"Mournful and Never-ending Remembrance": The Haunting "Indians" in Edgar Allan Poe's "A Tale of the Ragged Mountains"[1]

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Abstract: Given its direct borrowings from and intertextual relations to other similar texts, "A Tale of the Ragged Mountains" has often been accused of flagrant plagiarism or lack of originality. Such a simple assertion ignores not only Poe's deviation from these sources but also his rationale for such initiatives. While duly recognizing Poe's indebtedness to his predecessors and contemporaries, this paper proposes to examine Poe's literary re-creation and parody by concentrating on his subtle treatment of these borrowed texts, and in so doing, look also at his subversive approach to colonialist discourses. It suggests that in recounting Bedloe's encounters with "Indians" in America and Asia, the tale actually creates a world of doubles to connect the present with the past, the imperial with the exotic, and the self with the other. In this regard, Dr. Templeton's mesmeric treatment of Bedloe is both a reenactment and purgation of haunting colonial memories. The so-called medical accident at the end of the tale, therefore, registers Poe's reflection on and warning against the imperial mindset.

Keywords: Edgar Allan Poe, "A Tale of the Ragged Mountains," "Indians," double, colonialism

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Since its first publication in *Godey's Lady's Book*, "A Tale of the Ragged Mountains" (published in 1844)[2] has long been considered as one of Egar Allan Poe's few forays into the American, especially Southern setting.[3] As Robert Morgan observes, the tale belongs to "the Appalachian canon," or precisely speaking, is Poe's "first work of classic short fiction set in the Southern Appalachian Mountains" (75). Yet the juxtaposition of American South and British India in the tale seems to problematize a reading merely from the local perspective. In other words, Poe's use of the Orient and its link to native subject matter cannot be underestimated. Besides the uniqueness of its subject matter, the tale has also attracted considerable attention in another aspect—the seeming resemblance between Poe's story and other texts has often been taken as incontestable proof of his

plagiarism. This hasty conclusion, as I would argue, shows disregard for Poe's literary re-creation.

As a matter of fact, Poe's flagrant "plagiarism" demonstrates not so much his artistic lethargy as his sober criticism, because he has tapped into authoritative texts for the purpose of parodying. As for the Oriental setting, it can hardly be dismissed as "a diversionary element" (Isani 38). Instead, Poe's punning enables him to connect and burlesque the British and American colonization of "Indians."[4] In this sense, Poe's juxtaposition of national and international settings is not incompatible or unrelated. He re-writes those borrowed texts related to either American Indians or Asian Indians in order to reconsider the colonialist discourses regarding the haunting racial other.

In light of these considerations, it is thought-provoking to note how the tale revolves around the central pun of "Indian" to connect the present with the past, the imperial with the exotic, and above all, the self with the other, and in so doing shed light on Poe's subversive approach to colonialist discourses at home and abroad. That is, although the two episodes of imperial adventures in the tale occur in different times and spaces, they are not unrelated. Through the clever pun "Indian," Poe subtly exposes the discrimination and oppression perpetrated by colonizers, as embodied by Oldeb and his double Bedloe, against the other—the indigenous people of America and Asia—thereby illuminating the shared imperialist mentality of both British and American colonizers. On the other hand, Dr. Templeton, who once participated in the colonial oppression of India but was later affected by the trauma of colonization, serves as a critic of the imperial course. Having witnessing his friend Oldeb's death due to the failed military crackdown in India, Templeton realizes the injustice of British rule there and attempts to suppress this painful colonial memory. However, Bedloe's presence, and his resemblance to Oldeb, both physically and psychologically, triggers Templeton's "regretful memory of the deceased" or of his own youthful folly (663). Through hypnosis, Templeton compulsively repeats the colonial trauma via Bedloe's body. Nevertheless, Templeton's "uneasy, and not altogether horrorless curiosity" concerning Bedloe indicates that he attempts repeatedly to repress, or even purge the haunting colonial shadow (663). In this light, the alleged medical accident at the end of the tale not only suggests that the doctor, through his double the leech, succeeds in eliminating the colonial memory evoked by Bedloe but also manifests Poe's reflection on and warning against colonial expansion.

