

With endless amounts of entertainment available at ones disposal, today, more than ever, society is at a significant turning point. With the recent surge of popularity in virtual reality and platforms such as the metaverse, a shift is beginning to take place. The mass production of material aimed towards attacking the viewer with visual bursts of stimulation lasting just long enough to grab their attention in the hopes that they will click on the advertisement and visit their website.

Michel de Certeau, a French Jesuit, and scholar, who was a widely regarded philosopher and historian states, "The current industrial mass production of visual imagery tends to alienate vision from emotional involvement and identification, and to turn imagery into a mesmerizing flow without focus or participation. From television to newspapers, from advertising to all sorts of mercantile epiphanies, our society is characterized by a over saturated growth of vision, measuring everything by its ability to show or be shown."

Elaborating further, Juhani Pallasmaa, world renowned theorist and architect expresses his thoughts on this topic, "The ceaseless bombardment of unrelated imagery leads only to a gradual emptying of images of their emotional content. Images are converted into endless commodities manufactured to postpone boredom; humans in turn are commodified, consuming themselves nonchalantly without having the courage or even the possibility of confronting their very existential reality."

Tik Tok, a social media platform in which users are greeted with videos ranging from five seconds to a couple minutes shows just how this attack with unrelated imagery impairs the user the instant the application is opened. Videos, one after another, of unrelated content provided to the user to garner just enough serotonin in order to continue scrolling to the next video. Using the past as a model for living has been a course of action that has been pursued for many years. With the emergence of new technology and advancements in the field, much of society has distanced itself from this way of thinking and living. As time progresses, primary forms of information are progressively being modified to fit the direction that society is headed. This can turn counterproductive, as if previous knowledge is being altered, there will be no original in due time.

Hannah Arendt, a political theorist and philosopher argues, “Those who produce for the mass media ransack the entire range of past and present culture in the hope of finding suitable material. This material, moreover, cannot be offered as it is; it must be altered in order to become entertaining; it must be prepared to be easily consumed.”

Martin Heidegger, a German philosopher adds, “For nowadays we take in everything in the quickest and cheapest way, only to forget it just as quickly, instantly.”

To understand how society has evolved into what it has become, examining history will aid in this process. In *Utopian Knowledge: Eidetics, Education, and the Machine*, Jonathan Powers dives into the idea of Utopia and how the concept came to be. Powers starts by stating that the early critiques of Utopia classify Utopia as: fictional, describing a particular state or community, and the theme is that political structure of that state or community. This classification leans towards being more of an analytic definition than an essential definition.

Powers introduces Tommaso Campanella, an Italian friar, philosopher, and poet who lived during the turn of the seventeenth century.

Campanella’s *City of the Sun* deploys images within the framework of fiction relating to more specified teaching purposes. The City of the Sun is characterized as an elaborate city containing a network of circles and rings with the only streets facing the four cardinal directions.

This city, which has been organized in replication of the cosmos and mythical order, also has a set scheme of how information is passed along.

Images, accompanied by short labels, cover every upright exterior façade, informing the youth of topics ranging from astrology to languages. Campanella suggests that the mere presence of the murals influence the children's intellectual development. The vast murals depict reality as the city's inhabitants know it. They present singular images of subject matter to young viewers, and the corresponding labels name the image and transform them into Eide, or idealizing images. Every image must be grasped, not in the particularity of its style or the material it contains rather, in its generality. The goal at the heart of this society is establishing a similarity between knowledge and society by means of images. Images thus act as the common currency.

Powers follows the description of *The City of the Sun* by introducing another prominent figure, John Amos Comenius. Comenius emerged as one of Campanella's intellectual progeny and focused his lifework on pedagogy with various notable writings throughout his life. [NEXT SLIDE] Of these works, *Orbis Pictus*, was one of the first educational picture books, which organizes the entire world into a series of images which closely resemble the Eides in Campanella's work.

In 1632, Comenius published the *Labyrinth of the World* and the *Paradise of the Heart* which portray the world as a city organized according to one's trajectory from birth, through livelihood, and concluding at their death. The reader is accompanied by a pilgrim who has the ability to survey all potential occupations that a human may undertake during their lifetime. The reader and pilgrim have a bird's eye view of the world and are able to analyze the world as a whole. The pilgrim says he sees thousands of shafts, wheels, hooks, and teeth that cohesively move and hum together. Some move quietly, others rattled. For the spirit of the wheel was diffused through all the separate parts and directed everything. Almost as if it were a machine. The importance of this vision of the machine as an antidote to the depraved world lies not in the specifics of the machine, rather in its character as an eidos. The essential meaning of modern machines is not in their specific operations but in the fact that they carry out their purposes independently of humans –they act automatically. This trend continues in the modern day, through topics covered in the Hunger Games movies and the tv series Black Mirror.

