

the oval portrait critical analysis

The Oval Portrait: A Critical Analysis of Poe's Masterpiece of Terror and the Sublime

Introduction: Edgar Allan Poe's "The Oval Portrait" is more than just a chilling ghost story; it's a meticulously crafted exploration of art, life, death, and the destructive nature of obsessive creativity. This in-depth critical analysis will delve into the narrative's intricacies, examining its symbolism, themes, and underlying psychological complexities to reveal the profound meaning hidden within Poe's deceptively simple tale. We'll unpack the story's ambiguous ending, explore the chilling relationship between the artist and his model, and ultimately uncover how "The Oval Portrait" continues to resonate with readers centuries after its creation. This post offers a comprehensive guide for students, literary enthusiasts, and anyone captivated by Poe's dark genius.

I. The Uncanny and the Sublime: Setting the Stage for Terror

Poe masterfully sets the scene, using the narrator's precarious situation – injured and seeking refuge in a dilapidated castle – to immediately establish an atmosphere of unease. This dilapidated setting mirrors the decaying state of the artist's obsession and foreshadows the tragic outcome. The discovery of the portrait itself adds to the uncanny, a feeling of unsettling familiarity and strangeness that permeates the entire narrative. The very act of discovering a hidden room and a hidden painting contributes to this sense of mystery and impending doom. Poe expertly employs the sublime, a feeling of awe mixed with terror, through the descriptions of both the painting's beauty and its unsettling realism. This juxtaposition of beauty and horror is central to the story's effect on the reader.

II. The Artist's Obsession and the Sacrifice of Life

The artist's obsessive pursuit of capturing the "life" within his subject is the central conflict of the story. His devotion isn't merely artistic; it's a consuming, almost demonic passion. He sacrifices his wife's life in his relentless quest for perfection, a stark demonstration of the destructive potential of unchecked ambition. This resonates with the Romantic ideals of the time, where the artist's genius was often romanticized, even at the expense of morality. Poe subverts this romanticized vision, revealing the dark underbelly of such obsession. The artist's actions underscore the story's cautionary message about the limitations of human ambition and the potential for art to become a destructive force.

III. Symbolism and Allegory: Unpacking the Deeper Meanings

The oval shape of the portrait itself is a powerful symbol. The oval, often associated with perfection and completeness, ironically frames a subject whose life is consumed by the very process of its representation. The painting becomes a visual metaphor for the artist's attempt to trap and possess his subject's essence. The eyes of the subject, described as possessing a "lifelike" quality, symbolize the artist's appropriation of his wife's soul. The story's narrative structure, framed by the injured

narrator's discovery of the portrait, also adds to the symbolic layers. The narrator's own precarious state mirrors the precarious nature of life and art, and their eventual connection through the portrait.

IV. The Nature of Art and the Limits of Representation

"The Oval Portrait" engages with profound questions about the nature of art and its ability to truly capture life. The artist's belief that he can capture the "life" of his subject through painting is ultimately proven tragically wrong. This highlights the limitations of art as a means of capturing the ephemeral nature of existence. The painting, while breathtakingly lifelike, becomes a tombstone marking the end of his wife's life. This points to the inherent conflict between the fleeting nature of life and the permanence of art. The story challenges the romantic notion of art as capable of transcending mortality.

V. Psychological Exploration: Delving into Obsession and Madness

Poe masterfully employs psychological elements to create a sense of unease and suspense. The artist's obsessive behavior suggests a descent into madness, fueled by his unrelenting pursuit of artistic perfection. This descent can be interpreted as a metaphor for the destructive nature of unchecked ambition and the dangers of losing oneself in creative pursuits. The narrator's own precarious state—a reflection of the castle's decay and the portrait's unsettling nature—adds to this psychological exploration. The story's ambiguity contributes to the ongoing critical discussion of its meaning.

VI. The Ambiguous Ending and its Interpretations

The ending, where the narrator discovers the artist's death, is deliberately ambiguous. Did the artist die because he "killed" the life of his subject, or was it the other way around? This unresolved tension allows for multiple interpretations. Some argue that the artist's obsession led to self-destruction, mirroring the tragic outcome for his wife. Others suggest that the artist's soul was consumed by his artistic endeavor, finding an afterlife in the painting's lifelike eyes. This ambiguity fosters ongoing critical dialogue and demonstrates Poe's mastery of creating a haunting story that lingers long after the final word.

VII. The Legacy and Continuing Relevance of "The Oval Portrait"

"The Oval Portrait" remains a cornerstone of Gothic literature and a testament to Poe's enduring influence. Its exploration of art, life, and death continues to resonate with readers across generations. The story's thematic concerns, including obsessive ambition, the limitations of human endeavor, and the dark side of creativity, remain profoundly relevant in contemporary society. Its exploration of psychological states continues to inspire discussion and analysis. This enduring appeal cements its place as a classic of American literature.