Plagiarist or Parodist: Reconsidering Poe's Literary Borrowings

Henry Austin, among other critics, may have been the first to accuse Poe of plagiarism for the close similarities between his "A Tale of the Ragged Mountains" and Thomas Macaulay's essay on Warren Hastings (82–84). However, Poe scarcely copies other texts to cobble together a story in a manner reminiscent of "X-ing a Paragrab." Those available sources, he maintains, allow him to throw off "the shackles of imitation" and provide a springboard to originality, as he justifies the borrowings in the presumably self-critical review of his own *Tales of the Grotesque and Arabesque*: "The creative power of the mind is boundless. There is no end to the original combinations of words—nor need there be to the original combination of ideas" (868–869). Poe's seemingly verbatim citations without acknowledgement, as it turns out, are in truth "original" since they are less a mechanical repetition than a profound parody. Just as the ingenious sleuth C. Auguste Dupin in "The Murders in the Rue Morgue" advises by asking "what has occurred that has *never* occurred before" instead of "what has occurred" (414; emphasis added), it is sensible to examine Poe's subtle treatment and re-presentation of those authoritative texts instead of simply

locating the sources that Poe is said to have plagiarized.

As Mukhtar Ali Isani suggests, three identifiable sources for Poe's Indian episode (i.e. the Benares Uprising of 1781) are G. R. Gleig's *Memoirs of the Life of Warren Hastings*, Macaulay's review of *Memoirs*, and Richard Sheridan's speech at the trial of Hastings (38). Taking Macaulay's account as an example, in the initial stages of the uprising, a large assembly of Indian civilians flooded the streets to rescue Rajah Cheyte Sing, who had been arrested by Hastings, the Governor-General of Bengal. The rebellious multitude caught the British forces off guard and inflicted heavy casualties. At this critical juncture, "An English officer of more spirit than judgment, eager to distinguish himself, made a premature attack on the insurgents beyond the river. His troops were entangled in narrow streets, and assailed by a furious population. He fell, with many of his men; and the survivors were forced to retire" (Macaulay 605–606). However, the British forces quickly regrouped from the assault and swiftly mobilized available troops from surrounding areas to mount a counterattack, with the result that "The tumultuary army of the Rajah was put to rout. His fastnesses were stormed. In a few hours, above thirty thousand men left his standard, and returned to their ordinary avocations" (606). Both Macaulay and two other sources all conform to the historical fact that "Hastings' main party was never truly besieged but, surrounded by a hostile populace, it was in grave danger until a relieving force arrived" (Isani 38). Evidently, while drawing heavily on these sources in his depiction of the Indian insurrection, Poe has also deviated from their accounts. He deliberately intensifies the historical crisis: where records suggest Hastings's temporary vulnerability, the tale exaggerates it into an "imminent peril of his life," while transforming a tactical setback into the British troops' desperate siege (663). Moreover, Oldeb's fatal sally and the subsequent narrative interruption even allow for the possibility of British defeat. In this sense, Poe adopts what Linda Hutcheon calls "parody"—"a form of repetition with ironic critical distance." In other words, while preserving the basic historical facts by repeating previous accounts of the Benares Uprising, he simultaneously exerts a "potentially revolutionary impact" on white colonial history through ironic reframing (xii)—that is, by re-creating conditions favorable to the indigenous and potentially reserving a triumphant ending for them. Supposing that Poe turns to the authoritative texts for historical information "capable of sustaining imaginative interpolations" (Isani 38), the reversed ending of his tale then serves as nothing more than a paradox since it could simply ruin the last grain of historical truth.

