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# Three Poems: Then and Now

*by Edgar Allan Poe and  
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## Lenore<sup>1</sup> (1843)

Ah broken is the golden bowl! the spirit flown forever!  
Let the bell toll!—a saintly soul floats on the Stygian river;  
And, Guy De Vere, hast thou no tear?—weep now or never more!  
See! on yon drear and rigid bier low lies thy love, Lenore!  
Come! let the burial rite be read—the funeral song be sung! —  
An anthem for the queenliest dead that ever died so young—  
A dirge for her the doubly dead in that she died so young.

“Wretches! ye loved her for her wealth and hated her for her pride,  
“And when she fell in feeble health, ye blessed her—that she died!  
“How shall the ritual, then, be read? —the requiem how be sung  
“By you—by yours, the evil eye, —by yours, the slanderous tongue  
“That did to death the innocent that died, and died so young?”  
Peccavimus; but rave not thus! and let a Sabbath song  
Go up to God so solemnly the dead may feel so wrong!  
The sweet Lenore hath “gone before,” with Hope, that flew beside  
Leaving thee wild for the dear child that should have been thy bride—  
For her, the fair and debonair, that now so lowly lies,  
The life upon her yellow hair but not within her eyes—  
The life still there, upon her hair—the death upon her eyes.

“Avaunt! to-night my heart is light. No dirge will I upraise,  
“But waft the angel on her flight with a Pæan of old days!  
“Let no bell toll! —lest her sweet soul, amid its hallowed mirth,  
“Should catch the note, as it doth float up from the damnéd Earth.  
“To friends above, from fiends below, the indignant ghost is riven—  
“From Hell unto a high estate far up within the Heaven—  
“From grief and groan, to a golden throne, beside the King of Heaven.”

## A Dream Within a Dream (1849)

Take this kiss upon the brow!  
And, in parting from you now,  
Thus much let me avow:  
You are not wrong, who deem  
That my days have been a dream;  
Yet if Hope has flown away  
In a night, or in a day,  
In a vision, or in none,  
Is it therefore the less gone?  
All that we see or seem  
Is but a dream within a dream.

I stand amid the roar  
Of a surf-tormented shore,  
And I hold within my hand  
Grains of the golden sand—  
How few! Yet how they creep  
Through my fingers to the deep,  
While I weep—while I weep!  
O God! can I not grasp  
Them with a tighter clasp?  
O God! can I not save  
One from the pitiless wave?  
Is all that we see or seem  
But a dream within a dream?

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*Edgar Allan Poe (1809-1849)*

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## The Raven Grill

**i**

It's not historic—old by just a score  
of years—nor otherwise impressive. Still,  
it wears its name, poetic, well. The door  
invites us by an inkstand, scroll, and quill

to parse its sense. Within, the famous bird  
presides in bronze and charcoal, finely drawn,  
evoking fleeting days by that one word  
it quoth. The past is foreign, always gone,

and nevermore to come again. Thank God;  
what would one do with it, a vacant breath?  
—We order potent spirits, with a nod  
to Poe, his genius, drinking, raving death.

**ii**

No music; cultured conversation in its hum  
prevails. And no one's using a device,  
manically thumbing, deaf and dumb,  
confined in solipsistic paradise.

Outside, the wind is skipping over grass.  
I feel its passing, dark—a raven's sign.  
Enough; I shall not have a second glass.  
The evening gathers all in its design,

as if—it's strange—the wing of poetry,  
however grim the tale, or commonplace,  
were beating at the portal. Words may be—  
I pause—the medium of an eerie grace.

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1. In "Lenore," which dates from 1843 but incorporates much of an earlier poem, words spoken ostensibly by one Guy de Vere express his grief over the death of his beloved, Lenore. The poem may reflect Poe's suffering; his wife, Virginia, was ill. The name Lenore reappears in "The Raven" (1845), where a speaker laments "the lost Lenore"—"the rare and radiant maiden whom the angels name Lenore."