Outline of "The Oval Portrait" Critical Analysis:

- I. Introduction: Briefly introducing Edgar Allan Poe and "The Oval Portrait," highlighting the focus of the analysis.
- II. The Uncanny and the Sublime: Exploring the setting and atmosphere, highlighting the use of Gothic elements to create suspense and unease.
- III. The Artist's Obsession and Sacrifice: Analyzing the artist's obsessive behavior and the tragic consequences of his actions.
- IV. Symbolism and Allegory: Interpreting key symbols and allegories within the narrative, such as the oval shape and the eyes of the subject.
- V. The Nature of Art and Representation: Examining the story's commentary on the limitations of art in capturing life.
- VI. Psychological Exploration: Delving into the psychological states of both the artist and the narrator, exploring themes of madness and obsession.
- VII. The Ambiguous Ending and Interpretations: Discussing the different interpretations of the story's ending and its significance.
- VIII. Legacy and Relevance: Assessing the enduring impact and continued relevance of "The Oval Portrait."
- IX. Conclusion: Summarizing the key findings of the analysis and offering a final reflection on the story's enduring power.

Explanation of Outline Points (Detailed Expansion of each Point in the Outline):

Each point in the outline above is thoroughly explained within the main body of this blog post, providing a detailed critical analysis of "The Oval Portrait." The sections above demonstrate this in-depth exploration of each thematic element and symbolic layer.

FAQs:

1. What is the main theme of "The Oval Portrait"? The main themes are the destructive nature of obsession, the limits of artistic representation, and the dark side of creative genius.
1. What is the significance of the oval shape of the portrait? The oval shape symbolizes perfection and completeness, ironically highlighting the incompleteness and destruction caused by the artist's quest for perfection.

1. How does Poe use the sublime in the story? Poe uses the sublime to create a sense of awe mixed with terror, contrasting the beauty of the painting with the horrifying circumstances surrounding its creation.
1. What is the symbolism of the artist's wife's eyes? The wife's eyes, described as possessing a "lifelike" quality, symbolize the artist's appropriation of her soul and life force.
1. What is the significance of the ambiguous ending? The ambiguous ending allows for multiple interpretations, encouraging ongoing critical discussion and adding to the story's lasting impact.
1. How does "The Oval Portrait" relate to other works by Poe? It shares thematic concerns with other Poe works, such as the exploration of madness, obsession, and the macabre, showcasing his recurring interests and stylistic techniques.
1. What is the psychological significance of the artist's behavior? The artist's behavior suggests a descent into madness, fueled by his unrelenting pursuit of artistic perfection. This reflects the destructive potential of unchecked ambition.
1. What is the role of the narrator in the story? The narrator's precarious situation and his discovery of the portrait create a framework for the narrative, mirroring the fragility of life and art.
1. How does "The Oval Portrait" continue to resonate with modern readers? Its exploration of timeless themes – obsession, creativity, and the conflict between life and art – continues to engage and challenge contemporary readers.

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1. Comparing "The Oval Portrait" and "The Fall of the House of Usher": A comparative analysis of two of Poe's most famous short stories, exploring their shared themes and stylistic elements.

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1. Ambiguity and Interpretation in Poe's Short Fiction: Explores the use of ambiguity and its contribution to the lasting power of Poe's narratives.

the oval portrait critical analysis: The Oval Portrait Edgar Allan Poe, 2021-09-06 Perhaps fitting for a horror short story, the devil is in the details in Poe's *The Oval Portrait* (1842). A benighted traveller finds shelter in an abandoned mansion in the Apennine Mountains of Italy. Inside

he gets absorbed by a stunning painting and decides to delve into its origins with the help from a book he finds on a pillow. The story revolves around the complex and often tragic relationship between life and art. As per usual Poe can't help himself to play with layers, and most of the story is told as an embedded narrative. The intense emotional and psychological depths of the narrator's infatuation with the portrait and the enticing volume that helps to shed a light on the painting make this short story another fascinating and haunting and Poesque tale which succinctly glorifies the immortality of art. Edgar Allan Poe (1809-1849) was an American poet, author, and literary critic. Most famous for his poetry, short stories, and tales of the supernatural, mysterious, and macabre, he is also regarded as the inventor of the detective genre and a contributor to the emergence of science fiction, dark romanticism, and weird fiction. His most famous works include *The Raven* (1945), *The Black Cat* (1943), and *The Gold-Bug* (1843).

the oval portrait critical analysis: *The Cask of Amontillado* Edgar Allan Poe, 2008 After enduring many injuries of the noble Fortunato, Montressor executes the perfect revenge.

the oval portrait critical analysis: *A Descent into the Maelström* Edgar Allan Poe, 2024-07-16 »A Descent into the Maelström« is a short story by Edgar Allan Poe, originally published in 1841. EDGAR ALLAN POE was born in Boston in 1809. After brief stints in academia and the military, he began working as a literary critic and author. He made his debut with the novel *The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym of Nantucket* in 1838, but it was in his short stories that Poe's peculiar style truly flourished. He died in Baltimore in 1849.

