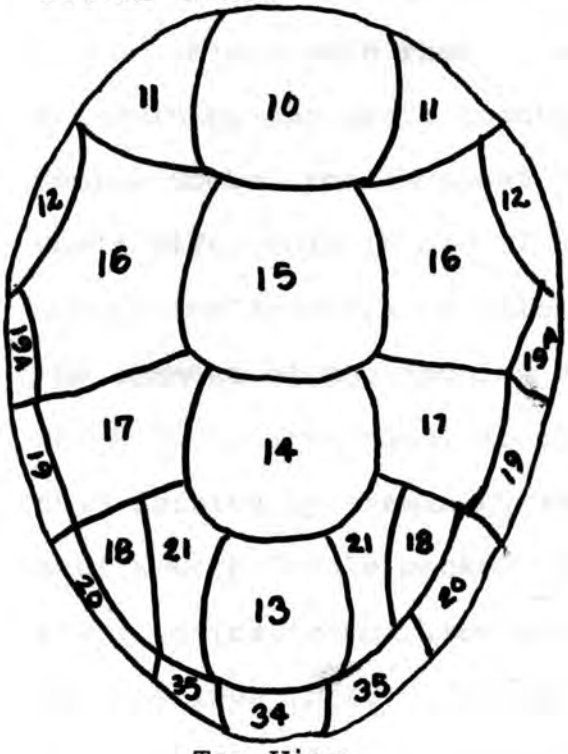


Side View

The Phrenological Faculties

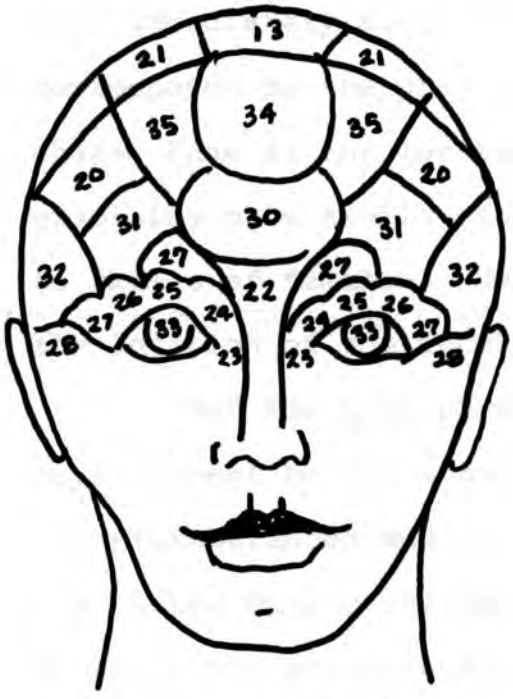
1. Amativeness
2. Philoprogeni-tiveness
3. Concentrativeness
4. Adhesiveness
5. Combativeness
6. Destructiveness
7. Secretiveness
8. Acquisitiveness
9. Constructiveness
10. Self-esteem
11. Love of Aprobation
12. Cautiousness
13. Benevolence
14. Veneration
15. Conscientiousness
16. Firmness
17. Hope
18. Wonder
19. Ideality
20. Wit
21. Imitation
22. Individuality
23. Form
24. Size
25. Weight
26. Colour
27. Locality
28. Number
29. Order
30. Eventuality
31. Time
32. Tune
33. Language
34. Comparison
35. Causality

FIGURE THREE



Top View

FIGURE FOUR



Front View

The Phrenological Faculties

1. Amativeness
2. Philoprogenitiveness
3. Concentrativeness
4. Adhesiveness
5. Combativeness
6. Destructiveness
7. Secretiveness
8. Acquisitiveness
9. Constructiveness
10. Self-esteem
11. Love of Aprobation
12. Cautiousness
13. Benevolence
14. Veneration
15. Conscientiousness
16. Firmness
17. Hope
18. Wonder
19. Ideality
20. Wit
21. Imitation
22. Individuality
23. Form
24. Size
25. Weight
26. Colour
27. Locality
28. Number
29. Order
30. Eventuality
31. Time
32. Tune
33. Language
34. Comparison
35. Causality

As neat a package as this was, phrenologists did have problems with their theory. One of these was determining the exact location of each of the faculties. George Combe, the foremost phrenologist in America during Poe's life, told in one of his lectures that F. J. Gall, one of the founders of phrenology, had difficulty locating the chamber of the faculty Philoprogenitiveness--"that which gives attachment to children." He finally located this faculty by examining and comparing female human skulls with female monkey skulls. Gall felt that this was a logical comparison to make because females of both species love their young intensely. He found that the skulls of female humans and the skulls of female monkeys both had protuberances ". . . on each side of the mesial line immediately above the cerebellum . . . [which] corresponds to the protuberance of the occiput." (See chart, Page 12 for location.) He then found, after examining male skulls, that this protuberance was peculiar to skulls of females. Hence Gall thought that this was the location of the faculty Philoprogenitiveness.[10]

But the <u>true</u> phrenologist's examination of the patient went beyond examining and noting the locations of the protuberances and hollows of the patient's skull. He also noted many other physical features which he felt were clues to the phrenological condition of the patient. In his lectures Combe pointed out the importance of several

of these other features:

> Eye--a large eye collects more rays of light and has a greater field of vision
> Ear--a large ear allows one to hear better, like an ear trumpet
> Nose--a large nose should give one a keen sense of smell
> Skull--a large skull indicates the possibility of more than the usual brain power. The Peruvian Indians were conquered by the Spaniards because European heads are bigger; the small skull of the Peruvian Indians indicated small mental power.[11]

However, the phrenologist had to be careful when making his diagnosis; he could not merely accept these physical attributes as they appeared to be. If the patient's optic nerve were not large in proportion to the eyes, the patient's sight would not be as acute as it appeared to be. And if the olefactory nerve were small, the patient's sense of smell would be impaired no matter how large his nose was. And even the brain of a large skull might have little power if the brain were not healthy.[12] Fowler explained this part of the phrenologists' theory in this manner. "The phrenological law is, that size, other things being equal, is a measure of power."[13] Persons ". . . who have very large heads, are sometimes dull, almost foolish, because their organic quality is low."[14]

There also were other physical features that the phrenologist considered when examining a patient. He noted body size, complexion, hair color and texture, eye

color, and muscular development.

These physical characteristics were the indices by which the phrenologist could tell which of one or more temperaments were a part of a patient's makeup. In Lecture II of his series on phrenology, George Combe explained the four temperaments, Sanguine, Lymphatic, Bilious, and Nervous, that governed human physical and mental capabilities, described the external signs of each temperament, and outlined how persons of each temperament could be expected to act. Those persons who were of a Lymphatic Temperament were Lymphatic because of a ". . . predominance of the glands and external organs."[15] The external signs of the Lymphatic Temperament are ". . . roundness of form, softness of muscle, fair hair, pale skin, sleepy eyes, and inexpressive face."[16] In a person of this temperament, ". . . the brain and all other parts of the system are feeble in action, slow and languid."[17]

The Sanguine Temperament was thought to be caused by the ". . . blood vessels being constitutionally predominant."[18] The external signs of the Sanguine Temperament are ". . . a well-defined form, moderate plumpness, firm flesh, chesnut [sic] hair, blue eyes, and ruddy fair complexion."[19] A person of this temperament has ". . . great fondness for exercise and intolerance of muscular quiescence. The brain partakes of the general activity."[20]

The Bilious Temperament was thought to be caused by ". . . the muscular and fibrous systems being predominant."[21] The external signs of the Bilious Temperament are ". . . black hair, dark skin, moderate stoutness, firm flesh, and harsh features."[22] A person of this temperament has ". . . great power of endurance, or bottom, as the jockies call it."[23]

The Nervous Temperament was thought to be caused by ". . . the brain and nerves being predominately active."[24] The external signs of the Nervous Temperament are ". . . fine thin hair, small muscles, thin skin, paleness of countenance, and brightness of eye."[25] A person of this temperament has ". . . great vivacity of mental action."[26]

These are the four temperaments the phrenologist used to help him decide what a patient's personality and capabilities were. Throughout his lecture on the temperaments, however, Combe cautioned his audience not to look for pure temperaments. Pure temperaments are found very seldom, he pointed out. Most people were thought to be a mixture of the temperaments with one of them being predominant. This, then, is the phrenology Poe may have used in his tales.

NOTES TO CHAPTER II

[1]Eric W. Carlson, "Chronology," Introduction to Poe, ed. Eric W. Carlson (Illinois: Scott, Foresman and Co., 1967), p. XII.

[2]O. S. and L. N. Fowler, Phrenology, A Practical Guide to Your Head, (rpt. Chelsea House Publishers, 1969), p. XIX. Original bibliographical data on this source is not available. This work is apparently a compilation of Fowler's concepts; it does not include the dates or sources of the information.

[3]Ibid.

[4]Ibid.

[5]George Combe, "Combe on Phrenology, Lecture 3," in The Southern Literary Messenger, (rpt., New York: AMS Press Inc., 1965), 5 (1839), 568.

[6]Madeleine B. Stern, Heads & Headlines (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1971), p. 17.

[7]Ibid.

[8]Fowler, op. cit., p. 201.

[9]George Combe, "Introduction," to Notes on the United States of North America, during a phrenological visit in 1838-9-40 (Philadelphia: Carey and Hart, 1841; rpt. Microbook film card) 1, XXIII.

[10]Combe, Lecture 4, op. cit., p. 602.

[11]Ibid., Lecture 2, 460-461.

[12]Ibid.

[13]Fowler, op. cit., p. 33.

[14]Ibid.

[15]Combe, Lecture 2, op. cit., p. 462.

[16]Ibid.

[17]Ibid.

[18]Ibid.

[19]Ibid.

[20]Ibid.

[21]Ibid.

[22]Ibid.

[23]Ibid.

[24]Ibid.

[25]Ibid.

[26]Ibid.

CHAPTER III

POE'S KNOWLEDGE OF PHRENOLOGY BEFORE 1836

Poe's interest in phrenology was natural. Poe himself stated that he wrote about the "terror . . . of the soul. . ."[1] or the psyche or mind. Herbert F. Smith wrote: "Throughout his life, Poe received more of his inspiration, his metaphors, the language for his writings from science than from philosophy or metaphysics. . . ."[2] The purposes of this chapter will be to determine as far as possible to what degree Poe was acquainted with phrenology before the 1836 date Hungerford suggests and to emphasize the important role that phrenological symbolism plays in Poe's short stories.

Poe's traceable acquaintance with phrenology closely parallels phrenology's rise in popularity in America. Poole's Index To Periodical Literature reflects the short-lived popularity of phrenology. Volume I, 1802-1881, contains 109 titles of articles under the heading "Phrenology." Volume II, 1882-1887, lists titles of only two articles under the heading "Phrenology." But the life of phrenology in the United States was even shorter than this suggests. Phrenology lost many of its supporters in the 1840's.

Information in Frank Luther Mott's A History of American Magazines, Volume I, further substantiates that phrenology was a popular subject in the magazines of the 1840's. Mott points out that most of the magazines printed articles on phrenology, although not all of the magazines would make their positions on the subject clear. The Christian Examiner and Knickerbocker Magazine were two of the majority of magazines which published articles about phrenology while remaining skeptical and not taking definite stands on the subject. Ladies' Magazine and Democratic Review, however, published articles supporting phrenology. This popularity of phrenology as a magazine subject eventually led to the founding of several phrenological journals of which The Phrenological Journal, established in 1835, is worthy of mention if for no other reason than the fact that it used a phrenological chart with the chambers of the skull marked and named as its front cover.[3] Thus, merely glancing at the cover of this magazine would acquaint one with this important concept of phrenology.

A number of books on phrenology were also published at this time. Perhaps the most popular of these was George Combe's The Constitution of Man, already in its fifth edition in America in 1835. It is quite conceivable that Poe, great reader that he was and as interested in the sciences of his time as he was, would have made it a

point to read, if not study, this book to further his understanding of the human mind.