A return to the methods that ancestors thought so highly of and held so close to them is a step in the right direction. Though technology can aid users in their everyday life, it does not have to take over the everyday life. Supplementing technology can be an immense help while conducting research or searching for quick answers needed in the spur of the moment. But the moment technology starts to consume everyday life and daily routines is when it becomes harmful to users. [NEXT SLIDE] Arendt concludes with, "Intellectually though, not socially, America and Europe are in the same situation: the thread of tradition is broken, and we must discover the past for ourselves – that is, read its authors as though nobody had ever read them before."

Reading the past's authors as though they had never been read is a return to tradition and a return to language. A return to language can open a new perspective while reading into topics and individually crafting written works. Language opens new pathways into worlds that would never have been seen or comprehended before. Using creative language while storytelling allows the viewer to conjure up vivid and magical images within their minds that, with less strength of language, could be lackluster and uninspired.

To aid in this journey of returning to language, Edgar Allan Poe's *La Ligeia* offers great insight into what strong language looks like and what it can do for the viewer. Edgar Allan Poe's best-known stories depict dark and dreary settings. More intriguing for architectural research is the tale featuring a protagonist who designs dazzling and fantastic settings. [NEXT SLIDE] The story is narrated by a grieving lover and scholar who fashions a chamber that alters, intensifies, and transcends the involvement with reality. As in all of Poe's fiction, the chamber represents a fallible state of mind that offers a restorative sanctuary, exceedingly magnificent and magical. The characters and setting embody the resilient fervor of poetic imagination, aspiring to what Poe deemed poetry's ultimate aim: "supernal beauty" via elevating excitement of the soul. The rooms devised endure as embodiments of poetic desire, As meta-poetic constructs, these settings illuminate Poe's motives and methods as a poet, story teller, and cultural critic. In the story *La Ligeia*, the grieving scholar is unable to recall the circumstances of meeting his love, but vividly remembers every detail of the chamber he made to alleviate the sorrow of her death:

“There is no individual portion of the architecture and decoration which is not now visibly before me.” Conjuring the pentagonal chamber, he recounts its captivating exotica: Egyptian sarcophagi lodged in five corners; a dark Venetian window; billowing gold draperies bearing black arabesque figures, tufted gold carpets with Bedlam patterns; Indian ottomans; golden candelabras of “eastern figure”; a vaulted ceiling elaborated fretted with grotesque specimens of semi-gothic, semi-druidical device; and suspended from the excessively lofty vault by a golden chain, a Saracenic censer casting a faint shadow on the golden carpet, while animating all with ghastly luster of writhing serpent-like flames.

The grieving scholar recalls Ligeia’s, “full raven-black hair and large radiant black eyes.” As time passes, Ligeia grows increasingly ill, her fierce spirit wanes and she releases a defiant shriek and passes away. After wandering aimlessly, the narrator settles in a new town and takes a second wife; Rowena, whose “fair hair and blue eyes contrasted Ligeia’s dark beauty as day to night.”

Situated in an English abbey, the lover and Rowena gather in a room that has, “black granite, solid ebony, fretted oak, laden-hued glass, golden draperies, and perforated gold that become vivified by parti-colored fires and an artificial current of wind.” Rowena’s health begins to decline, as the narrator watches over Rowena, he becomes seized by visions of Ligeia. Appearing to succumb, Rowena’s corpse stirs, rises, and advances to the room’s center. The shroud falls from her head, releasing “huge masses of long and disheveled hair... blacker than the wings of midnight.” As she opened her eyes, the lover recognized not Rowena rather the wild black eyes of Ligeia.

Lisa Landrum, professor of architecture, explains what possible underlying meanings this story could have, “In other words, a meta-poetic allegory animates Rowena’s wavering between death and life, relapse and recovery, passivity, and transformation. The efforts to restore her “pallid and rigid figure,” which the storyteller experiences as a “hideous drama of revivification,” may be understood as a poetic struggle to enliven common language.”

Using the work of the great writers, poets, and novelists that came before, modern writers can live their work. With the transformation of Rowena to Ligeia, from light to dark, from emptiness to wholeness, a new life form out of a previous one.

Using the works of Edgar Allan Poe, the idea of the transformational process was explored by the various forms of the artefact. Pages of the rigid and unwavering works of Poe were deconstructed and fragmented by immersing the language into a water filled receptacle. The act of submerging language with the intention of returning to it as a new form, yet unsure of what was going to ensue. After returning, the pages further fragmented, some pieces dissolving, others suspended at the surface, others completely submerged, vanishing from sight. To re-encapsulate Poe's work, the singular members reintegrated with one another and merged to form a new, unexpected disposition.