Another model for Poe's story, as Boyd Carter notes, is Charles Brockden Brown's Indian narrative *Edgar Huntly* (1799). Carter does find a close correspondence between Poe's and Brown's texts but he fails to grasp the seeming irrelevance of the parallels to "the themes of hypnosis, telepathy, and metempsychosis" and of "the Oriental setting of Oldeb's murder [to] the Ragged Mountains" so he hastily attributes such parallels as "character relationships" and "descriptions" to the "fascination Brown's *Edgar Huntly* had for Poe" (195). Unlike Carter whose critical acumen is somehow compromised by a formalist reading of Poe's tale, G. R. Thompson carries the point forward and observes that by invoking Oldeb and the hyena, "Poe was burlesquing, even parodying, *Edgar Huntly*" (459–460). But that is what Thompson has left unexamined—namely, the rationale behind Poe's parody. Curiously, Carter's cognitive limitation and Thompson's incomplete interpretation are complementary given the recurring motif of the tale—"Indians." Carter has noticed the (in)comparability of British India and the American South[5] while Thompson has revealed the parodic nature of Poe's tale. Taken together, their discoveries give a convincing example of, as I will show, how Poe parodies the mainstream colonialist narrative.

Washington Irving's "Rip Van Winkle" (1819) is also believed to be another source of inspiration for Poe. For example, the motifs of mountain exploration and revolution constitute the intertextual evidence. Stuart Levine's argument merits consideration that Poe "may have selected the mountains of Virginia for much the same reason that Irving chose the Catskills: because he thought they offered a setting in which the author could "'get away' with more than he could in more prosaic places" (138–139), insofar as one can appreciate their use of local folklores. Perhaps revolution is a most discernible motif shared by the two writers. But it is also where their similarities end: Irving presents a sharp contrast between the pre- and post-Revolutionary periods whereas Poe intentionally re-writes the Indian insurrection and even aligns it with "that of the thirteen [American] colonies" (Williams 57). With his tactful word-play of "Indian" and focus on antithesis between repression and revolution, Poe raises his (inter)national awareness to a higher level than Irving. Then it is no wonder that Christopher Rollason recognizes in this tale some "anticipating elements of the dynamic of today's knife-that-cuts-both-ways globalization and India's surprising participation in it" (109).

Although Poe might have capitalized on these noted texts, his debt does not undermine his literary creativity but rather confirms his satiric genius.[6] Perhaps Poe's role as parodist is easily misunderstood in his relation to contemporary colonialist discourses. John Carlos Rowe, for instance, singles out some imperialist expressions that the protagonist Bedloe adopts in the tale to prove what he calls Poe's "imperial fantasy." Although Rowe incisively identifies "Poe's model for imperial power in North America and India" as Great Britain, his discussion on Poe's "imperial fantasy" is open to debate overall (77). By equating what Bedloe makes of the marginalized "Indian" with Poe's racial consciousness, Rowe in some way confuses Bedloe the character with Poe the writer. When Bedloe repeats his description with such expressions as "absolutely virgin," "the first adventurer," and "the uncouth and fierce races of men" (657–658), Poe in fact intends not to endorse but parody Bedloe's colonialist mentality and egoistic rhetoric which figured prominently in the Jacksonian era and even in mainstream Western thought of the time. In the early colonial imagination of Euro-Americans, one important reason why America was called the "New" World was that they viewed the Native Americans as beasts, the racial other who lacked subjectivity. As Governor William Bradford of Plymouth put it:

> The place […] was some of those vast, and unpeopled countries of America, which are fruitful, and fit for habitation; being devoid of all civil inhabitants; where there are only savage, and brutish men, which range up, and down, little otherwise than the wild beasts of the same… [the savage people] are cruel, barbarous, and most treacherous, being most furious in their rage, and merciless … with other cruelties horrible to be related. (56–57)