the oval portrait critical analysis: *The Facts in the Case of M. Valdemar* Edgar Allan Poe, 2020-08-26 One of E. A. Poe's more horror-oriented stories, *The Facts in the Case of Mr. Valdemar* presents the author's obsession with death, scientific experiments, and resurrection. Playing around with forbidden and unscientific methods, Poe vehemently tries to exhibit his own medical knowledge to the reading public, asking for some sort of pardon for the horrific and disgusting end of his experiment. The depiction of gore and detestable putrescence paves the way for another master of American horror, H. P. Lovecraft, whose dream journeys and loathsome descriptions owe a great debt to Poe's story. Edgar Allan Poe (1809-1849) was an American poet, author, and literary critic. Most famous for his poetry, short stories, and tales of the supernatural, mysterious, and macabre, he is also regarded as the inventor of the detective genre and a contributor to the emergence of science fiction, dark romanticism, and weird fiction. His most famous works include *The Raven* (1945), *The Black Cat* (1943), and *The Gold-Bug* (1843).

the oval portrait critical analysis: *Encyclopedia of Feminist Literary Theory* Elizabeth Kowaleski-Wallace, 2009-03-23 From the cutting edge to the basics The latest advances as well as the essentials of feminist literary theory are at your fingertips as soon as you open this brand-new reference work. It features-in quick and convenient form-precise definitions of important terms and concise summaries of the salient ideas of critics working in the field who have made significant contributions to feminist literary studies, and points out how a feminist perspective has affected the development of emerging ideas and intellectual practices. Every effort has been made to include as many feminist thinkers as possible. Expanded coverage of key subjects Overview entries cover topics ranging from creativity, beauty, and eroticism topornography, violence, and war, with a thorough exploration of the major theoretical points of feminist literary approaches and concerns. In addition, entries organized around literary periods and fields, such as medieval studies, Shakespeare and Romanticism survey subjects in the framework of feminist literary theory and feminist concerns. Shows how feminist ideas have shaped literary theory The Encyclopedia gathers in one place all the key words, topics, proper names, and critical terminology of feminist literary theory. Emphasis throughout is on usage in the United States and Great Britain since the 1970s. Each entry is accompanied by a bibliography that is a point of departure for further research. A key advantage of this Encyclopedia is that it amasses bibliographic references for so many important and often-cited works within a single volume. Instructors especially will find this information invaluable in the preparation of course material. Special FeaturesOffers precise contemporary definitions of all important critical terms * Summarizes the salient ideas of key literary critics * Overviews cover

major theoretical issues * Entries on periods and fields survey feminist contributions * Emphasizes terminology that has evolved since the 1970s * Indexes proper names, subjects, key words, and related topics

the oval portrait critical analysis: *Ligeia* Edgar Allan Poe, 2023-10-16 Un anonimo narratore ci racconta del suo amore perduto Ligeia, una donna alta, dai capelli neri, estremamente intelligente, che credeva che la morte potesse essere sconfitta con la forza di volontà. Inoltre era innamorata in maniera ossessiva del marito, lo idolatrava, ricambiata. Quando lei muore lui è affranto. Qualche tempo dopo decide di andare avanti con la sua vita e si risposa. Strane cose cominciano ad accadere mentre il narratore continua a pensare sempre di più al suo primo amore, Ligeia...

the oval portrait critical analysis: *The Personal Librarian* Marie Benedict, Victoria Christopher Murray, 2022-06-07 The Instant New York Times Bestseller! A Good Morning America* Book Club Pick! Named a Best Book of the Year by NPR! Named a Notable Book of the Year by the Washington Post! "Historical fiction at its best!"* A remarkable novel about J. P. Morgan's personal librarian, Belle da Costa Greene, the Black American woman who was forced to hide her true identity and pass as white in order to leave a lasting legacy that enriched our nation, from New York Times bestselling authors Marie Benedict and Victoria Christopher Murray. In her twenties, Belle da Costa Greene is hired by J. P. Morgan to curate a collection of rare manuscripts, books, and artwork for his newly built Pierpont Morgan Library. Belle becomes a fixture in New York City society and one of the most powerful people in the art and book world, known for her impeccable taste and shrewd negotiating for critical works as she helps create a world-class collection. But Belle has a secret, one she must protect at all costs. She was born not Belle da Costa Greene but Belle Marion Greener. She is the daughter of Richard Greener, the first Black graduate of Harvard and a well-known advocate for equality. Belle's complexion isn't dark because of her alleged Portuguese heritage that lets her pass as white—her complexion is dark because she is African American. The Personal Librarian tells the story of an extraordinary woman, famous for her intellect, style, and wit, and shares the lengths she must go to—for the protection of her family and her legacy—to preserve her carefully crafted white identity in the racist world in which she lives.