Phrenology had become widespread in the United States in the early 1830's. Hungerford points out that "That caustic traveler, Frances Trollope, had found phrenology penetrated so far west as Cincinnati--and this in 1828--when Caldwell lectured there. . . ."[4]

In his article, Hungerford uses several of the body characteristics Poe gave his characters to prove that Poe made use of phrenology in his descriptions. He points out that Roderick Usher is a carefully-drawn phrenological study of Ideality and the Nervous Temperament. As proof, he pointed out that Usher's large forehead, especially in the region above the temples, shows that Usher has a large amount of the faculty of Ideality, that characteristic needed to make one a "Poet, painter or musician." And Usher is a poet, painter and musician.[5]

Hungerford also points out the physical characteristics of Usher which show that Usher has a Nervous Temperament. Temperaments are indicated by the skin, hair and eyes of a person. As Hungerford notes, Usher has ". . . fine thin hair, small muscles, thin skin, paleness of countenance, and brightness of eye."[6] These are definite characteristics of the Nervous Temperament, and Usher possesses this temperament which gives him

". . . great vivacity of mental action."[7] These things, plus Poe's use of the words Ideality and nervousness, are Hungerford's proof that Poe was using the techniques of phrenology in his description of Roderick Usher.

According to Hungerford, Poe concentrated on two different bodily characteristics in "Ligeia." Poe again made much mention of the large forehead, but in "Ligeia," this indicated to Hungerford that she had a large chamber of Love of Life. This chamber, like Ideality, is located in the temple region. Ligeia's supernatural will to live, Hungerford says, is due to the enlarged size of this faculty, indicated by her large forehead.[8]

He also points out that Poe's Ligeia has a great facility for languages. She speaks with a ". . . low musical language. . ." of "eloquence." This, as Hungerford points out, is no accident. Eyes, in phrenology, indicated the extent of development of the language faculty. The reader who knows something about phrenology would expect a character with large eyes, depending on their color and perceptiveness, to have a more-than-average ability to handle language. Ligeia, then, with her extra large eyes, would be expected to have an extra-well developed language faculty, developed to the point that it even has become "musical."[9]

This, then, is basically the proof that Hungerford cited to show that Poe used the concepts of phrenology in

his writing after he reviewed Mrs. Miles' book in 1836. But examples much like those Hungerford used can also be found in three stories written by Poe in 1835: "Berenice," "Morella," and "King Pest." If the above information used by Hungerford is accepted as proof that Poe used phrenology in his stories after 1836, then the same types of uses of phrenology by Poe in stories written before 1836 should stand as proof that Poe used phrenology in his stories before 1836.

Because the 1836 date is germane to the point at hand, the texts used for "Berenice," "Morella," and "King Pest" are the 1835 Southern Literary Messenger printings of the tales. Texts using later editions, such as James A. Harrison's The Complete Works of Edgar Allan Poe used in Chapters Four and Five, contain Poe's revisions made after 1836. The textual changes in these later editions, explored in Chapter Five, may be proof that Poe used phrenological ideas after 1836, but only the material from the earlier editions will help establish the possibility that Poe was familiar with phrenology before the date Hungerford suggests.

At the beginning of the story "Berenice," 1835, Berenice is an agile, graceful girl who possesses much energy. Then she takes sick and wastes away. It seems to be more than mere coincidence that Poe points out as symbols of her sickness her "lifeless and lustreless"

eyes, her "once golden hair" turned "black as the raven's wing" and her "Hollow temples",[10] the seat of the Love of Life faculty according to Hungerford. Perhaps Poe has drawn upon the concepts of phrenology to show the extent, both mentally and physically, of Berenice's sickness.

Eyes were the index by which the phrenologists measured one's ability to handle language. Berenice's eyes, "lifeless and lustreless," show why she does not speak when she confronts the narrator in the library. Her eyes show that her language faculty has withered. The important thing here is not that she does not speak but that phrenologically she cannot speak.

And what about Berenice's hair, the ". . . once golden hair . . . now black as the raven's wing. . .?"[11] "Fair hair," according to George Combe, was one of the external signs of the Lymphatic Temperament. Lymphatic persons were characterized as being "feeble in action, slow and languid."[12] But this is not Berenice early in the tale, "--she agile, graceful, and overflowing with energy . . . she roaming carelessly through life. . . ."[13] Her yellow hair may be a foreshadowing device, warning the reader that Berenice is not as healthy as she appears to be, that she will not long remain agile, free and careless. Her physical activity early in the tale is phrenologically out of character for her. This activity must soon cease.

Berenice's sickness does not surprise the

phrenology-grounded reader; it has been pre-determined by Poe. When the "spirit of change swept over her, pervading her mind. . . and, in a manner the most subtle and terrific, disturbing even the very identity of her person. . .",[14] making an ". . . appalling distortion of her personal identity. . ."[15] the reader must agree with the change in Berenice. The fair hair indicated early in the tale the predominance of the Lymphatic temperament even though Berenice's actions denied this. As the Lymphatic temperament begins to take charge of her body, Berenice's actions begin to slow down to fit the Lymphatic temperament. The hair color has done its job. The reader is aware that the Lymphatic temperament has rightfully taken over Berenice's physical and mental activities.

Once the golden hair has set up acceptance of this change in Berenice for the reader, and the change has taken place, the hair color becomes less important. It has served its purpose. The resulting change from golden to black may be Poe's way of symbolizing Berenice's impending death. Her once golden hair turned black becomes her shroud.

Then there are the hollow temples--the seat of the Love of Life faculty. A hollow in the skull in the region of a faculty indicated to the phrenologist that the faculty located there was deficient, was small in size. And Berenice certainly is proceeding, apparently

resignedly, toward death. The closer she comes to accepting death, the deeper the hollow in her temple becomes. This is the phrenologists' Berenice. And she matches Poe's Berenice.

In "Morella," 1835, the reader is told that Morella has gigantic powers of mind, is able to understand and enjoy mystical writings.[16] After Morella dies, the child ". . . to which in dying she had given birth, and which breathed not till the mother breathed no more,"[17] the child who is "the perfect resemblance of her who had departed,"[18] --note perfect resemblance--the child with "the adult powers and faculties of the woman"[19] who is actually Morella reincarnated, is described as having a "High forehead."[20] This same forehead, after 1836, indicated to Hungerford that Roderick Usher possessed a large amount of the faculty of Ideality. Should it not indicate the same thing for Morella when the same traits of character are present?

Again in "Morella," the reader is told that Morella has cold hands and wan fingers and that the daughter--and thus Morella--has silken hair and wan fingers and a ". . . full and speculative eye. . . ."[21] This sounds just like Roderick Usher--"small muscles, thin skin," "fine thin hair," and "brightness of eye". Morella and Usher were much alike. Neither traveled. Both of them attached themselves to one person in their

stories--Usher to his sister and Morella to her husband.

This is not to say that every high forehead and every pale, wan complexion used by Poe are absolute results of his knowledge of phrenology. However, the point remains that to the phrenologist, other things being equal, every high forehead and pale, wan complexion indicate the same thing, the high forehead being especially important. One means by which the phrenologist could get an indication of a patient's brain size was to measure his skull. The forehead became very important here because, as Combe pointed out, it was not the hat measurement of the head but the forehead, the over-the-top-of-the-skull measurement that reflected intelligence.[22] Fowler described this same measurement in phrenological terms, ". . . from Individuality [approximately the nose] to Philoprogenitiveness [the base of the skull in the back of the head]."[23]

And the eyes--Hungerford wrote that in "Ligeia" her extra large eyes indicated that her "low musical language" was a part of her phrenological character. Then "the lustre of" Morella's "melancholy eyes"[24] and the daughter's "full and speculative eye"[25] should be all the proof that the phrenological reader needs to show that Morella's "musical language,"[26] like Ligeia's, is phrenologically fully in character with her description.

In "King Pest," 1835, Poe made three more good

phrenological studies: Legs, Hugh Tarpaulin, and the six characters in the funeral parlor. Legs is a sound character phrenologically. His mental capabilities match his physical description well. During the story the reader finds out that Legs cannot read,[27] that he has no power to recognize ". . . images or sensations. . ."[28] and that he was unintelligent enough to go into the walled-off plague area of the city. And he did not just enter the outer fringe of the plague area--he penetrated to the ". . . strong hold of the pestilence. . . ."[29] A good close look at Legs through the eyes of a phrenologist will show why he had this lack of ordinary functions.

Legs does not fit easily into any of the four temperaments. His great height indicates ". . . predominance of the [some] glands . . ."[30] which would place him, at least partially, in the Lymphatic Temperament. One of the characteristics of this temperament is that the brain is feeble and slow in action. This description certainly fits Legs.

The long escape run and his dominance during the fight at the end of the story indicate that Legs, although he was not a strongly-built man, had a great deal of endurance. Endurance was one of the characteristics of the Bilious Temperament. And one of the external signs of this temperament was ". . . harsh features."[31] Legs' ". . . high cheekbones, . . . large hawk-nose, retreating

chin, [and] fallen underjaw . . ."[32] are certainly harsh features. And, Combe said that the temperaments were rarely pure. For Poe to have drawn a character with a pure temperament, he would have had to ignore this concept of phrenology. Legs is a logical combination of temperaments--being not too bright but having a great deal of stamina.

But the eyes! Here is the most obvious clue of all to Legs' mental capacities. One of the phrenologists' basic beliefs was that an extra large organ--ear, eye, nose--allowed the patient to hear, see, or smell more that was happening around him than a patient with normal sized organs. In this way, the patient with the oversized organ would become smarter than other people because he would observe more of what was going on around him unless, of course, the organ were not functioning properly or were diseased. Both possibilities are true in Legs' case. His eyes are huge and protruding.[33] This should enable Legs to take in everything that happens around him; he should know a great deal about everything. But Legs' eyes do not function well. This is shown in the scene in the funeral parlor when he opens his eyes wider to take in the whole scene.[34] If his large eyes had been functioning properly, he would not have had to make this effort.

And the color of the eyes, along with their not functioning properly, is another indication that Legs'

language faculty is not well developed. In discussing the eye as the indicator of the size and efficiency of the language faculty, Fowler explained the eye-language relationship by saying that those with a well-developed language faculty would ". . . have a most expressive . . . eye. . . . ."[35] In another place Fowler wrote, ". . . the color of the eye generally corresponds with that of the skin and expresses character. Light eyes indicate warmth of feeling, and dark eyes power."[36] Normal, average eyes have some color--blue, brown, hazel. But Legs' eyes are white. They are not normal. Whiteness is paleness, and paleness indicates sickness. Legs' language faculty is sick; his eyes are the indicators of this.

Hugh Tarpaulin, Legs' companion, is also a good phrenological study. At first glance Hugh seems to be merely the oposite of Legs in every way, probably drawn that way for comic effect. Legs is tall and thin; Hugh is short and heavy. Legs has a hawk-nose; Hugh has a sunken nose. Legs has large eyes; Hugh has small eyes. Physically they are different. But in spite of their physical differences, they are very much alike mentally.

These physical differences between Legs and Hugh may seem to be a flaw in Poe's phrenological characters. But a closer examination of the phrenologists' theories will show how both characters may be <u>physically</u> different and yet possess the same <u>mental</u> capabilities. There is

the matter of the eyes, for example. Hugh has small eyes, indicating two things to the phrenologist. First Hugh's language faculty will be small. Second, Hugh's powers of observation will be small, also. Legs has large eyes, initially indicating to the phrenologist that his language faculty should be large and he should have excellent powers of observation. But his eyes are white. Fowler wrote of the eye, "The mere expression of the eye conveys precise ideas of the . . . states of the mentality. . . ." When the mental state is good, ". . . the eye is clear and bright, but becomes languid and soulless in proportion as the brain has been enfeebled."[37] Thus, the whiteness of his eyes might indicate two things about Legs to the phrenologist. First, Legs' language faculty is deficient. Second, Legs' powers of observation will be deficient, also. Therefore, although the characters are different physically, they still may be alike mentally. And they are.

Like Legs, Hugh cannot read, has no power to recognize ". . . images or sensations. . ."[38] and penetrates into the depth of the pestilence's stronghold.[39] Was he just following Legs? Or has his mental character been drawn strongly enough by the external characteristics the reader is given to make his actions fit his phrenological character and seem like his own? Hugh, like Legs, has harsh features--a short, sunken nose; a thick upper lip and a thick lower lip; stumpy body; short, thick

arms--[40] that would classify him as Bilious. This would give him endurance--to run and to drink. And his plumpness, firm flesh and ruddy complexion--"purple face . . ."[41] --are signs of the Sanguine Temperament, that which gives ". . . great fondness for exercise and intolerance of muscular quiesence."[42] This is Hugh. In the Sanguine Temperament, however, ". . . the brain usually partakes of the general activity."[43] This is not true in Hugh's case, but it probably should not be considered a flaw in the character Poe has drawn. Consider Hugh's eyes.