I trembled not —I stirred not —for a crowd of unutterable fancies connected with the air, the stature, the demeanor of the figure, rushing hurriedly through my brain, had paralyzed —had chilled me into stone. I stirred not —but gazed upon the apparition. There was a mad disorder in my thoughts —a tumult unappeasable. Could it, indeed, be the living Rowena who confronted me? Could it indeed be Rowena at all —the fair-haired, the blue-eyed Lady Rowena Trevion of Tremaine? Why, why should I doubt it? The bandage lay heavily about the mouth —but then might it not be the mouth of the breathing Lady of Tremaine? And the cheeks—there were the roses as in her noon of life —yes, these might indeed be the fair cheeks of the living Lady of Tremaine. And the chin, with its dimples, as in health, might it not be hers? —but had she then grown taller since her malady? What inexpressible madness seized me with that thought? One bound, and I had reached her feet! Shrinking from my touch, she let fall from her head, unloosened, the ghastly cerements which had confined it, and there streamed forth, into the rushing atmosphere of the chamber, huge masses of long and disheveled hair; it was blacker than the raven wings of the midnight! And now slowly opened the eyes of the figure which stood before me. "Here then, at least," I shrieked aloud, "can I never —can I never be mistaken — these are the full, and the black, and the wild eyes —of my lost love —of the lady —of the LADY LIGEIA."

The result, a reemergence of the language that was once unequivocal transformed into an ambiguous form. Taking this new, rigid again form, submerging it further, fragments appeared, same yet different from the previous. The fragmentation, as language is in the state of continuous becoming which is reintegrated and reassembled through the architecture.

The proposal, situated on the West River Memorial Park in New Haven, Connecticut, acts as an addition to the existing Yale University Beinecke Rare Books and Manuscript Library.

The Beinecke Rare books library is one of the largest buildings in the world dedicated to rare books and manuscripts. Complementing the existing library, the Edgar Allan Poe Rare Books Library houses the works and doings of the poet. Accompanying the storage of the books and writings, a reading room and a Wunderkammer showcasing the poetic imagination of Poe.

Once on the site, the viewer is greeted by an opening in the earth, a burrow descending into the depths of the surface. The burrow, a pathway to allow the viewer to fully submerge themselves below grade, out of sight of what's happening in their surroundings.

Descending downward, the surfaces surrounding, punctured, and textured to allow glimpses of what's ensuing. "The setting especially dramatizes symbolic tensions between light and dark, levity and solemnity, the transience of life and permanence of art. The viewer is conflicted in the deep of midnight, stepping into a dark, gloomy niche." Following the decent, the viewer is met with a vast, open space where wondering aimlessly is encouraged.

The first space, the chamber of stored written works and various writings allow the viewer to take a piece along with them in their journey. While searching for a specific title or letting themselves wonder aimlessly into an unplanned written work, when the viewer takes that work, a fragment of what was there belongs to them for that moment in time. The empty space where the work was once stored, now incomplete, acting as a portal into the poetic imagination. Incomplete until the work is returned, after the viewer has completed their imaginative journey.

Following the chamber that houses the written works, a room where creative thinking thrives. Within the walls of the space, areas where Edgar Allan Poe's writing comes to life within the mind of each viewer. Acting as a framework for Poe's language to emerge and take shape, as each viewer interprets what is laid before them within the written work, vivid and magical worlds come to life.

After the viewer experiences the language before them, a Wunderkammer designed to take a look into how Poe gathers fragments and reassembles them to create a texture of language and creativity. Similar to the museum interiors of John Soane, Poe's narratively concise but evocatively expansive settings are packed with curious, exotic, antique, and fantastic elements from different times and places. Such fragments were less emblems of loss than means of invention: stimuli to memory, imagination, and synthetic understanding. For Poe, ornaments purposefully dramatized manifold inspirations at play in creatively conflicted minds. Opposing odious uniformity, Poe sought poetic fulfillment through multi-form combinations among the things and thought of time. Advocating unusual combinations, especially novel arrangements of old forms, he made it the task of imagination to choose the most combinable things hitherto uncombined. Housed in the Wunderkammer, various fragments from Poe's written works dispersed amongst the surrounding walls. Focusing on a work by Poe titled, *The Visionary*, a lens into how these vivid and magical realms can be created within one's mind that would be unimaginable without the texture of language that is imposed within the works.

"The eye wandered from object to object and rested upon none —neither the grotesques of the Greek painters, nor the sculptures of the best Italian days, nor the huge carvings of untutored Egypt. Rich draperies in every part of the room trembled to the vibration of low, melancholy music, whose origin was not to be discovered. The senses were oppressed by mingled and conflicting perfumes, reeking up from strange convolute censers, together with multitudinous flaring and flickering tongues of emerald and violet fire. The rays of the newly, risen sun poured in upon the whole, through windows formed each of a single pane of crimson-tinted glass. Glancing to and fro, in a thousand reflections, from curtains which rolled from their cornices like cataracts of molten silver, the beams of natural glory mingled at length fitfully with the artificial light, and lay weltering in subdued masses upon a carpet of rich, liquid-looking cloth of Chili gold." Through the story of *La Ligeia* and the passage from *The Visionary*, Poe reveals the potential of literary architecture to revive capacities to wonder. Once the



fragments within the Wunderkammer are allowed to speak and be seen, the viewer is welcomed to re-emerge above the ground transformed with a new and unique way of creative thinking, with the intention of enlivening language and the poetic image and imagination.