the oval portrait critical analysis: Short Story Theories , 2015-06-29 Short Story Theories: A Twenty-First-Century Perspective problematizes different aspects of the renewal and development of the short story. The aim of this collection is to explore the most recent theoretical issues raised by the short story as a genre and to offer theoretical and practical perspectives on the form. Centering as it does on specific authors and on the wider implications of short story poetics, this collection presents a new series of essays that both reinterpret canonical writers of the genre and advance new critical insights on the most recent trends and contemporary authors. Theorizations about genre reflect on different aspects of the short story from a multiplicity of perspectives and take the form of historical and aesthetic considerations, gender-centered accounts, and examinations that attend to reader-response theory, cognitive patterns, sociolinguistics, discourse analysis, postcolonial studies, postmodern techniques, and contemporary uses of minimalist forms. Looking ahead, this collection traces the evolution of the short story from Chaucer through the Romantic writings of Poe to the postmodern developments and into the twenty-first century. This volume will prove of interest to scholars and graduate students working in the fields of the short story and of literature in general. In addition, the readability and analytical transparency of these essays make them accessible to a more general readership interested in fiction.

the oval portrait critical analysis: Tamerlane and Other Poems Edgar Allan Poe, A. Bostonian, 2010-03-16 Tamerlane and Other Poems is the first published work by American writer Edgar Allan Poe. The short collection of poems was first published in 1827. Today, it is believed only 12 of approximately 50 copies of the collection still exist. The poems were largely inspired by Lord Byron, including the long title poem Tamerlane, which depicts a historical conqueror who laments the loss of his first romance. Like much of Poe's future work, the poems in Tamerlane and Other Poems include themes of love, death, and pride.

the oval portrait critical analysis: A Spell for Chameleon (The Parallel Edition... Simplified) Piers Anthony, 2012-02-14 Piers Anthony's bestselling Xanth series is one of the cornerstones of fantasy, a lively and whimsical interpretation of a genre often criticized for taking itself too seriously. Anthony's first Xanth novel, *A Spell for Chameleon*, was initially edited to target a more traditional audience. Now, in an eBook exclusive, *A Spell for Chameleon* has been reworked line by line—its language matching the simpler, playful way with words that made Piers Anthony an enduring fan favorite. Xanth is an enchanted land where magic rules, a land of centaurs and dragons and basilisks where every citizen has a unique spell to call their own. For Bink of North Village, however, Xanth is no fairy tale. He alone has no magic. And unless he gets some—and fast!—he will be exiled. Forever. But the Good Magician Humfrey is convinced that Bink does indeed have magic. In fact, both Beauregard the genie and the magic wall chart insist that Bink has magic as powerful as any possessed by the King, the Good Magician Humfrey, or even the Evil Magician Trent. Be that as it may, no one can fathom the nature of Bink's very special magic. This is even worse than having no magic at all . . . and he still faces exile!

the oval portrait critical analysis: *The Changeling* Victor LaValle, 2018-03-06 "Mesmerizing . . . a dark fairy tale of New York, full of magic and loss, myth and mystery, love and madness."—Marlon James, author of the Dark Star trilogy SOON TO BE AN APPLE TV+ SERIES STARRING LAKEITH STANFIELD • ONE OF TIME'S 100 BEST FANTASY BOOKS OF ALL TIME Winner of an American Book Award, a Locus Award for Best Horror Novel, a British Fantasy Award for Best Horror Novel, a World Fantasy Award for Best Novel • Nominated for a Shirley Jackson Award, an International Dublin Literary Award, a Mythopoeic Award for Literature When Apollo Kagwa's father disappeared, he left his son a box of books and strange recurring dreams. Now Apollo is a father himself—and as he and his wife, Emma, settle into their new lives as parents, exhaustion and anxiety start to take their toll. Apollo's old dreams return and Emma begins acting odd. At first Emma seems to be exhibiting signs of postpartum depression. But before Apollo can do anything to help, Emma commits a horrific act and vanishes. Thus begins Apollo's quest to find a wife and child who are nothing like he'd imagined. His odyssey takes him to a forgotten island, a graveyard full of secrets, a forest where immigrant legends still live, and finally back to a place he thought he had lost forever. NAMED ONE OF PASTE'S BEST HORROR BOOKS OF THE DECADE • NAMED ONE OF THE BEST BOOKS OF THE YEAR BY The New York Times • USA Today • The New York Public Library • NPR • BuzzFeed • Kirkus Reviews • Book Riot "The thriller you won't be able to put down."—O: The Oprah Magazine "Intense, riveting . . . The story is a long, slow burn with a lingering sizzle."—Los Angeles Review of Books "A modern-day tale of terror rooted in ancient myth and folklore, brimming with magical revelation and emotional truth."—San Francisco Chronicle

the oval portrait critical analysis: *Desperate Characters* Paula Fox, 1999 First published in 1970 to great acclaim, this novel stands as one of the most dazzling and rigorous examples of the storyteller's craft in postwar American literature—a novel that, according to Irving Howe, ranks with *Billy Budd* and *The Great Gatsby*.

the oval portrait critical analysis: *Hop-Frog* Edgar Allan Poe, 2024-07-18 »Hop-Frog« is a short story by Edgar Allan Poe, originally published in 1849. EDGAR ALLAN POE was born in Boston in 1809. After brief stints in academia and the military, he began working as a literary critic and author. He made his debut with the novel *The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym of Nantucket* in 1838, but it was in his short stories that Poe's peculiar style truly flourished. He died in Baltimore in 1849.