The eyes are the index to the language faculty, and the development of the language faculty is a measure of intelligence. Hugh's eyes are small. Immediately the reader knows, other things being equal, that Hugh's language faculty is not well developed. He talks a lot but uses no discretion. He is finally thrown into the punch bowl[44] because he cannot control his mouth. This inability to control his thoughts is understandable because of his small eyes. And, Poe gives Hugh's eyes no particular color,[45] possibly to further emphasize Hugh's deficient language faculty. Hugh's eyes are neither light to indicate "warmth of feeling" nor dark to indicate power. This may show that Hugh, like Legs, has a poorly developed language faculty. Small eyes of no distinct color seem to indicate a small, indistinct

language faculty.

The six characters that Hugh and Legs meet in the funeral parlor in the area of the pestilence can also be studied phrenologically. Poe emphasizes one facial feature of each character. One has a high forehead. He is, naturally, the president of the small group and acts ". . . jaunty and knowing."[46] But he is emaciated; his face is yellow--he is sick.[47] His Ideality faculty, large as indicated by the high forehead, is diseased as indicated by the yellow face and is not functioning properly. Because of this he is here, leading this sorry group in the middle of the pestilence, instead of leading an important group of normal people in an area of safety.

The next three characters do not act much. Among these three are the following physical characteristics: one large mouth--"Commencing at the right ear, it swept with a terrific chasm to the left. . ."[48] one long nose--". . . extremely long, thin, sinuous, flexible, and pimpled. . ."[49] and a pair of heavy cheeks--"like two huge bladders of Oporto wine. . . ."[50] Enlarged characteristics, yes. But not necessarily efficient. These characteristics are too large, so large that they have become grotesque and useless like the characters who possess them.

The fifth man has a pair of large ears. He should be able to hear well, and he can. This <u>should</u> help him

in life. If he can hear better than others, he should know more than others. But his hearing faculty is diseased. Instead of listening for knowledge's sake, his ears were tuned to and ". . . were occasionally pricked up, or depressed, as the sounds of bursting bottles increased, or died away. . . ."[51]

The sixth man has a pair of large eyes. But they are more than just large; they are ". . . huge goggle eyes . . .,"[52] --grotesque. And they are white, like Legs' eyes. And, like Legs, this character does not speak much. Apparently his language faculty, too, is diseased.

These, then, are possible phrenological concepts in three of Poe's tales written in 1835, before he reviewed Mrs. Miles' book and before the 1836 date Hungerford suggests. Enough phrenological concepts (which are similar to those pointed out by Hungerford in Poe's later tales) have been used in these three tales to indicate that Poe was probably acquainted with phrenology before 1836. But perhaps this early acquaintance with phrenology was more superficial than his later knowledge of phrenology. In chapter four, by looking at one of Poe's later tales, perhaps one can see that Poe's uses of phrenology have become more complete, natural and subtle. This would indicate the possibility that Poe's use of phrenology matured as he became more acquainted with it.

CHRONOLOGY OF POE AND PHRENOLOGY

1809 Poe is born in Boston on January 19.

1811 Poe's mother dies; he goes to the John Allan home.

1815 An extensive, negative review of phrenology entitled "The Physiognomical System of Drs. Gall and Spurzheim & c" is published in the Edinburgh Review.

1817 "The Craniad," an eighty-seven page poem -- a satire on phrenology -- is published in Scotland.

1823 Phrenological Journal, a periodical edited by George Combe, is found in Scotland.

1824 Another verse satire of phrenology, "Phrenology in Edinburgh," is published.

1827 Poe enlists in the army. Tamerlane and Other Poems is published. Charles Caldwell's Elements of Phrenology is published in the United States.

1828 Caldwell lectures on phrenology in Cincinnati. Hawthorne mentions phrenology in Fanshaw, his first novel.

1830 Three more satires on phrenology are published in Scotland: "The Phrenologists," "The Headpiece, or Phrenology Opposed to Divine Revelation," and "A Helmet for the Headpiece, or Phrenology Incompatible with Reason."

1832 Johann G. Spurzheim, a noted German phrenologist, dies in America.

1833 Poe publishes "M. S. Found in a Bottle." Annals of Phrenology periodical is published in Boston. The September issue of New England Magazine contains a review of H. T. Judson's Alphabet of Phrenology.

1834 Combe's Elements of Phrenology is published.

1835 In January, an explanation of what phrenology was supposed to do, "Phrenological Examination," is published in The Southern Literary Messenger. Poe's "Berenice," "Morella" and "King Pest" are also published in The Southern Literary Messenger. In Decenber, Poe becomed editor of The Southern Literary Messenger.

Phrenological works published at this time included the following: Combe's fifth edition of The Constitution of Man, Gall's On the Function of the Brain and Each of Its Parts, (Boston), N. B. Schurtleff's An Epitome of Phrenology (Boston), and Carey, Lea & Blanchard's The Manual of Phrenology.

1836 Poe's review of Mrs. L. Miles' book, Phrenology and the Moral Influence of Phrenology appears in The Southern Literary Messenger.

1837 Poe resigns his editorship of The Southern Literary Messenger.

1838 Poe's The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym and "Ligeia" are published. The American Phrenological Journal begins publication. D. M. Reese's Humbugs of New York, an attack on phrenology, is published.

1839 Poe's "The Fall of the House of Usher" and "The Man That Was Used Up" are published. Combe's lectures on phrenology are printed in The Southern Literary Messenger. Fowler's Phrenology Proved, illustrated, and applied is published.

1840 Poe's "The Business Man" is published.

1841 Combe's Notes on The United States of North America, during a phrenological visit in 1838-9-40 is published.

1842 Poe's "The Masque of the Red Death" is published. Fowler's Phrenology and Psychology Explained and Applied to Matrimony is published.

1845 "The Raven" and "The Imp of the Perverse" are published.

1849 Poe dies on October 7.

1851 Fowler's Illustrated Phrenological Almanac for 1851 is published. It contains an article in which Poe is phrenologized.

NOTES TO CHAPTER III

[1]Edgar Allan Poe, "PREFACE TO TALES OF THE GROTESQUE AND ARABESQUE," Introduction to Poe, ed. Eric W. Carlson (Illinois: Scott, Foresman and Co., 1967), p. 484.

[2]Herbert F. Smith, "Usher's Madness and Poe's Organicism," American Literature, 39 (November, 1967), 386.

[3]Frank L. Mott, A History of American Magazines, (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1938) I, 447-450.

[4]Edward Hungerford, "Poe and Phrenology," American Literature, 2 (March, 1931), 209.

[5]Ibid., p. 226.

[6]Ibid.

[7]Ibid.

[8]Ibid., p. 228.

[9]Ibid.

[10]Edgar Allan Poe, "Berenice" in The Southern Literary Messenger, (rpt., New York: AMS Press Inc., 1965) 1, (1835), 334.

[11]Ibid.

[12]George Combe, "Combe on Phrenology," Lecture 2, in The Southern Literary Messenger, (rpt., New York: AMS Press Inc., 1965) 5, (1839), 462.

[13]Poe, op. cit., p. 333.

[14]Ibid.

[15]Ibid., p. 334.

[16]Edgar Allan Poe, "Morella," in The Southern Literary Messenger, (rpt. New York: AMS Press Inc., 1965) 1, (1835), 448.

[17]Ibid., p. 449.

[18]Ibid.

[19]Ibid.

[20]Ibid., p. 450.

[21]Ibid., p. 449.

[22]Combe, Lecture 2, op. cit., p. 461.

[23]O. S. and L. N. Fowler, Phrenology, A Practical Guide to Your Head, (rpt. Chelsea House Publishers, 1969), p. 33.

[24]Poe, "Morella," op. cit., p. 449.

[25]Ibid.

[26]Ibid.

[27]Edgar Allan Poe, "King Pest," in The Southern Literary Messenger, (rpt. New York: AMS Press Inc., 1965) 1, (1835), 757.

[28]Ibid., p. 758.

[29]Ibid.

[30]Combe, Lecture 2, op. cit., p. 462.

[31]Ibid.

[32]Poe, "King Pest," op. cit., p. 757.

[33]Ibid.

[34]Ibid., p. 759.

[35]Fowler, op. cit., p. 175.

[36]Ibid., pp. 52-53.

[37]Ibid., p. 53.

[38]Poe, "King Pest," op. cit., p. 758.

[39]Ibid.

[40]Ibid., p. 757.

[41]Ibid.

[42]Combe, loc. cit.

[43]Ibid.

[44]Poe, "King Pest," op. cit., p. 761.

[45]Ibid., p. 757.

[46]Ibid., p. 758.

[47]Ibid.

[48]Ibid., p. 759.

[49]Ibid.

[50]Ibid.

[51]Ibid.

[52]Ibid.

CHAPTER IV

POE'S KNOWLEDGE OF PHRENOLOGY AFTER 1836

The first positive proof which shows that Poe was acquainted with the principles of phrenology is the review of a book on phrenology which he did for The Southern Literary Messenger. He reviewed Phrenology and the Moral Influence of Phrenology: Arranged for General Study, and the Purpose of Education, from the First Published Works of Gall and Spurzheim, to the latest discoveries of the present period, written by Mrs. L. Miles and published in 1836. As the title suggests, this book was a complete study of phrenology, written to give the reader a working knowledge of phrenology. It would have been almost impossible for Poe to review this book without acquiring some, or perhaps more, knowledge of phrenology.

Poe's review of Mrs. Miles' book was printed in The Southern Literary Messenger in 1836. His opening statement in his review seemed to say that he, at least, felt that phrenology was now a legitimate science. He began his review in this way:

> Phrenology is no longer to be laughed at. It is no longer laughed at by men of common understanding. It has assumed the majesty of a science; and as a science, ranks among the most important which can engage the attention of thinking beings. . . .[1]

A counterpart to Poe's interest in phrenology is the interest of phrenologists in Poe as a prototype of the poet. Madeleine B. Stern discussed this aspect of the Poe-phrenology relationship in her article, "Poe: 'The Mental Temperament' for Phrenologists." She wrote, "Actually, phrenology was as deeply interested in Poe as Poe was in phrenology."[2] She supported this thesis by pointing out the interest that ". . . the New York firm of Fowler and Wells . . . consisting of Orson Squire Fowler, his younger brother, Lorenzo Niles Fowler . . ."[3] took in Poe.

According to Stern, ". . . Poe and the phrenologists had the opportunity to meet"[4] at one of their offices in New York or Philadelphia. And, Poe's great interest in phrenology coupled with the Fowlers' concern, ". . . both as phrenologists and as publishers . . . with the art of poetry,"[5] gave both parties a motive for the meeting. But, Stern says, ". . . no dated, written report of such an analysis has survived . . ."[6] although she hastens to point out that ". . . upon several occasions after Poe's death the firm did publish their findings about the poet's phrenology."[7]

One strong piece of evidence, admittedly circumstantial but still important, that was not noted by Stern appears in John W. Ostrom's The Letters of Edgar Allan Poe. In letter 127, To Frederick W. Thomas, from

Philadelphia in 1841, Poe write, "Speaking of heads--my own has been examined by several phrenologists--all of whom spoke of me in a species of extravaganza which I should be ashamed to repeat."[8] Although Poe does not mention the Fowlers by name, this quotation does strengthen Stern's argument. The Fowlers did have a phrenology parlor in Philadelphia in 1841, and their praise of Poe was extravagant.

Examples of their praise of Poe appeared in Lorenzo Fowler's Illustrated Phrenological Almanac for 1851, two years after Poe's death. Although Stern's article contains the whole analysis of Poe, several excerpts will suffice to show that Fowler's praise of Poe was indeed "a species of extravaganza."