By the 18th century, the stigmatization of Native Americans was further whitewashed as "scientific" discourse under the complicit framework of Enlightenment thought. Human society was believed to be constantly progressing and evolving, with white people, who adhered to scientific rationality and thereby bore the duty to spread the light of civilization and knowledge to those dark corners where Indians were one of the inferior races in need of salvation. Such Progressivism clearly presupposes a racial hierarchy: white people at the top and people of color at the bottom. Paradoxically, however, in whites' civilizing of Native Americans, the latter's situation did not improve at all but instead deteriorated, eventually leading to their decline and extinction. During Poe's time, mainstream American society still clung to the binary opposition of "civilization versus barbarism"

and considered the "uncivilized" Indians incompatible with and even detrimental to the nation. Thus, removal (i.e. relocating Native Americans living east of the Mississippi River to lands west of the river) became "the only method calculated in their opinion to preserve the Indian from total extinction" (Berkhofer 157). But it is highly ironic that this supposedly benevolent policy not only relocated Indians from their ancestral lands but also removed them from contemporary reality, or rather turned them into "a curiosity," "a relic of an earlier period of American history" (Foner 397).

Similarly, Indians of the Asian Subcontinent were also perceived as the barbaric other in the minds of the British. Since the Black Hole incident of Calcutta in the 1750s, British colonizers had continuously portrayed Indians as savage and cruel, and in so doing, claimed their own "civilizing mission" in India as an effort to help the indigenous rid themselves of such appalling inclinations. For instance, the founder of the Royal Asiatic Society, William Jones, opined by the end of the 18th century that, Indians now appeared "degenerate and abased," and in front of Europe the "sovereign Princess," India, and even Asia, could only serve as her "Handmaid" ("Second Anniversary" 406; "Third Anniversary" 421). Roy Harris also argues that the British came to India "not as colonialist adventurers pillaging the riches of the East, but as restoring a far-flung, ancient outpost of Aryan civilization to its rightful place within the corresponding political boundaries of the modern world" (qtd. in Liu 57). In essence, British imperialists, like their transatlantic counterparts, sought to explain why Indians as the other "deserved to be ruled" through the binary discourse of civilization versus barbarism (Said xi).

Poe was well-versed in and critical of these colonial histories. Contrary to D. H. Lawrence's assertion that "Poe has no truck with Indians or Nature. He makes no bones about Red Brothers and Wigwams," (65) Poe actually demonstrates profound sympathy for Native Americans and subtly expresses criticism toward white colonization. When Bedloe the imperial "adventurer" advocates the notion of an uninhabited continent, Poe actually intends to critique the settler colonialism: the North American continent was not "new" at all, as it had already been inhabited. It is just that the aboriginal inhabitants were either driven away or massacred by Anglo-Americans. Apart from "A Tale of the Ragged Mountains," Poe also published two stories that sharply criticized the policy of removal around its peak period, "The Man That Was Used Up" (1839) and *The Journal of Julius Rodman* (1840): in the former, he depicts the pervasive hostility and disdain toward Native Americans in Southern society, while simultaneously satirizing how the Indian fighter General John A. B. C. Smith was dismembered or "used up" by the brutal campaign against Indians (specifically the Second Seminole War); in the latter, through Rodman's Rocky Mountain expedition, he presents a panoramic portrayal of how Indigenous peoples on the frontier were colonized and even annihilated amid the relentless westward expansion. Notably, Rodman, driven by fear, initiates an attack on the Sioux, resulting in casualties. Yet afterward, Rodman justifies his actions by claiming that "well disposed to the Sioux," the whites enter their territory merely to "trap beaver" and "see the beautiful region." However, having heard that the Sioux are a "quarrelsome race," the whites allegedly have no choice but to strike first in self-defense—a tactic meant to ensure "the future good behavior of the savages" (1229). In this sense, the novel's subtitle, *Being an Account of the First Passage Across the Rocky Mountains of North America Ever Achieved by Civilized Man*, is deeply ironic—for these so-called "civilized men" achieve their conquest through the violent suppression of the "savages."