the oval portrait critical analysis: *The Black Cat* Edgar Allan Poe, 2024-01-29 Edgar Allan Poe's *The Black Cat* is a short story that explores themes of guilt and perversity. The narrator, haunted by cruelty to his black cat and acts of domestic violence, is consumed by paranoia and madness. His attempt to conceal a crime leads to his own disgrace.

the oval portrait critical analysis: *The Masque of the Red Death* Edgar Allan Poe, 2020-08-01 *The Masque of the Red Death*, originally published as *The Mask of the Red Death: A Fantasy*, is an 1842 short story by American writer Edgar Allan Poe. The story follows Prince Prospero's attempts to avoid a dangerous plague, known as the Red Death, by hiding in his abbey. He, along with many

other wealthy nobles, hosts a masquerade ball within seven rooms of the abbey, each decorated with a different color. In the midst of their revelry, a mysterious figure disguised as a Red Death victim enters and makes his way through each of the rooms. Prospero dies after confronting this stranger, whose costume proves to contain nothing tangible inside it; the guests also die in turn. Poe's story follows many traditions of Gothic fiction and is often analyzed as an allegory about the inevitability of death, though some critics advise against an allegorical reading. Many different interpretations have been presented, as well as attempts to identify the true nature of the titular disease. The story was first published in May 1842 in *Graham's Magazine* and has since been adapted in many different forms, including a 1964 film starring Vincent Price.

the oval portrait critical analysis: *Ask Again, Yes* Mary Beth Keane, 2019-05-28 The triumphant New York Times Bestseller *The Tonight Show Summer Reads Pick* Named one of the Best Books of the Year by People, Vogue, Parade, NPR, and Elle A gem of a book. —Taylor Jenkins Reid, author of *The Seven Husbands of Evelyn Hugo* How much can a family forgive? Francis Gleeson and Brian Stanhope, rookie NYPD cops, are neighbors in the suburbs. What happens behind closed doors in both houses—the loneliness of Francis's wife, Lena, and the instability of Brian's wife, Anne, sets the stage for the explosive events to come. In Mary Beth Keane's extraordinary novel, a lifelong friendship and love blossoms between Kate Gleeson and Peter Stanhope, born six months apart. One shocking night their loyalties are divided, and their bond will be tested again and again over the next thirty years. Heartbreaking and redemptive, *Ask Again, Yes* is a gorgeous and generous portrait of the daily intimacies of marriage and the power of forgiveness.

the oval portrait critical analysis: *The Ghost and the Bone-Setter* Joseph Sheridan le Fanu, 2015-10-21 This early work by Sheridan Le Fanu was originally published in 1838. Born in Dublin in 1814, he came from a literary family of Huguenot origins; both his grandmother Alicia Sheridan Le Fanu and his great-uncle Richard Brinsley Sheridan were playwrights,

the oval portrait critical analysis: *The Unparalleled Adventure of One Hans Pfaall* Edgar Allan Poe, 2021-11-11 When Hans Pfaal's creditors begin to circle, there is only one thing he can do. Construct a magnificent, science defying balloon and escape to the moon! Hans records the details of this voyage with vivid otherworldly description, and impressive scientific knowhow. This fascinating, hallucinatory adventure, is regarded as one of the first examples of the modern science fiction genre, inspiring works by later writers such as Jules Verne and H.G Wells. Edgar Allan Poe (1809-1849) is a titan of literature. Most famous for his poetry, short stories, and tales of the supernatural and macabre, his body of work continues to resonate to this day. Poe is widely regarded as the inventor of the detective genre and a contributor to the emergence of science fiction, dark romanticism, and weird fiction. His most famous works include *The Raven* (1945), *The Black Cat* (1943), and *The Gold-Bug* (1843).

the oval portrait critical analysis: *Man Size In Marble* E Nesbit, 2020-05-15 Life has taken a sudden interior turn but the literature of the lockdown may have already been written. A century ago writers throughout the supposedly civilised world realised their once familiar, domestic world had changed profoundly and began to describe it in singular unsettling ways. The best word for what they found and how they described it is the German one 'unheimlich' whereby the familiar or homely is suddenly strange; a unique word for which we have in English the unsatisfactory 'uncanny'. In his essay of 1919, Freud used the word 'unheimlich' to describe the disquieting, unsettling short fiction of his time. As has been noted by the critic Mark Fisher and others however, he structured his inquiry into the unheimlich on the stories themselves, unable to create a theory which superseded them. These stories have endured. We have collected together the best of them — the funny, the horrific and the simply disturbing — to offer insight and commentary on the strange world we have been living in. E Nesbitt's ghost story is elevated from the thousands that were published in popular magazines such as the Strand in the early 20th century by the way she places a barely-competent middle class couple in a situation frighteningly beyond their depth.

the oval portrait critical analysis: *About "The Oval Portrait" of Edgar Allan Poe* Manü Mohr, 2013-08-23 Essay from the year 2012 in the subject English Language and Literature Studies