To Fowler, Poe was a ". . . gifted son of genius. . . ." He had ". . . an unusual degree of intellect, Ideality, Sublimity, Spirituality, and Language." Although he was "left an orphan at an early day, . . . he released himself from the control and roof of his foster-father, Mr. Allan, and boldly shot off in a tangent, gleaming like a meteor in the heavens, to delight, and amaze, attract or astonish. . . . Ambitious, sensitive, and critical in a high degree, he found himself surrounded by those who could neither understand his nature, appreciate his talents, nor sympathize with his erratic spirit." Fowler concludes by saying, ". . . he

was from the very nature of his organization a wandering star, which could be confined to no orbit and limited to no constellation in the empire of the mind."[9]

Extravagant praise. And the Fowlers' interest in Poe did not end with his death. Charlotte Fowler Wells, a sister to the Fowler phrenologists who ". . . lent a receptive ear to murmurings and mysterious rappings from the spirit world . . ."[10] reported that she had communicated with Poe after his death. A half-brother, Edward P. Fowler, who was also able to communicate with spirits, received a written communication from Poe. Stern describes his experience as follows:

> On a December night in 1851, a parchment was placed on Edward's table before he retired; the following morning he found it had been inscribed with the following sentiment: 'Peace, but not without Freedom.' To this noble phrase was attached a list of signatures, among them that of Edgar A. Poe. At a meeting of the circle investigating spiritual phenomena, the spirits were asked whether each had executed his own name, to which the reply was an emphatic, 'Yes'![11]

This type of contact with the spirit world would probably have intrigued Poe had he still been alive. It would have been a good basis for a tale, perhaps a humorous one, for Poe, as Hungerford points out, does laugh at several concepts and pretensions of phrenology.

The importance of knowing something of phrenology when reading Poe's tales becomes even more apparent when one looks at some of the humorous uses Poe makes of

phrenology. Hungerford points this out when discussing Poe's comic tale, "The Business Man," saying "Indeed, the whole point of the skit comes from the bizarre turn which Poe gives to a phrenological tenet."[12] One of the bases of phrenology was that a bump or depression made on the skull by an outside force would not lessen or increase the amount of the faculty housed at that point inside the skull. In "The Business Man," however, the hero, when very young, accidentally received a blow to the head which caused a bump, ". . . as pretty an organ of order as one shall see on a summer's day"[13], to rise on his head. The location of this bump caused his order faculty to be larger than usual and gave him ". . . that positive appetite for system and regularity which has made me the distinguished man of business that I am."[14]

Upon reading the story, however, one soon realizes that this "distinguished man of business" is not what he claims to be. Actually, he is a swindler. One of the businesses he operated was that of organ grinder. But people did not pay him because of his beautiful music. He had repaired his organ with a hammer so that people would pay him to move his terrible music to another corner. Another of his businesses was the assault and battery business. This job consisted of going to a bar, finding a drunk, well-to-do young man, and getting into a fight with him. The profit in this business was gained

through the ensuing lawsuit. The well-to-do young man was sued for assault and battery; the businessman reaped a handsome profit. It was this kind of job that led the businessman to brag, "I consider myself, therefore, a made man, and am bargaining for a country seat on the Hudson."[15] But as Poe knew, and as we know, he was not, realistically, a businesman.

The misinterpretation of Poe due to lack of phrenological background which Hungerford warns against can be illustrated here. Stuart Levine, in Edgar Poe: seer and craftsman, 1972, seems to have missed the point of "The Business Man" completely according to Hungerford's interpretation. Levine dismissed this tale as one ". . . about small scale swindling."[16] He apparently does not consider "The Business Man" to be connected in any way with phrenology.

Poe also poked fun at phrenological ideas in "Some Words with a Mummy." Yet, the average reader would not catch the satire in the tale without some background in phrenology, Hungerford notes.

In this tale, an Egyptian mummy is being told the accomplishments of modern science, the implication being that the ancient Egyptians were a backward, unscientific race because of their skull structure. The modern scientists are quieted, however, when the mummy proves that he has as much knowledge of phrenology as they have.

Hungerford writes,

> It is not phrenology, but the pretensions of phrenology which Poe ridicules here. The passage of a hundred years has lent a new satire to this passage, a satire which one will not perceive unless he knows that Poe in some of his most serious artistry calls upon phrenology to authenticate his subtlest interpretation of human character.[17]

A third example of Poe's satirical uses of phrenological concepts which may be added to Hungerford's list is the tale, "The Man That Was Used Up," 1839. In this tale, Poe satirizes a concept he also used seriously in other tales: the "large and lustrous" eye--"rich, melodious language" combination. Building a hero right before the reader's eyes, Poe ignores until the last moment the hero's voice. Not until after the hero's false but "exceedingly large and lustrous"[18] eye is inserted does his valet adjust the hero's palate to change his squeaky voice to its full, deep quality. The <u>adjustment</u> of the palate is not important--the insertion of the eye <u>before</u> the adjustment of the palate is the important concept. As in phrenology, the eye controls the language.

In "The Man That Was Used Up," the reader is given a description of General Smith--who might well be called the man who was <u>built</u> up. We are told that he is about six feet tall,[19] has an abundance of "jetty black" hair and "the handsomest pair of whiskers under the sun,"[20]

"brilliantly white," even teeth,[21] a clear, strong melodious voice,[22] and ". . . exceedingly large and lustrous . . ." ". . . deep hazel . . ." eyes that were ". . . worth a couple of the ordinary ocular organs."[23] We are also told that he had a head of "wonderful proportion"[24] and a strong body--shoulders, legs--with graceful curves.[25] The general's head of "wonderful proportion" is not described in any more detail than that. However, it is possible that Poe was describing the general's head-type when he wrote in his review of Mrs. Miles' book, ". . . a skull which is large, which is elevated or high above the ears, and in which the head is well developed and thrown forward, so as to be nearly perpendicular with its base, may be presumed to lodge a brain of greater power . . . than a skull deficient in such proportion."[26] Thus, a head of "wonderful proportion" would be the embodiment of the above mentioned characteristics noted by Poe.

General Smith is a phrenologist's dream because he exemplifies everything that phrenologists said was physically good. And his past and present actions match up with his physical description. The reader is told that General Smith was, in the war, "A downright fire-eater, and no mistake."[27] He had been a fierce and smart warrior. And now, General Smith impressed the narrator with his conversational powers.[28] He is a seemingly

perfect being, one whose physical and mental endowments were perfectly matched, a phenomenon which does not happen often in nature. He possessed only two minor faults that the narrator noticed. The first fault, a very slight one, was that General Smith forgot the narrator's name after they had been introduced. This was a very small flaw in his character but was noted by the narrator: "Thompson, to be sure, is not my name."[29] One would suppose that such a perfect specimen as General Smith would have no trouble remembering the name of a man he had just met.

The second fault the narrator noticed is a physical one which also hints that all may not be as right with the General as it seems. The narrator's curiosity about the General is piqued by what the narrator describes as ". . . a primness, not to say stiffness, in his carriage--a degree of measured, and, if I may so express it, of rectangular precision, attending his every movement. . . ."[30] This observation prompts the narrator to attempt to find out more about the General by talking to some of Smith's friends. But each time one of the friends seem about to disclose some great secret about General Smith, he is interrupted and the conversation about Smith is left unfinished. Finally, after this happens several times, the narrator goes right to the source of his curiosity, the General himself, for an

explanation to what has become by now a mystery to him.

As the narrator is let into General Smith's dressing room, he kicks a ". . . large and exceedingly odd-looking bundle of something which lay . . . on the floor. . . ."[31] He is amazed and frightened when this bundle chides him in a voice ". . . between a squeak and a whistle . . ."[32] for the kick. He does not, even yet, recognize that this "odd-looking bundle" is General Smith. And then, right before the narrator's eyes, Poe builds the phrenologists' dream man.

First, the leg of graceful curves, ". . . a very capital cork leg, already dressed. . . ."[33] is screwed onto the bundle. Secondly, the cork arm, made by a different manufacturer, is screwed on. Thirdly comes the shoulders and bosom, completing the magnificent body.[34] But now we know that General Smith is not a fierce, smart warrior anymore; he is the replica, or the epitome, of one.

And then Poe goes to work on the head of "wonderful proportions." First the "jetty black" hair and the white teeth are added.[35] But still the General speaks in his squeaky, whistley voice. What could be lacking? The General seems to possess all of the attributes necessary to speak clearly. But, of course; how could we forget? "Oh, yes, by the by, my eye . . . screw it in."[36] The wonderful eye, worth at least a couple of ordinary ones, that index of the language faculty. It was not

until after--the order of events is important here--the eye was inserted that Pompey, the General's valet, ". . . went up to his master, opened his mouth . . . and adjusted therein a somewhat singular-looking machine. . . ."[37] "When he again spoke, his voice had resumed all that rich melody and strength which I had noticed upon our original introduction."[38] The palate could easily have been adjusted when the teeth were inserted, but the eye is the key to the General's language, just as a phrenologist would expect it to be. After the eye is inserted, the palate can be adjusted. He may have been "The Man That Was Used Up," but he was also the man that was built up.

Poe's use of the eye-language concept here is not subtle. In fact, inserting the eye before the General's voice can become rich and full, is quite apparent. But a reader who knows no phrenology will merely see this as a progression of sorts in no particular order for no particular reason. A reader who is somewhat familiar with phrenology, however, may find himself wondering about the voice at the end of the story. When will it change from squeaky to deep? He may not suspect what Poe has planned. He may not even think about the eye being the index to language. But when the eye is inserted and then the machine is adjusted, the reader who knows some phrenology would realize that language cannot be of an

elevated nature without the help of the "large and lustrous" eye.

Thus far many phrenological concepts have been explored and applied, but the use of one concept--the bumps and hollows--has been neglected. Bumps and hollows on skulls are apparently a rather unwieldy device for an author to use. But Poe does give at least one character, Dirk Peters, in The Narrative of A. Gordon Pym, a hollow on the top of his head. As Poe describes it, "His head was equally deformed, being of immense size, with an indentation on the crown (like that on the head of most negroes), and entirely bald."[39] Peters' head is compared here to the head of most Negroes. Yet, Peters is not a Negro. He is the son of an Indian mother and an apparently white father. Poe must have had some reason for drawing this Peters-Negro comparison.

This hollow on the crown of Peters' head was in all probability in the area of Veneration. In A Practical Guide, Fowler's illustration for a small Veneration faculty was a skull. The caption under the skull read, "A NEGRO MURDERED, WHO IGNORED ALL RELIGION."[40] Poe's comparison of Peter's hollow to that "of most negroes" suggests much the same principle that Fowler's caption seems to suggest--Negroes have small Veneration faculties and so does Peters. The test for this implication must be Peter's actions.

Veneration, Fowler wrote, was the "ADORATION OF A

SUPREME BEING: REVERENCE FOR . . . THINGS SACRED."[41] Persons with a small Veneration faculty, will "Experience little devotion or respect, and are deficient in fervor."[42] Peters' actions do show that he has a small Veneration faculty. He participates in the mutiny, helping to overthrow the captain, who would be the supreme being or the most sacred thing aboard the ship. Peters also seems to have little reverence for life. It is Peters who stabs Parker when Parker loses in the drawing of lots,[43] and it is Peters who dispatches numerous savages with different clubs.

Poe has given another clue to the condition of Peters' Veneration faculty in the same description of Peters' head, ". . . entirely bald." Fowler had this to say about hair: "Abundance of hair and beard signifies virility and a great amount of character; while a thin beard signifies sterility and a thinly settled upper story, with rooms to let."[44] A room "to let" is generally empty, vacant, as was Dirk Peters' Veneration faculty.

This, then, is one aspect of Poe that the reader with no knowledge of phrenology misses in his reading. The joy of discovering many different uses of phrenology is there in Poe's tales. All one has to do is find them. But he must have tools to work with and some idea of what he is looking for.

NOTES TO CHAPTER IV

[1]Edgar Allan Poe, rev. of Phrenology, and the Moral Influence of Phrenology: Arranged for General Study, and the Purposes of Education from the First Published Works of Gall and Spurzheim, to the latest discoveries of the present period, by Mrs. L. Miles, Southern Literary Messenger, 2 (1836), 286.

[2]Madeleine B. Stern, "Poe: 'The Mental Temperament' for Phrenologists," American Literature, 39 (May, 1968), 155.