Certainly, Poe's satire and warning about white encroachment on Native Americans in "The Oblong Box" (published in the same year as "A Tale of the Ragged Mountains") carry an even

more apocalyptic, albeit subtler significance. While the story ostensibly depicts the tragic demise of Mr. Wyatt, who sinks into the ocean clinging to his wife's coffin—a narrative seemingly unrelated to Native Americans—its key plot resonates with the undertones of a national elegy. By setting the sinking of the vessel "Independence" near Roanoke Island (marking "the site of the first English encroachment on Indian land") on the Fourth of July, Poe symbolically foreshadows the "consequences of imperial expansion" (Kennedy 379–380). Echoing his fiction, Poe also expresses sympathy for Native Americans in his critical writings. In 1844, while commenting on a Philadelphia *Public Ledger* sketch, he brings into sharp relief the atrocities endured by the indigenous people: "The Indians have been persecuted with fire, whiskey, and sword, and they are nearly exterminated" (*Collected Works* 1096). In an 1846 "Marginalia" piece, Poe went even further in his critique of white colonization by bluntly proposing that the American nation should be called "Appalachia" because "in employing this word we do honor to the Aborigines, whom, hitherto, we have at all points unmercifully despoiled, assassinated, and dishonored" (*Essays* 1415).

As for Poe's skepticism of British imperialism,[7] we can catch a glimpse of it in "The Thousand-and-Second Tale of Scheherazade" and *The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym*. In the "The Thousand-and-Second Tale of Scheherazade," Poe metaphorically compares the British warship to a mechanical sea monster controlled by "men-animals" or "the Cock-neighs," (clearly referring to Cockneys) who claim to be "circumnavigating the globe." Reminiscent of the British Empire's catastrophic colonial legacy, the sea monster is burlesqued as "a cruel demon, with bowels of sulphur and blood of fire, created by evil genii as the means of inflicting misery upon mankind" (793–794). Yet in *The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym*, Poe's critique of British (and by extension American) overseas expansion is even more intricate. After drifting at sea for several days, the American protagonist Pym is rescued by the British ship *Jane Guy* from Liverpool. From Pym's account of British maritime colonialism, we learn that besides embarking on "a sealing and trading voyage to the South Seas and Pacific," Captain Guy, the ship's captain, is also tasked with surveying the seas along the route and resolving territorial disputes between Britain and other European powers like Spain and France in the Pacific (1112). Clearly, British maritime shipping is intricately connected to its imperial expansion. This is especially pronounced in the *Jane Guy*'s commercial colonization of the Tsalal islanders. Given the island's abundant resources, the crew establish "a regular market on shore, just under the guns of the schooner," and engage in what seems like a sincere and orderly trade with the local islanders (1146). Later, in order to further expand colonial markets, the crew (including Pym) negotiate with the chief, Too-wit, to build some processing houses and warehouses near the shore and, at an astonishing speed, cut down enough trees to construct the buildings. From this, we can see that even if the *Jane Guy* is ultimately destroyed by the Tsalal islanders, Poe's critique goes beyond simply condemning the cruelty of the natives; he further accuses British (and implicitly American) colonization of being the root cause of all these disasters.[8] Viewed through this lens, white notions of racial supremacy and their rigid demarcation from the racial other are overturned, as the novel reveals a "startling identification" between the two races (Whalen 149). Hence it is necessary to distinguish between Poe and his imperialist characters and in so doing, consider how his tales serve as a burlesque of colonialist discourses.

Here what Malini Johar Schueller identifies as "subversive Orientalism" may shed light on Poe's role as parodist. That is, Poe seemingly adopts the "colonialist trope of discovery" (116) but actually ends up subverting it: he invests his characters with colonialist rhetoric not for catering to mainstream ideology but for critiquing contemporary stereotypes and prejudices. Furthermore,

Poe's approach departs from the mainstream in that he does not silence the other and eschew their contemporaneity and materiality. In "Some Words with a Mummy," Poe subverts such colonial power dynamics by animating an Egyptian mummy—a violated Oriental other—to revolt against its white oppressors, with a voice lashing out at the silent complicity of onlookers. Likewise, the "Indians" in "A Tale of the Ragged Mountains" are no longer muted or docile, but rather aggressive. They have either traumatized the colonizers or repelled them—the Indian people in Benares fight a possibly victorious battle against British invaders, an anachronism per se signifying the tale's subversive potential. In lieu of Poe's conformity to the texts of his precursors, the deviation betrays his iconoclastic idea and warrants critical attention. In a word, Poe has not so much plagiarized the texts of his predecessors as parodied the colonialist discourses deeply embedded in those borrowed texts. He has, to borrow Nathaniel Lewis's pithy observation, made "a palimpsest of the written [Indians]" (30).