- Literature, grade: 1,0, University of Stuttgart, language: English, abstract: Edgar Allan Poe is one of the most famous and celebrated American writers whose short stories inspired numerous other authors. The Oval Portrait, initially titled Life in Death, is a revised and shorter version that was published in the Broadway Journal in 1845. Although being one of his shortest stories, Poe is able to establish in The Oval Portrait a haunting atmosphere of terror. The fate of the beautiful, young woman fascinates the narrator who is entirely taken by the enigmatic painting and the inscrutable circumstances of the lady's death. It is in this way that the author is able to create simultaneously a sense of both mystery and tragedy, and this essay will examine in greater detail how these two elements are combined in order to make up the Gothic mood typical for Poe's writings. Firstly, I will have a look at the author and his background before providing some general information about this short story. In this case, a biographical approach to The Oval Portrait is very enriching and is able to shed light on some aspects, as we will see later on. Secondly, I will concentrate on the appearance of the mysterious atmosphere in the work, such as the narrator's equivocal reliability, the mansion and its relation to the Gothic, the role of light and darkness, and the open questions. My third point of analysis will be the tragic: how is Poe able to make both the story's narrator and his readers be captivated by such a sad woman's death within less than four pages? To begin with, I will focus on the painter and his obsession with his art, as well as the dilemma whether the latter is inevitably irreconcilable with life. Then the woman's outward appearance, that is her surpassing loveliness, will be linked to what Poe himself says about the role of beauty and horror in his work Philosophy of Composition. Furthermore, James Twitchell's interpretation of The Oval Portrait will be taken into account.

the oval portrait critical analysis: Lionizing Edgar Allan Poe, 2018-10-23 Lionizing (+Biography and Bibliography) (Glossy Cover Finish): I am, that is to say I was, a great man, but I am neither the author of Junius nor the man in the mask, for my name, I believe, is Robert Jones, and I was born somewhere in the city of Fum-Fudge. The first action of my life was the taking hold of my nose with both hands. My mother saw this and called me a genius: my father wept for joy and presented me with a treatise on Nosology. This I mastered before I was breeched. I now began to feel my way in the science, and soon came to understand that, provided a man had a nose sufficiently conspicuous, he might by merely following it, arrive at a Lionship. But my attention was not confined to theories alone. Every morning I gave my proboscis a couple of pulls and swallowed a half-dozen of drams

the oval portrait critical analysis: The Red Room H. G. Wells, 2016-09-14 The Red Room is a short story written by H. G. Wells. First published in the 1896 edition of The Idler magazine, it is a quintessentially Gothic tale about a man who spends a night in a supposedly haunted room in Lorraine Castle in an attempt to disprove the legends surrounding it. This thrilling tale constitutes a must-read for fans of Gothic literature and Wells' seminal work, and it would make for a fantastic addition to any collection. Herbert George Wells (1866 - 1946) was a prolific English writer who wrote in a variety of genres, including the novel, politics, history, and social commentary. The Father of Science Fiction was also a staunch socialist, and his later works are increasingly political and didactic. Today, he is perhaps best remembered for his contributions to the science fiction genre thanks to such novels as The Time Machine (1895), The Invisible Man (1897), and The War of the Worlds (1898). Many vintage books such as this are becoming increasingly scarce and expensive. We are republishing this book now in an affordable, modern, high-quality edition complete with a specially commissioned new biography of the author.

the oval portrait critical analysis: See What Can Be Done Lorrie Moore, 2018-04-03 A remarkable collection of essays and reviews on everything from Philip Roth to Margaret Atwood, from race in America to the shocking state of the GOP—from the national bestselling author of Birds of America and a master of contemporary American fiction. “The kind of book, and the kind of human, you’d want to guide you through the past few decades in letters and culture.... Moore is one of our best documentarians of everyday amazement.” —The New Yorker This essential, enlightening, truly delightful collection shows one of our greatest writers parsing the political, artistic, and media

landscape of the past three decades. These sixty-six essays and reviews, culled from the pages of The New York Review of Books, The New York Times, Harper's, The Atlantic, and The New Yorker, among others, find Lorrie Moore turning her discerning eye on everything from celebrity culture to the wilds of television, from Stephen Sondheim to Barack Obama. *See What Can Be Done* is a perfect blend of craft, brains, and a knowing, singular take on life, liberty, and the pursuit of (some kind of) happiness.

the oval portrait critical analysis: Poet Warrior: A Memoir Joy Harjo, 2021-09-07 National bestseller An ALA Notable Book Three-term poet laureate Joy Harjo offers a vivid, lyrical, and inspiring call for love and justice in this contemplation of her trailblazing life. Joy Harjo, the first Native American to serve as U.S. poet laureate, invites us to travel along the heartaches, losses, and humble realizations of her poet-warrior road. A musical, kaleidoscopic, and wise follow-up to *Crazy Brave*, *Poet Warrior* reveals how Harjo came to write poetry of compassion and healing, poetry with the power to unearth the truth and demand justice. Harjo listens to stories of ancestors and family, the poetry and music that she first encountered as a child, and the messengers of a changing earth—owls heralding grief, resilient desert plants, and a smooth green snake curled up in surprise. She celebrates the influences that shaped her poetry, among them Audre Lorde, N. Scott Momaday, Walt Whitman, Muscogee stomp dance call-and-response, Navajo horse songs, rain, and sunrise. In absorbing, incantatory prose, Harjo grieves at the loss of her mother, reckons with the theft of her ancestral homeland, and sheds light on the rituals that nourish her as an artist, mother, wife, and community member. Moving fluidly between prose, song, and poetry, Harjo recounts a luminous journey of becoming, a spiritual map that will help us all find home. *Poet Warrior* sings with the jazz, blues, tenderness, and bravery that we know as distinctly Joy Harjo.