[3]Ibid.

[4]Ibid., p. 156.

[5]Ibid.

[6]Ibid., p. 158.

[7]Ibid.

[8]John Ward Ostrom, The Letters of Edgar Allan Poe (New York: Gordian Press, Inc., 1966), 1, 185.

[9]Stern, op. cit., pp. 158-159.

[10]Ibid., p. 161.

[11]Ibid.

[12]Edward Hungerford, "Poe and Phrenology," American Literature, 2 (March, 1931), 219.

[13]Ibid.

[14]Edgar Allan Poe, "The Business Man," in The Complete Works of Edgar Allan Poe, ed. J. A. Harrison (1902; rpt. New York: AMS Press, Inc., 1965) IV, 123.

[15]Ibid., p. 133.

[16]Stuart Levine, Edgar Poe: seer and craftsman (Deland, Florida: Everett/Edwards, Inc., 1972), p. 57.

[17]Hungerford, op. cit., p. 221.

[18]Edgar Allan Poe, "The Man That Was Used Up," in The Complete Works of Edgar Allan Poe, ed. J. A. Harrison (1902; rpt. New York: AMS Press, Inc., 1965) III, 260.

[19]Ibid., p. 259.

[20]Ibid., p. 260.

[21]Ibid.

[22]Ibid.

[23]Ibid.

[24]Ibid.

[25]Ibid., pp. 260-261.

[26]Poe, review of L. Miles', Phrenology and The Moral Influence of Phrenology, op. cit., p. 286.

[27]Poe, "The Man That Was Used Up," op. cit., p. 262.

[28]Ibid., p. 263.

[29]Ibid.

[30]Ibid., p. 261.

[31]Ibid., p. 269.

[32]Ibid.

[33]Ibid., p. 270.

[34]Ibid.

[35]Ibid.

[36]Ibid., p. 271.

[37]Ibid.

[38]Ibid.

[39]Edgar Allan Poe, The Narrative of A. Gordon Pym, in The Complete Works of Edgar Allan Poe, ed. J. A. Harrison (1902; rpt. New York: AMS Press, Inc., 1965) III, 52.

[40]O. S. and L. N. Fowler, A Practical Guide to Your Head, (rpt. Chelsea House Publishers, 1969), p. 133.

[41]Ibid.

[42]Ibid., p. 134.

[43]Poe, The Narrative of A. Gordon Pym, op. cit., p. 129.

[44]Fowler, op. cit., p. 52.

CHAPTER V

BUILDING-MIND RELATIONSHIPS IN POE'S TALES: A PHRENOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE

Looking into the mind of one of Poe's characters by examining the character's home or rooms is not a new concept. This relationship between character and building is not an unnatural one in Poe's writings. As Maurice Beebe points out, Poe's characters and the characters' buildings could easily exhibit the same tendencies because

> . . . he [Poe] makes no distinction between vegetable or biological life and inanimate matter. Matter, he says, is but attraction and repulsion: 'the former is the Body; the latter the Soul: the one is material; the other the spiritual principle of the universe'.[1]

By looking at what critics have written about building-character relationships in "Ligeia" and "The Fall of the House of Usher" and what Poe himself said about "The Haunted Palace" and applying the same basic criteria to "The Masque of the Red Death," one may build a case for including "The Masque of the Red Death" in the list of tales containing close building-character relationships. And by looking closely at the mind-concepts used in "The Masque of the Red Death," one may also find indications that Poe used phrenological concepts in constructing this tale. Then, by examining Prospero's actions, one

may determine his phrenological state of mind. A comparison of Combe's phrenological chart to the arrangement of Prospero's suite of rooms will show that the phrenological faculties Prospero most noticeably lacks form approximately the same shape as Prospero's suite of rooms. This presents the possibility that Prospero's castle is really a symbolic description, in phrenological terms, of Prospero's mental condition.

Roy P. Basler, in "The Interpretation of 'Ligeia'," applies this building-character relationship Beebe mentioned to "Ligeia," 1845, one of Poe's tales dealing with the psyche. According to Basler, the narrator in "Ligeia" admits to an "incipient madness." This original state of mind, a beginning-madness, is reflected in the furnishings of the bridal suite: an ebony couch, black arabesque figures on the draperies, a black granite sarcophagus. These furnishings, Basler states, are the furnishings of a death chamber--not a bridal suite.[2] These furnishings represent the state of the narrator's mind at the beginning of the story--his being slightly out of touch with reality.

This room-character analogy in "Ligeia" can be carried yet one step further. The room was carefully constructed, Basler points out, and fitted with these furnishings to bring about "weird sounds and movements designed to produce ghostly effects."[3] The most obvious

movement in the room was that of the draperies. The narrator describes this movement, caused by a wind behind the draperies, as a slight, barely perceptible motion--"inarticulate breathings," Basler calls it.[4]

It is at this point that the room becomes more than a reflection of the narrator's psyche; it becomes an extension of the narrator himself. Those "inarticulate breathings" make the room live, as the narrator lives. What happens in the room--Rowena being poisoned by drops that appear from nowhere but fall into her goblet, and the spirit of the dead Ligeia seemingly struggling to take over the body of the dead Rowena--Basler points out, is actually happening in the narrator's mind. His mind and the bridal suite are one. The narrator is becoming less sane with each bizarre event that happens in the suite.

A number of times the narrator falls into visions of Ligeia, and each time Rowena's body seems to stir--to struggle as if to live again. Each struggle seems to the narrator's increasingly crazed mind, to produce changes in the corpse of Rowena until at the final imagined stirring the narrator shrieks, ". . . these are the full, and the black, and the wild eyes . . . of the Lady Ligeia."[5] These movements, wished by the narrator's psyche, are reported as factual movements of the corpse in the bridal suite.[6] And the narrator's insanity, although momentary, is complete; his lost love lives

again. And the bridal suite is the medium through which the reader finds out what the narrator's thoughts are. Hence, in this tale, the room designed and furnished (in an odd manner) by the narrator has become an extension of the narrator's mind, a convenient picture-box into which the reader can look to observe the narrator succumb to a creeping madness.

Many critics have noted that Roderick Usher's mansion in Poe's "The Fall of the House of Usher," 1845, is in reality a reflection of Usher's physical being and his psyche. Beebe draws this parallel between the Usher mansion and Usher's psyche:

> . . . Many details in the story express the relationship. The 'eye-like windows' and doors like 'ponderous and ebony jaws' are the most obvious. The 'minute fungi . . . hanging in a fine tangled web-work from the eaves' is equivalent to Roderick Usher's hair 'of a more than weblike softness and tenuity.' . . . The crack in the building corresponds to Roderick's struggle against insanity, his effort to maintain his composure against what may be called the 'kingdom of inorganization'.[7]

In the same vein, Richard Wilbur, in "The House of Poe," states: "The House of Usher <u>is</u>, in allegorical fact, the physical body of Roderick Usher, and its dim interior <u>is</u>, in fact, Roderick Usher's visionary mind."[8] Wilbur further states: "As we contemplate the splendor of any of Poe's rooms, we must remember that the room is a state of mind, and that everything in it is therefore a thought, a mental image."[9]

What Wilbur seems to be saying here is that the shapes, furnishings, colors and mood of the rooms in Poe's tales reflect the kinds of thoughts that the character-owner's psyche contains.

If the ". . . purpose of the tale ["The Fall of the House of Usher"] is to explore mental derangement. . ."[10] as critics suggest, Poe would logically use the means of exploring the mind he was familiar with. That is phrenology, not psychology. Perhaps substituting the word "phrenologically" for the word "psychologically" in the following quote from Levine will help make this point. In discussing "Those portions of the tales which inform the reader of the nervous and intense state of mind. . ." Levine writes,

> Psychologically [substitute phrenologically], they either sketch the personality of Poe's ideal artist, or they suggest the madness and the fact that what is to be related will be seen through the medium of a distorted intelligence.[11]

This substitution focuses on the problem. If Poe wrote with phrenology in mind, the reader should interpret with that same phrenology--not psychology--in mind. If one applies the terms and concepts of phrenology to Poe's characters, one should gain insight into the characters' actions. And if Poe's buildings are really representations of characters' minds, to get back to Wilbur's idea, the next step would seem to be to compare the buildings to a skull. Both are outer structures which protect inside

materials. And as has been illustrated, a number of critics believe that the interiors of Poe's buildings contain thoughts or mental images. The logical skull to compare the buildings to would be the phrenologists' chart. The rooms inside Poe's buildings could symbolize the phrenological faculties, the "rooms to let" Fowler mentioned.

Poe points out several rooms to the reader. One of them is Madeline's tomb in the bottom of the house, "lying, at great depth. . . ."[12] The phrenological faculty one finds at the greatest depth is Amativeness, the faculty that controls love between the sexes. This may be an indication of an incestuous relationship between Madeline and Roderick. Allen Tate, in "Our Cousin, Mr. Poe," discussed the possibility of an incestuous relationship between Roderick and Madeline, saying,

> The theme and its meanings as I see them are unmistakable: the symbolic compulsion that drives through, and beyond, physical incest moves toward the extinction of the beloved's will in complete possession, not of her body, but of her being.[13]

Perhaps Madeline's burial place is a symbolic representation of the relationship Tate speaks of here.

Roderick's "apartments" were in ". . . the upper portion of the house."[14] Roderick, we must remember, was a poet. Good poets, according to Poe in The Literati, had to possess the faculties of Ideality, Imitation and Comparison. These three faculties are in the "upper

portion" of the phrenologists' chart. And these are the faculties Roderick is given in the tale.

Another of Poe's buildings which portrays, in Poe's own words, ". . . a mind haunted by phantoms--a disordered brain . . ."[15] is the poem "The Haunted Palace," 1845. "The Haunted Palace" was originally published as a separate work in April of 1839. In September of 1839 it was published as a part of "The Fall of the House of Usher." As Usher recites the poem, he becomes aware that he is losing control of his own reason just as Thought loses control of his domain in the poem. "The Haunted Palace" is considered a part of "The Fall of the House of Usher" and is generally published as such.

"The Haunted Palace" is accepted as being a reflection of Roderick Usher's state of mind, just as the crumbling House of Usher is a reflection of Usher's crumbling state of mind. The first four stanzas of "The Haunted Palace" describe the palace, or brain, at a better time--". . . the olden/Time Long ago."[16] At that time all was orderly in the palace. ". . . The monarch Thought"[17] ruled over a "happy valley."[18] But in the last two stanzas, tragedy strikes. For "evil things, in robes of sorrow"[19] attack and conquer Thought's domain. The extent to which Thought's kingdom is conquered is shown by the transformation of the different furnishings of the palace:

"Wanderers" become "travellers"
"two luminous windows" become "red-litten windows"
"spirits moving musically" become "Vast forms,
that move fantastically"
"lutes well-tuned" become "a discordant melody"
"the fair palace door" becomes "the pale door"
"A troop of Echoes" becomes "a hideous throng"[20]

These changes, then, symbolize the over-throw of ordered Thought's domain by disorder. The "hideous throng" that "rush out forever/And laugh--but smile no more,"[21] and the "Vast forms, that move fantastically/to a discordant melody,"[22] portray the unrealistic thoughts of that disordered brain. As Richard Wilbur points out, "Poe does not make it altogether clear why one state of mind has given way to the other. . . ."[23] But Poe has graphically illustrated to us that a happy state of mind has been overthrown by a disordered state of mind. Apparently illustrating the fact of the overthrow was more important to Poe than illustrating the cause of the overthrow.

Thus far in Chapter five, three of Poe's writings, "The Fall of the House of Usher," "Ligeia," and "The Haunted Palace," have illustrated Poe's building-character relationship. The remainder of this chapter will be an exploration of a fourth tale, Poe's "The Masque of the Red Death," 1845, to see if this tale, too, contains Poe's building-character relationship.

"The Masque of the Red Death" was originally published in Graham's Magazine in May of 1842. The 1845

Broadway Journal text used by Harrison in The Complete Works of Edgar Allan Poe differs slightly from the Graham's text. Harrison has recorded these textual differences, calling them "Variations of Graham's from [Broadway Journal] text."[24] Several of these variations invite closer scrutiny; Harrison wrote, "Especially to be noted is the change of wording of several phrases. . . ."[25] Some of these changes of wording may help link "The Masque of the Red Death" to phrenology.