Dual Narratives of the "Indians" and Poe's Critique of Anglo-American Colonialism

Except for plagiarism, "A Tale of the Ragged Mountains" raises much lively debate over the essence of Poe's Orientalism as well. Isani, for example, contends that Poe's Orientalism is a "lure" and the story is merely "a tale of Charlottesville" with "exotic cover" (38). While focusing on its local color, Isani pays much attention to Poe's representation of the American South. For Rollason, however, this tale demonstrates Poe's international awareness by foretelling "momentous future global developments," especially "the unexpected and subversive colors of a future, more equitable global order" (114–115). In contrast, Rollason's analysis highlights Poe's global vision given the tale's climactic international conflict. Convincing as they appear to some degree, both readings fail to fully recognize Poe's complication of the recurring motif without considering his clever word-play. In fact, revolving around the central pun of "Indian," Poe creates a world of doubles to connect the present with the past, the imperial with the exotic, and above all, the self with the other.

In the tale, the day when the protagonist Bedloe leaves for the Ragged Mountains is characterized by the "strange *interregnum* of the seasons which in America is termed the Indian Summer" (657; emphasis in original). Later when recounting his extraordinary experience in India to the narrator and his friend Dr. Templeton, Bedloe first describes what he has seen in the Indian Summer, namely, "[t]he thick and peculiar mist, or smoke" (658). Here the word "interregnum" makes a perfect pun since it not only refers to transitional climate but also pertains to social indeterminacy, the latter meaning of which even gives a broad hint of the ensuing insurrection and confusion in India when associated with and reinforced by the "Indian Summer" and the "mist."

More tellingly, the resonant "Indian" becomes the key pun in building bridges between the marginalized doubles at home and abroad and revealing Poe's subtle and even subversive approach to colonialist discourses. That day Bedloe rambles around the mountains as usual, only to find that this time he enters a different "absolutely virgin" region, as if he is the "first adventurer" who has "ever penetrated its recesses" (657–658). Here Bedloe's arrogant expression reeks of colonialist undertone for he apparently invokes the theory of discovery and thus "ignores the presence of Indians, denies agency to Indians, and relies upon problematic culture/nature and civilized/savage binaries" (Hulsey 35). As a conceited colonialist, he at first tends to feminize and appropriate the "newly-discovered" land although it has been previously inhabited. Then the aboriginals naturally fall victim to the

appropriation for they are either silenced or displaced. Yet if the aboriginals are still repressed here, later their presence looms large in Bedloe's mind: when Bedloe continues to linger in the mountains, he recalls the "strange stories told about these Ragged Hills, and of the uncouth and fierce races of men who tenanted their groves and caverns" and feels rather "oppressed and disconcerted" (658). It is right here that "Indians"—as textualized, static ghosts—first emerge. However, as Renée L. Bergland argues, these ghostly Indians refusing to be "buried," not only reveal the "fears" and "horrors" of white colonizers but also symbolize "unsuccessful repression," thereby posing a challenge to the colonial power structure (5). As a result, while Bedloe has managed to demonize and repress the other, the oppressed now come back to haunt and traumatize the oppressor.