the oval portrait critical analysis: Annabel Lee Edgar Allan Poe, 1927

the oval portrait critical analysis: An Account of Some Strange Disturbances in Aungier Street J. Sheridan Le Fanu, »An Account of Some Strange Disturbances in Aungier Street« is a short story by L. Sheridan Le Fanu, first published in 1853. JOSEPH SHERIDAN LE FANU [1814-1873] was an Irish mystery and horror author. He had an enormous influence on the horror genre in the 19th and 20th century, especially through his championing of tone and effect rather than shock factor. Among his most noted work is the lesbian vampire novella *Carmilla* [1872] and mystery *Uncle Silas* [1864].

the oval portrait critical analysis: James Ensor Patricia G. Berman, 2002 The brash young artist James Ensor painted *Christ's Entry into Brussels in 1889* during a period of extraordinary artistic and political fomentation in his native Belgium. It is one of the most dazzling, innovative, and perplexing paintings created in Europe in the late nineteenth century, rivaling any work of its period in audacity and ambition. Huge in scale, complex in design and execution, and brimming with social commentary, the startling canvas presents a scene filled with clowns, masked figures, and—barely visible amid the swirling crowds—the tiny figure of Christ on a donkey entering the city of Brussels. This insightful volume examines the painting in light of Belgium's rich artistic, social, political, and theological debates in the late nineteenth century, and in the context of James Ensor's exceptional career, in order to decipher some of the painting's messages and meanings.

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the oval portrait critical analysis: The Purloined Letter Edgar Allan Poe, 2019-06-08 The *Purloined Letter* is the third of the three stories featuring the detective C. Auguste Dupin, the other two being *The Murders in the Rue Morgue* and *The Mystery of Marie Roget*. These stories are considered important forerunners of the modern detective story. The method Poe's detective, Dupin, uses to solve the crime was quite innovative. He tried to identify with the criminal and to think like he would. In May of 1844 Poe wrote to James Russell Lowell that he considered it perhaps the best of my tales of ratiocination

the oval portrait critical analysis: The Shadow of a Shade (Fantasy and Horror Classics) Tom

Hood, 2011-04-01 Many of the earliest ghost stories, particularly those dating back to the 1900s and before, are now extremely scarce and increasingly expensive. We are republishing these classic works in affordable, high quality, modern editions, using the original text and artwork.

the oval portrait critical analysis: The Moving Finger Edith Wharton, 2014-03-01 The Moving Finger is a short story by Edith Wharton. Edith Wharton (born Edith Newbold Jones; January 24, 1862 - August 11, 1937) was a Pulitzer Prize-winning American novelist, short story writer, and designer. She was nominated for the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1927, 1928 and 1930. Wharton combined her insider's view of America's privileged classes with a brilliant, natural wit to write humorous, incisive novels and short stories of social and psychological insight. She was well acquainted with many of her era's other literary and public figures, including Theodore Roosevelt. Wharton was born to George Frederic Jones and Lucretia Stevens Rhineland in New York City. She had two brothers, Frederic Rhineland and Henry Edward. The saying Keeping up with the Joneses is said to refer to her father's family. She was also related to the Rensselaer family, the most prestigious of the old patroon families. She had a lifelong friendship with her Rhineland niece, landscape architect Beatrix Farrand of Reef Point in Bar Harbor, Maine. In 1885, at 23, she married Edward (Teddy) Robbins Wharton, who was 12 years older. From a well-established Philadelphia family, he was a sportsman and gentleman of the same social class and shared her love of travel. From the late 1880s until 1902, he suffered acute depression, and the couple ceased their extensive travel. At that time his depression manifested as a more serious disorder, after which they lived almost exclusively at The Mount, their estate designed by Edith Wharton. In 1908 her husband's mental state was determined to be incurable. She divorced him in 1913. Around the same time, Edith was overcome with the harsh criticisms leveled by the naturalist writers. Later in 1908 she began an affair with Morton Fullerton, a journalist for The Times, in whom she found an intellectual partner. In addition to novels, Wharton wrote at least 85 short stories. She was also a garden designer, interior designer, and taste-maker of her time. She wrote several design books, including her first published work, The Decoration of Houses of 1897, co-authored by Ogden Codman. Another is the generously illustrated Italian Villas and Their Gardens of 1904.

the oval portrait critical analysis: Burning Down the House Bruce Hallenbeck, 2020-02-10 Between 1960 and 1964, the legendary Roger Corman created eight motion pictures that have become known as the 'Poe Cycle', elevating the careers of both himself and Vincent Price to cult status around the world. This text details and analyses these highly important films.