The first change of wording to be examined here is the deletion of several words, words which have an important bearing on the identities of the masquers. The line in Graham's stating that Prospero himself had created the masquers' costumes read as follows: "and it was his [Prospero's] own guiding taste which had given character to the costumes of the masqueraders."[26] The words "costumes of the" were deleted in the Broadway Journal text, making the statement read, "and it was his own guiding taste which had given character to the masqueraders."[27]

The word "costumes" is important here. In the Graham's text, Prospero merely gives character to or creates costumes. In the later Broadway Journal text, Prospero gives character to or creates masqueraders. With this change of wording, Poe indicates that not just the costumes but the masquers themselves are products of

Prospero's mind, are "in fact, a multitude of dreams."[28] In the Graham's text, the masquers' identities were hidden behind the costumes Prospero created for them. In the later text, the masquers themselves seem to have been created (given character) by Prospero. It would seem likely, then, that such a group, created by Prospero in his mind to wander through his mind should do their creator's bidding. However, at a very important moment, these masquers fail to do Prospero's bidding. And at that moment Poe made another important textual change.

This textual change also deals with the identity of the masquers--but as a group, not as single characters. When Prospero becomes aware of the Red Death masquer, he demands that the other masquers, "Seize and unmask him. . . ."[29] Poe changed the identity of the other masquers when he made the following revision. In the Graham's text, Prospero addressed "the group that stood around him."[30] In the Broadway Journal text, Prospero addressed "the courtiers who stood near him."[31]

The masquers' identity here was changed from a general "group" to a specific group--"courtiers." The significance of this change is the response that would be expected from the two different assemblages. A "group" is a general mass; they might not be expected to react in any specific way to Prospero's demands. But "courtiers," those people invited by the prince who secured their

friendship by flattery and obeying his commands, would be expected to do Prospero's bidding without hesitation. However, they did not accost the masquer as he demanded. Prospero, at this point, is unable to control his masquers or dreams. His inability to manipulate these dreams can be interpreted phrenologically by comparing these chambers filled with dreams to Combe's explanation of a large but ineffective organ. Size, Combe said, is a measure of power only if age and health are equal.[32] Therefore, although a large nose would seem to indicate a keen sense of smell, this would be true only if the olefactory nerve were also large and in good condition.[33] To the phrenologist, quantity of a sense was an indicator of ability but the quality of the quantity could overshadow the sense's function. In this same way, Prospero's "chambers" may be filled with dreams and yet not function correctly if the dreams are not of high quality. And the grotesque shapes of the masquers seems to indicate that they, as dreams, would be of an inferior quality. This would cause Prospero to act in predictable but abnormal ways.

The reasons given for the textual changes noted are not meant to be taken as absolutes. They are possibilities. Looked at exclusively, these changes may seem coincidental or inconsequential. However, when added to other clues which indicate that Poe may have used phrenological concepts in "The Masque of the Red

Death," these textual changes help total a more convincing sum.

Another clue which indicates that Poe may have made use of phrenological concepts in The Masque of the Red Death is the number of similarities that can be noted between the buildings described in "The Masque of the Red Death" and "The Haunted Palace," the building that Poe described to illustrate Usher's "disordered brain" as noted earlier. If these similarities prove to be of significant scope, they may indicate that "The Masque of the Red Death," like "The Haunted Palace," is another of Poe's pictures of a "disordered brain" and as such may reflect possible uses of phrenological concepts by Poe in portraying Prospero.

One similarity to be noted between "The Haunted Palace" and "The Masque of the Red Death" is that of the windows. As observed earlier in this chapter, the windows of the disordered Haunted Palace are "red-litten windows," not clear-glass windows. Some unnamed material gives the windows a colored, not-clear appearance. This material is transparent; the travellers in that valley see the shapes and figures that move behind the windows.

The windows in Prospero's suite are similar to these windows, Prospero has his windows covered with stained glass, a different color for each of the seven rooms: blue, purple, green, orange white, violet, and

scarlet.[34] These windows are also transparent; the light in the rooms came ". . . through the tinted glass and so glaringly illumined the room."[35] But it is not the window itself that is important here, rather that the light shining through these windows ". . . produced a multitude of gaudy and fantastic appearances,"[36] much like the shapes and figures behind the Haunted Palace's windows.

A second similarity between "The Haunted Palace" and "The Masque of the Red Death" is these forms that move about inside the rooms. The Haunted Palace contains "Vast forms, that move fantastically. . . ."[37] These forms are not described in any more detail than this in "The Haunted Palace." Yet, when looked at in the scope of the last two stanzas, these forms would seem to be abnormal, ill-formed, and formless shapes moving in abnormal ways throughout the rooms of the Haunted Palace.

The forms that roam through the chambers in "The Masque of the Red Death" are not unlike those which roam through the Haunted Palace. The masquers' forms, although they have definite shapes which will be discussed later, still appear to change form or to vacillate because of the light thrown through the windows by the fire on the tripod outside each chamber. The flickering light from the flame outside the window and the color of the stained-glass window of each chamber combined to make masquers

who ". . . writhed in and about, taking hue from the rooms . . . "[38] appearing to be somewhat indefinite forms.

A third similarity that can be noted between "The Haunted Palace" and "The Masque of the Red Death" is the music in each building. The Haunted Palace's "Vast forms . . . move . . . To a discordant melody. . . ."[39] The music in "The Masque of the Red Death" comes from two different sources. The masquers dance to the ". . . wild music of the orchestra. . . ."[40] But both they and the orchestra are controlled by a greater, more compelling music--the chiming of the clock in the seventh chamber. This chiming was

> . . . deep and exceedingly musical, but of so peculiar a note and emphasis that, at each lapse of an hour, the musicians of the orchestra were constrained to pause, momentarily . . . to hearken to the sound; and thus the waltzers perforce ceased their evolutions.[41]

It was not until this "discordant melody" of the clock died away that the musicians and then the masquers resumed their merry-making.

A fourth similarity between "The Haunted Palace" and "The Masque of the Red Death" is that of the "hideous throng" that "laugh--but smile no more."[42] The masquers in "The Masque of the Red Death" are indeed a "hideous Throng." Poe describes them variously as "grotesque," "arabesque figures with unsuited limbs and appointments," "delirious fancies," "wanton," "and not a little of that

which might have excited disgust."[43] Laughing but not smiling also seems to describe Prospero's masquers. Their fun seems to be forced. Each time the clock strikes they stop dancing: "the giddiest grew pale, and the more aged and sedate passed their hands over their brows as if in confused revery or meditation."[44] Their freedom of movement is also slightly restricted by their reluctance to enter the seventh chamber where the clock resides.

These similarities, in each instance carefully drawn by Poe, seem to indicate that "The Masque of the Red Death," like "The Haunted Palace," is a portrayal of a "disordered brain." If this is true, then the list of symbolic building-character relationships may be extended to include the tale, "The Masque of the Red Death." Once the possibility of including "The Masque of the Red Death" in this symbolic building-character list has been established, the rooms in Prospero's suite may be looked at as a reflection of Prospero's state of mind. The important concept here is exploring how Poe might have hoped the reader would phrenologically unravel the disordered brain concept. That Poe made many uses of phrenology is well documented. But "The Masque of the Red Death" might well be a <u>new</u> use of Poe's phrenological knowledge--a symbolic description, in phrenological concepts, of the character's mental condition.

Before exploring the possibility that Prospero's

suite of rooms is a symbolic description, in phrenological concepts, of the character's mental condition, one basic assumption must be accepted at face-value: the chambers in Prospero's suite symbolize phrenological chambers in the character's skull. This is not too outlandish; the phrenologists called the divisions for the different faculties of the mind chambers because they considered them to be little rooms in the skull, individual rooms for each of the faculties. If this concept is accepted, the physical arrangement of Prospero's suite become important in reading the character's "symbolic skull."

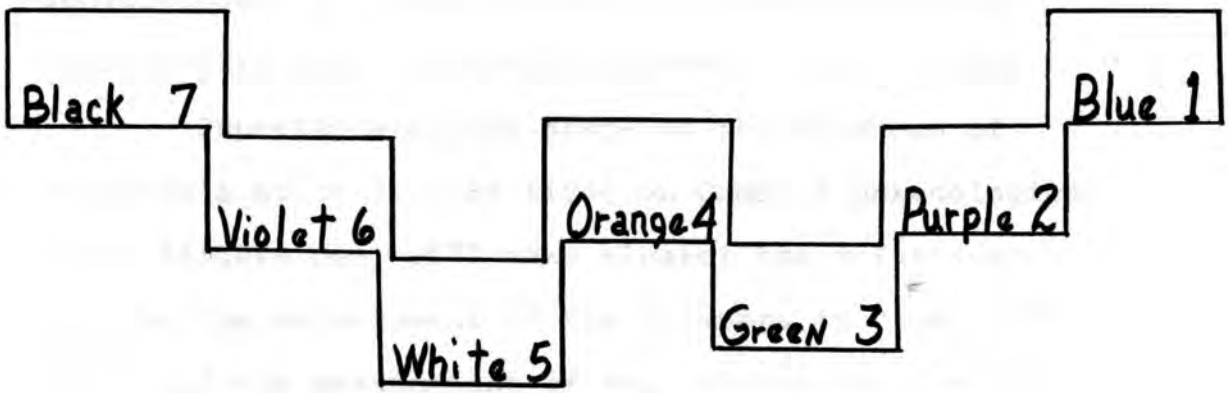
Poe gives each of Prospero's seven chambers a different color. Three of these colors are important in determining the shape of the suite: blue, white, and black. The blue and black chambers are on either end of the suite of rooms. Poe designated the blue chamber as the eastern-most chamber and the black chamber as the western-most chamber in the tale. This conveniently allows Prospero's last journey, chasing the masquer, to be interpreted as a symbolic journey from the east to the west, from morning to night and from birth to death.

The white chamber is also very important in determining the suite's shape. The chambers were so ". . . irregularly disposed that the vision embraced but little more than one at a time."[45] Apparently there were turns and crooks in the suite's arrangement. The

blue-east, black-west concept is well accepted. But the direction the turns and crooks take depends upon the interpretation of the symbol white.

In The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym, Poe used the color white symbolically at a very tense moment. As Pym is being drawn into a whirlpool at the climax of the story, his eyes behold "a shrouded human figure. . . . And the hue of the skin of the figure was of the perfect whiteness of the snow."[46] At this moment, all was white. And Pym was at the end of his southward journey. White and south are related in Pym. Perhaps the white chamber in Prospero's suite is also the southern-most chamber. In that case, the rooms may have been arranged like this:

FIGURE FIVE



Key to Figure Five

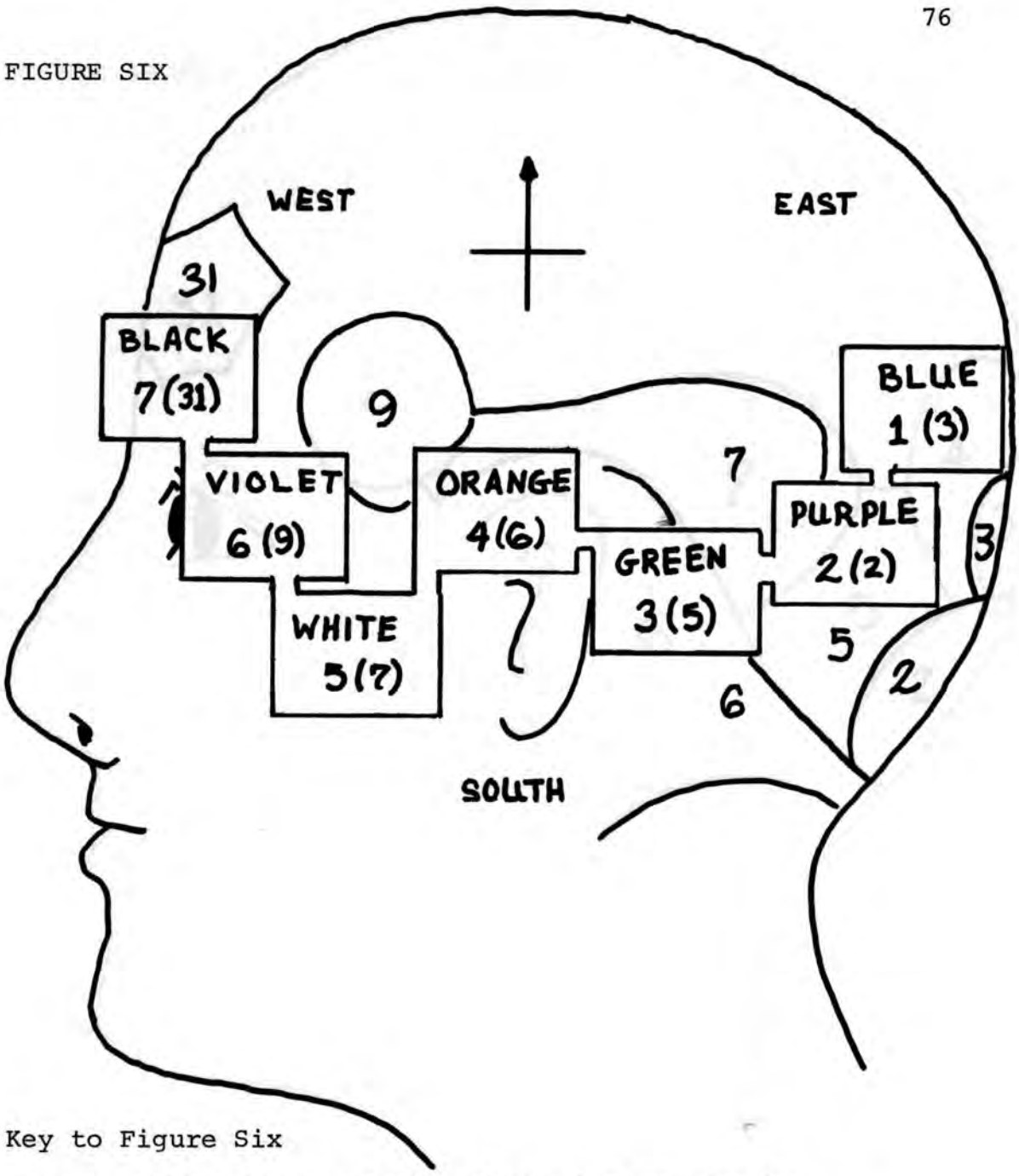
Colors are those given chambers by Poe.

Numbers are those given chambers by Poe.

If this arrangement is correct, then the shape of the rooms may be likened to the shape of the base of the left-looking skull, figure two, on Combe's phrenological chart. This semi-circular arrangement is roughly the shape of the base, or "southern" part, of the human skull. If the suite's chambers are symbolic representations of the phrenologist's chambers in the skull of Prospero, the faculties Poe wanted the reader to be aware of in the character's mind should be located toward the base of the skull. The exact chambers Poe, perhaps unconsciously, wished to illustrate might never be determined; however, several possibilities do exist. The chambers of the following seven faculties form roughly the same shape as the seven chambers of Prospero's suite: 3--Concentrativeness, 2--Philoprogenitiveness, 5--Combativeness, 6--Destructiveness, 7--Secretiveness, 9--Constructiveness, and 31--Time.

Superimposing the shape of the chambers of Prospero's suite (figure five) on Combe's phrenological chart (figure one) will make clearer the relationship between the arrangement of the chambers in Prospero's suite and the arrangement of the chambers on Combe's chart.

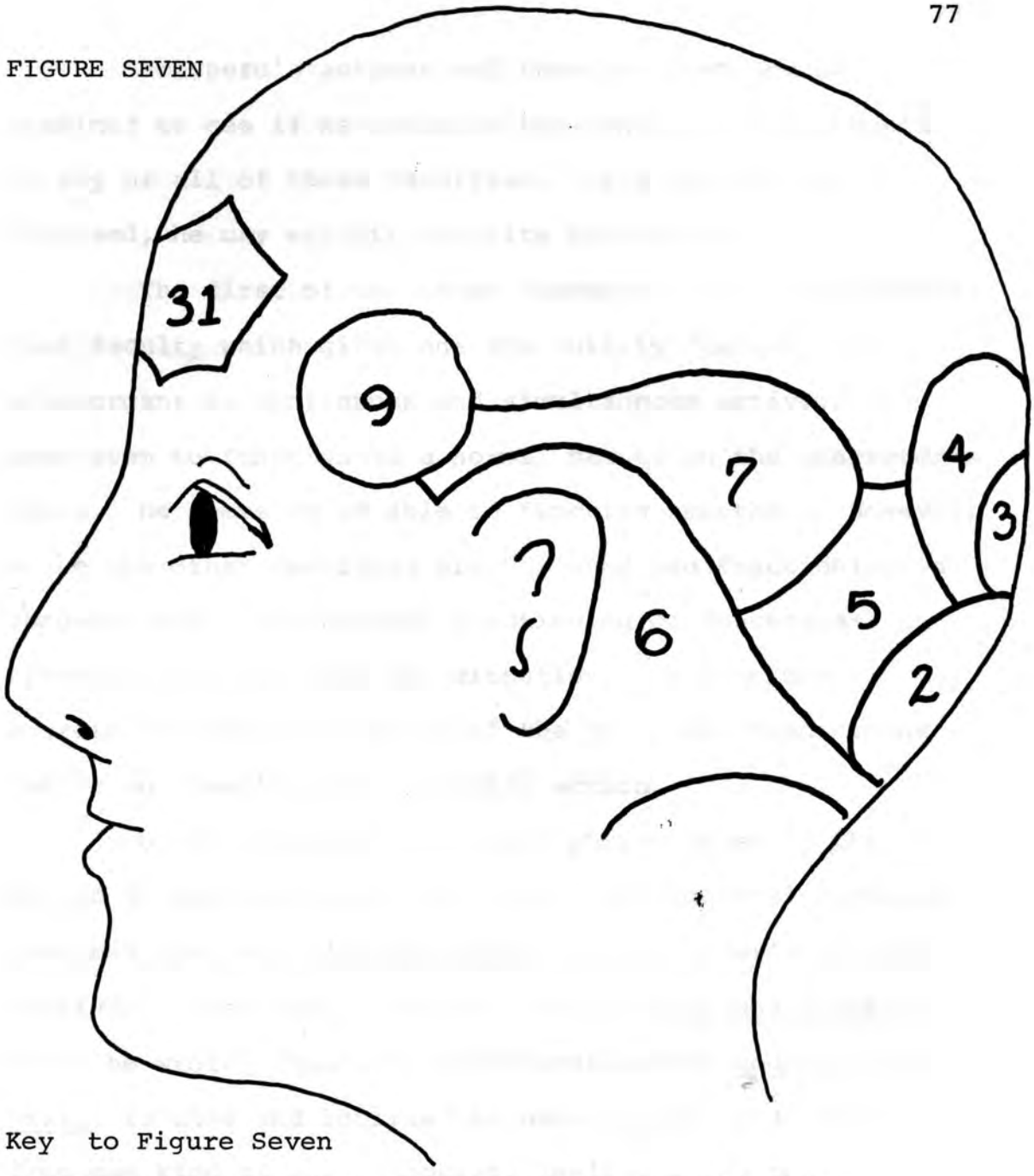
FIGURE SIX



Key to Figure Six

Colors correspond to colors given chambers by Poe
Compass points correspond to east-west explanation of chambers given by Poe
Numbers inside chambers correspond to numbers given chambers by Poe
Numbers in parentheses inside chambers correspond to numbers given phrenological chambers by Combe
Numbers outside Poe's chambers correspond to chambers and numbers of Combe's phrenological chart
(See Figure Seven, next page.)

FIGURE SEVEN



Key to Figure Seven

Numbers inside chambers correspond to numbers given phrenological chambers by Combe
Placement of chambers corresponds to Combe's phrenological chart.

2. Philoprogenitiveness
3. Concentrativeness
4. Adhesiveness
5. Combativeness
6. Destructiveness
7. Secretiveness
9. Constructiveness
31. Time

Prospero's actions and thoughts must now be examined to see if he exhibits the tendencies attributed to any or all of these faculties. If a faculty is diseased, he may exhibit opposite tendencies.

The first of the seven chambers, Concentrativeness, that faculty which gives one the ability "to keep one or more organs in continuous and simultaneous activity"[47] does seem to function in a normal manner in the character's skull. He seems to be able to function smoothly. However, since the other faculties are diseased and functioning in abnormal ways, the correct functioning of Concentrativeness does not help the situation. This merely coordinates the functioning of the other diseased organs and is in itself, then, a faulty action.

O. S. Fowler, a prominent phrenologist in the United States, may have found that the masquers' grotesque costumes were an indication that the character's Concentrativeness was small. In his book, Phrenology Proved, 1839, he wrote, "One with concentrativeness moderate or small, is able and inclined to pass rapidly and easily from one kind of . . . thought, feeling . . . to another . . . without connecting or arranging them."[48] This could account partially for the grotesque costumes with unsuited limbs that the masquers wore.

The second of these seven faculties, Philoprogenitiveness, that faculty which gives the tendency to

love children,[49] does not function in a normal manner in the character's skull. This is evidenced by the companions Prospero gathered around himself in his castle, those he apparently wished to have escape the Red Death with him. Prospero and ". . . a thousand hale and light-hearted friends from among the knights and dames of his court . . ."[50] were present in his castle; no children are mentioned. Thus, this faculty does not function in what the phrenologists would consider a "normal manner."

Fowler described the tendency to not like children in this way: "One having philoprogenitiveness <u>small</u>, with combativeness and destructiveness large, is generally severe, and easily vexed, with children."[51] This, then, would give Prospero a phrenologically sound reason for excluding children from his group.

The third of the seven chambers, Combativeness, that faculty which ". . . produces active courage--the instinctive propensity to oppose"[52] also does not function in a completely "normal manner" in the character's skull. First, instead of remaining with his subjects and helping them battle the Red Death, Prospero ordered a courtier to weld the bolts of the gates and seal him and his followers into his castle. This is, admittedly, a very human response, but is not the response to be expected if Prospero's Combativeness faculty were functioning normally.

Secondly, when confronted with the Red Death Masquer, Prospero hesitated before attacking him, ". . . convulsed, in the first moment with a strong shudder either of terror or distaste."[53] He didn't react in an instinctive manner. His active courage was controlled by other faculties--first by Cautiousness or fear and then by Destructiveness or anger--not by Combativeness. Prospero only attacked the Red Death after his anger overcame his fear.

Fowler described a character's problem with Combativeness in this way: "One having combativeness large, with large destructiveness, will unite harshness and severity, and a kind of fierceness, . . . very severe and vindictive when roused."[54] This explains in part Prospero's charge through the chambers of the suite, dagger raised, to strike down the Red Death masquer.

The fourth of the seven chambers, Destructiveness, that faculty which, when large, gives the desire to see scenes of suffering and the desire to hurl destruction on an aggressor,[55] does function in the expected manner in the character's skull. Prospero exhibits both of these tendencies. He has the masquers dress in their grotesque costumes, presumably because he enjoys looking at these apparitions or "sufferers." And, at the end of the story when he has been confronted by the Red Death masquer, Prospero chases him through the suite of rooms into the

last chamber, dagger raised, ready to commit murder. However, in spite of the fact that this faculty functions in the expected manner, it does not function in a good way. That is, Prospero acts the way he does because the character's Destructiveness faculty is too large. He is too aggressive.

But, as Fowler's concepts seem to show, the large Destructiveness chamber alone is not the cause of Prospero's attempting to murder the masquer.

> One having destructiveness large, with large combativeness . . . possesses that sternness and severity of character, which makes others fear to provoke him . . . [and] feels strong indignation towards those that displease or injure him . . . .[56]

The combination of the large Combativeness and large Destructiveness propels Prospero through the suite of rooms to avenge himself.

The fifth of the seven chambers, Secretiveness, that faculty which serves as a shield against other's prying,[57] also does not function in a normal manner in the character's skull. Normal Secretiveness would cause one to shield himself when others were attempting to learn about his private life, ie. function to thwart other's attempts to learn things they have no business knowing. But this character's Secretiveness, linked to his fear of the Red Death, led Prospero to order the bolts of the castle gates welded to immure himself into his castle.