the oval portrait critical analysis: Alexandre Cabanel Andreas Blühm, Wallraf-Richartz-Museum, 2011 One of the foremost artists of 19th century France, Alexandre Cabanel (1823 - 1889), will be featured in his first exhibition at the Wallraf in Spring 2011. In cooperation with Musée Fabre in Montpellier, the Wallraf in Cologne will present over 60 works by a man who rose from the rank of a lowly carpenter's son to become court painter to Napoleon III. In order to give these graceful works by the last of the great salon painters just the right ambience, the Wallraf has secured the services of a distinguished compatriot of Cabanel: Star designer Christian Lacroix has been commissioned to design a special interior exclusively for the exhibition. Lacroix studied at the Academy of Arts in Montpellier the hometown of Cabanel and regards the painter as one of his all-time favourites. Exhibition: Wallraf-Richartz Museum, Köln (4.2-15.5.2011).

the oval portrait critical analysis: Boy, Snow, Bird Helen Oyeyemi, 2014-03-01 BOY Novak turns twenty and decides to try for a brand-new life. Flax Hill, Massachusetts, isn't exactly a welcoming town, but it does have the virtue of being the last stop on the bus route she took from New York. Flax Hill is also the hometown of Arturo Whitman - craftsman, widower, and father of Snow. SNOW is mild-mannered, radiant and deeply cherished - exactly the sort of little girl Boy never was, and Boy is utterly beguiled by her. If Snow displays a certain inscrutability at times, that's simply a characteristic she shares with her father, harmless until Boy gives birth to Snow's sister, Bird. When BIRD is born Boy is forced to re-evaluate the image Arturo's family have presented to her, and Boy, Snow and Bird are broken apart.

the oval portrait critical analysis: Alexander Roslin Alexander Roslin, 2007-01-01

the oval portrait critical analysis: *Edgar Allan Poe Annotated and Illustrated Entire Stories and Poems* Edgar Allan Poe, 2008-05 This annotated and illustrated edition of the entire stories and poems of Edgar Allan Poe brings the author to life as never before. Photographs of Poe's many loves and the literary figures he satired in his stories are included.

the oval portrait critical analysis: *The Racial Imaginary* Claudia Rankine, Beth Loffreda, Max King Cap, 2015 Frank, fearless letters from poets of all colors, genders, classes about the material conditions under which their art is made.

the oval portrait critical analysis: *Muncie, India(na)* Himanee Gupta-Carlson, 2018-02-21 Muncie, Indiana, remains the epitome of an American town. Yet scholars built the image of so-called typical communities across the United States on an illusion. Their decades of studies ignored the racial, ethnic, and religious diversity and tensions woven into the American communities that Muncie supposedly embodied. Himanee Gupta-Carlson puts forth an essential question: what do nonwhites, non-Christians, and/or non-natives mean when they call themselves American? A daughter in one of Muncie's first Indian American families, Gupta-Carlson merges personal experience, the life histories of others, and critical analysis to explore the answers. Her stories of members of Muncie's South Asian communities unearth the silences imposed by past studies while challenging the body of scholarship in fundamental ways. At the same time, Gupta-Carlson shares personal memories and experiences that illuminate her place within the historical, political, and socio-cultural currents she engages in her work. It also reveals how that work informs and transforms her as a scholar and a person. As meditative as it is insightful, *Muncie, India(na)* invites readers to feel the truth of the fascinating stories behind one woman's revised portrait of an American community.

the oval portrait critical analysis: *Rembrandt & Saskia* Marlies Stoter, Justus Lange, 2018 In 1634 the up-and-coming painting talent Rembrandt van Rijn wed the love of this life in Friesland: Saskia Uylenburgh, the daughter of a councillor at the Court of Friesland. The story of their marriage is also that of seventeenth-century marriages in general, from courtship to drawing up a will. How did such a stylish wedding come about, and how did life proceed afterwards, when love and suffering were shared? Using evocative paintings, etchings, documents and precious wedding gifts, this book shows us the world of Friesland's most famous bride and groom ever--and that marriage vows back then actually appear to differ little from those of today.--from back cover

the oval portrait critical analysis: *Edgar Allan Poe* Arthur Hobson Quinn, 1997-11-25 Renowned as the creator of the detective story and a master of horror, the author of *The Red Mask of Death*, *The Black Cat*, and *The Murders of the Rue Morgue*, Edgar Allan Poe seems to have derived his success from suffering and to have suffered from his success. *The Raven* and *The Tell-Tale Heart* have been read as signs of his personal obsessions, and *The Fall of the House of Usher* and *The Descent into the Maelstrom* as symptoms of his own mental collapse. Biographers have seldom resisted the opportunities to confuse the pathologies in the stories with the events in Poe's life. Against this tide of fancy, guesses, and amateur psychologizing, Arthur Hobson Quinn's biography devotes itself meticulously to facts. Based on exhaustive research in the Poe family archive, Quinn extracts the life from the legend, and describes how they both were distorted by prior biographies.

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