The description of Prospero's castle is another indication that the character's Secretiveness is too large, is over-active. The castle is described as ". . . an extensive and magnificent structure, the creation of the prince's own eccentric yet august taste. A strong and lofty wall girdled it in. This wall had gates of iron."[58] This fits Combe's basic description of the homes of those whose Secretiveness was too large. These persons would "seclude themselves and surround their houses and gardens with high walls. . . ."[59] Therefore, given the right set of circumstances--the Red Death--Prospero's shutting himself inside of his castle is a predictable and "normal" action for one with a too-large Secretiveness faculty.

One following Fowler's concepts might also explain the interiors of the rooms, the masquers, and the shadowy lighting as being partially caused by the faulty Secretiveness faculty. "This faculty, in its perverted exercises, produces . . . those ten thousand artifices in dress, furniture . . . the chief objective of which is to create false appearances. . . ."[60]

The sixth of the seven chambers, Constructiveness, that faculty which allowed one ". . . to put detached materials together . . ."[61] does not function in an altogether normal manner in the character's skull. The suite of rooms, Prospero's own creation, is one example

of this. His suite of rooms was not the normal straight suite but ". . . was very different; as might have been expected from the duke's love of the bizarre."[62] And Prospero's rooms were not lighted by the normal chandeliers in each room but by the braziers of fire on tripods that stood outside the colored window of each room.

The costumes that Prospero provided for the masquers are another example of his mis-functioning Constructiveness. The costumes were not "fun-costumes" but were "delirious fancies," "figures with unsuited limbs," all products of an abnormal Constructiveness faculty.

Fowler typified a normally-functioning Constructiveness faculty like this: "One having constructiveness large, will possess a high degree of natural skill in . . . building, contriving. . . ."[63] This Prospero does well. He is a mastermind at building and contriving as evidenced by his suite and the masquers' costumes. The second part of Fowler's description of normal Constructiveness is where Prospero's creations prove him abnormal. One with normal Constructiveness ". . . will be able to impart a particular beauty and a richness to all his works, and combine perfect accuracy with taste."[64] Prospero's creations may have been unique and accurate, but they were lacking in beauty, richness and taste.

The seventh of the seven chambers, Time, that

faculty which "notices and recollects the lapse of time, and the relative distance of time, and order of succession, in which events transpire,"[65] does not function in a normal way in the character's skull. The identity of this chamber is graphically illustrated by the presence of the large, ebony clock. It is this clock that illustrates the misfunctioning of this chamber. According to Fowler, "One having very large time, will possess a wonderfully accurate and precise memory of the time when certain things occurred, of dates, ages . . ."[66] or will, ". . . in short, . . . be a real chronologist. . . ."[67]

But this clock, this Time faculty, doesn't seem to arrange anything chronologically. It is, in fact, the controlling factor in the suite of rooms. In spite of the masquer's din and the music of the orchestra, the masquers (or dreams) halt their merry making and the musicians quit playing each time the clock strikes the hour. This faculty, then, regulates the activities in the other chambers. It is thus overstepping its bounds, neglecting its real duties, and therefore should be judged deficient.

After "reading the character's skull" and observing Prospero's actions, the phrenologist's opinion should be that the character's mind is deranged. His faculties are not functioning properly. This portrayal of the disordered brain and the connection between character and building is more subtle than the Roderick

Usher--mansion portrayal of Usher's insanity or "The Haunted Palace" portrayal of Usher's disordered brain. It is closer to the subtlety of the narrator's insanity in "Ligeia." The connection between building and character is there for the reader to discover.

Through this symbolic use of phrenology, Poe brings across Prospero's insanity as graphically as he brings across Usher's insanity without resorting to any physical description of the character. Poe accomplished this difficult task by describing instead Prospero's castle and allowing the reader to make the comparison between the castle and the character's "disordered brain." The reader who knows no phrenology may still conclude that Prospero's mind is deranged, but the phrenological reader has additional evidence.

NOTES TO CHAPTER V

[1]Maurice Beebe, "The Universe of Roderick Usher," in Poe: A Collection of Critical Essays, ed. Robert Regan (New Jersey: Prentice Hall, Inc., 1967), p. 126. Originally published in The Personalist, 37 (Spring, 1956).

[2]Roy P. Basler, "The Interpretation of 'Ligeia'," in Poe: A Collection of Critical Essays, ed. Robert Regan (New Jersey: Prentice Hall, Inc., 1967) p. 57. Originally published in Sex, Symbolism and Psychology in Literature, 1948.

[3]Ibid., pp. 58-59.

[4]Ibid., p. 59.

[5]Edgar Allan Poe, "Ligeia," in The Complete Works of Edgar Allan Poe, ed. J. A. Harrison (1902; rpt. New York: AMS Press, Inc., 1965), II, 268.

[6]Basler, op. cit., pp. 59-60.

[7]Beebe, op. cit., p. 125.

[8]Richard Wilbur, "The House of Poe," in Poe: A Collection of Critical Essays, ed. Robert Regan (New Jersey: Prentice Hall, Inc., 1967), p. 106.

[9]Ibid., p. 114.

[10]I. M. Walker, "The 'Legitimate' Sources of Terror in 'The Fall of the House of Usher'," in Twentieth Century Interpretations of Poe's Tales, ed. Wm. Howarth (New Jersey: Prentice Hall, Inc., 1971), p. 54.

[11]Stuart Levine, Edgar Poe: seer and craftsman (Deland, Florida: Everett/Edwards, Inc., 1972), p. 78.

[12]Edgar Allan Poe, "The Fall of the House of Usher," in The Complete Works of Edgar Allan Poe, ed. J. A. Harrison (1902; rpt. New York: AMS Press, Inc., 1965), III, 288.

[13]Allen Tate, "Our Cousin, Mr. Poe," in Poe: A Collection of Critical Essays, ed. Robert Regan (New Jersey: Prentice Hall, Inc., 1967), p. 43. Originally an address given on October 7, 1949, to the Poe Society of Baltimore.

[14]Poe, "The Fall of the House of Usher," op. cit., p. 289.

[15]Wilbur, op. cit., p. 106.

[16]Edgar Allan Poe, "The Haunted Palace," in The Complete Works of Edgar Allan Poe, ed. J. A. Harrison (1902; rpt. New York: AMS Press, Inc., 1965) VII, 83-84.

[17]Ibid., p. 83.

[18]Ibid.

[19]Ibid., p. 84.

[20]Ibid., pp. 83-84.

[21]Ibid., p. 84.

[22]Ibid.

[23]Wilbur, op. cit., p. 106.

[24]Edgar Allan Poe, "The Masque of the Red Death," in The Complete Works of Edgar Allan Poe, ed. J. A. Harrison (1902; rpt. New York: AMS Press, Inc., 1965) IV, 319.

[25]Ibid.

[26]Ibid.

[27]Ibid., p. 254.

[28]Ibid.

[29]Ibid., p. 256.

[30]Ibid., p. 319.

[31]Ibid., p. 256.

[32]George Combe, "Combe on Phrenology," Lecture 2, in The Southern Literary Messenger, (rpt. New York: AMS Press Inc., 1965), 5 (1839), 459.

[33]Ibid., p. 460.

[34]Poe, "The Masque of the Red Death," op. cit., p. 252.

[35]Ibid.

[36]Ibid.

[37]Poe, "The Haunted Palace," op. cit., p. 84.

[38]Poe, "The Masque of the Red Death," op. cit., p. 254.

[39]Poe, "The Haunted Palace," loc. cit.

[40]Poe, "The Masque of the Red Death," loc. cit.

[41]Ibid., p. 253.

[42]Poe, "The Haunted Palace," loc. cit.

[43]Poe, "The Masque of the Red Death," op. cit., p. 254.

[44]Ibid., p. 253.

[45]Ibid., p. 251.

[46]Edgar Allan Poe, The Narrative of A. Gordon Pym, in The Complete Works of Edgar Allan Poe, ed. J. A. Harrison (1902; rpt. New York: AMS Press Inc., 1965) III, 242.

[47]Combe, Lecture 4, op. cit., p. 603.

[48]Orson S. and Lorenzo N. Fowler, Phrenology proved, illustrated, and applied, accompanied by a chart. . . together with a view of the moral and theological bearing of the science, 4th ed. (Philadelphia: Fowler and Brevoort, 1839), p. 71.

[49]Combe, Lecture 4, op. cit., p. 602.

[50]Poe, "The Masque of the Red Death, op. cit., p. 250.

[51]Fowler, op. cit., p. 64.

[52]Combe, Lecture 4, loc. cit.

[53]Poe, "The Masque of the Red Death," op. cit., p. 256.

[54]Fowler, op. cit., p. 76.

[55]Combe, Lecture 5, op. cit., p. 667.

[56]Fowler, op. cit., p. 82.

[57]Combe, Lecture 5, op. cit., p. 669.

[58]Poe, "The Masque of the Red Death," op. cit., p. 250.

[59]Combe, Lecture 5, loc. cit.

[60]Fowler, op. cit., pp. 101-102.

[61]Combe, Lecture 6, op. cit., p. 766.

[62]Poe, "The Masque of the Red Death," op. cit., p. 251.

[63]Fowler, op. cit., p. 161.

[64]Ibid., p. 162.

[65]Ibid., p. 214.

[66]Ibid., p. 216.

[67]Ibid.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSIONS

Poe used concepts of phrenology in many of his tales. Whether or not he used these concepts in tales written before the 1836 beginning date that Hungerford suggests is a debatable point. However, if one accepts Hungerford's evidence of physical characteristics--eyes, foreheads, skin, hair, muscles--which correspond with mental and physical actions of characters as proof that Poe did indeed use concepts of phrenology in tales written after 1836, he might also conclude that the uses of these same concepts in tales written before 1836 may indicate that Poe used phrenology in certain earlier tales, also.

Poe's earlier uses of phrenology may not have been as subtle as his later uses. His possible earlier uses in "King Pest," were limited mainly to bodily characteristics which reflected characters' mental and physical actions. But this does not make the earlier uses of phrenology any less important. It indicates that Poe was constantly searching to perfect his techniques of character portrayal in his tales.

Poe's uses of a character's home to reflect the

character's mental condition are an extension of this search to perfect technique, to make every word in the tale add to the meaning of the tale. Thus, as critics have pointed out, the Usher mansion is in reality an extension of Roderick Usher. Poe has not wasted words describing the crack in the Usher mansion if the reader realizes that that crack also exists in Roderick's psyche. In "The Haunted Palace" and "Ligeia," likewise, a physical structure represents a character's state of mind.

In this same vein, Prospero's castle might well be an extension of the character's psyche. a phrenological interpretation of the abnormal suite of rooms fits Prospero's abnormal actions. The missing link in "The Masque of the Red Death" that would make the Prospero-castle relationship as obvious as the Roderick-mansion relationship is the lack of a physical description of Prospero. But "The Haunted Palace" and "Ligeia" do not contain physical descriptions of the characters represented by the buildings, either. In these two examples, as in "The Masque of the Red Death," the <u>actions</u> of the beings within the structures are the indicators of the state of mind being portrayed.

As Poe's uses of phrenology in some of his tales became more subtle, so did his independent invention of phrenological concepts seem to become greater. Poe's building of a perfect phrenological being in "The Man

That Was Used Up" is much like Poe's phrenological inventions in "The Business Man" and "The Imp of the Perverse" which Hungerford pointed out.

But perhaps the most important idea presented in this paper is that the modern reader of Poe who has no acquaintance with phrenology cannot hope to gain full insight into Poe's tales. This reader will miss the humor in "The Business Man" or "The Man That Was Used Up." To him, "The Man That Was Used Up" might be a tragic recollection of the atrocities of war suffered by a noble warrior instead of the humorous rendition of the building of the phrenologists' perfect being. And to him "The Masque of the Red Death" might be just the story of a prince and his courtiers who met death inside the castle in the same way that his subjects met death outside the castle. This reader, without the help of phrenology, may understand <u>how</u> Prospero acted without understanding <u>why</u> he acted. Phrenology, as an aid to a broader understanding of Poe's tales, may be a most valuable tool.

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