Having been overwhelmed by uneasiness at the thought of Native Americans, Bedloe is soon distracted and thus (un)relieved by the "loud beating of a drum" and his encounter with a "dusky-visaged and half-naked man" followed by a hyena (658). The wild animal here serves three different purposes: firstly, due to several parallels between Poe's tale and Brown's *Edgar Huntly*, Poe's substitution of hyena for Brown's panther, as Thompson aptly points out, forms one aspect of "an insinuated burlesque" (455); secondly, as a symbol of death, the hyena forebodes Bedloe's subsequent demise; and thirdly, as a unique species living in Africa and Asia, the hyena is an important reminder of the "Indian Summer," both literally and figuratively. Then all of a sudden, Bedloe finds himself in an "Eastern-looking city, such as we read of in the Arabian Tales, but of a character even more singular than any there described" (659). Just as he earlier believed rumors and hastily concluded that the indigenous people were savage and barbaric, Bedloe here also examines the other of another type—the Indians under British colonial rule—through the lens of long-standing racial prejudices held by white people. Moreover, like many of Poe's colonialist figures, such as Psyche Zenobia in "How to Write a Blackwood Article" and the tyrant in "Hop-Frog," Bedloe is also accustomed to projecting what he reads or knows to the exotic world unknown to him: the strange city (later identified as Benares) is said to be "wildly picturesque," "as if delineated on a map" (659–660). Hence the Indians who he describes are virtually stereotypical and "text-based" (Williams 53) in the same way Native Americans are represented: exotic, poetic, yet static, historical, and devoid of agency—in a word, merely an object that can be freely written and molded at will. For instance, when justifying British rule in India, Hastings argued that "the town of Banaris [i.e. Benares] has long been deficient in all those regulations which in populous places are necessary for the preservation of peace and good order, and the protection of the property and persons of the inhabitants." Moreover, "the inhabitants of Banaris were guilty of enormities and vices which reflected the greatest disgrace on the government to which they were subject." Hence, the "establishment of Police and Courts of Judicature" was deemed necessary (91–93). This paternalistic justification extended to Hastings's broader colonial conduct. As he blatantly proclaimed:

> Whatever judgment may be passed on my particular conduct, I am yet happy that it has proved the means of calling forth the inherent virtue of my countrymen, and displaying to all the powers and people of India both the national character, and the national constitution, by such effects as have been unrecorded in their histories, and are scarce conceivable by their habits of thinking. (54)

Yet Poe would not allow for such a monolithic India, as reduced by most colonialists in recording international and interracial history. Instead, he presumably leaves the British troops

which Bedloe voluntarily joins besieged and vanquished by the Indian populace. The implied victory won by Indians, on the one hand, echoes the aforementioned affliction and trauma of those aggressive colonialists. On the other hand, it restores the agency of the so-called other and subverts the unchallenged Progressivism and doctrine of Western supremacy. Then it can be safely concluded that Poe relates American internal colonization to British global colonization through the two-in-one term "Indians," both of whom shared similar experiences, albeit in different regions. Furthermore, Poe's substitution of an American citizen for a British soldier even complicates the first consideration and alludes to America's emerging nationhood and imperialism epitomized by President John Tyler and his successor James Knox Polk. [9]

Undoubtedly, another two inseparable pairs of doubles are Bedloe and Oldeb as well as Dr. Templeton and the leech. At the beginning of the tale, the narrator confesses the impossibility of tracing Bedloe's "moral" or "physical relations" and he could only deduce from Bedloe's singular appearance that Bedloe is just "a long-interred corpse" (655). Subsequently, the narrator's deduction is confirmed by Templeton's drawing of his departed friend Oldeb which demonstrates the "miraculous similarity" between Bedloe and Oldeb (663). It is at this very moment that the dramatic irony takes effect—Bedloe indeed has close "physical relations" with someone else while the truth is more available to Templeton and readers than the patient himself. Furthermore, both men are kindred spirits, as evidenced by Bedloe's "deep sentiment of animosity" against the Indian crowd and his "inconceivable impulse" to "join the weaker party" in the insurrection (661). As an outsider and onlooker, Bedloe unexpectedly chooses to join the British troops. Yet in accordance with his disparagement of Native Americans, Bedloe here has reasonable grounds to make such a seemingly rash decision. A colonialist at heart, Bedloe, to quote Michael J. S. Williams's expression, "unconsciously mimics an imperial discourse" already sanctioned by Oldeb (56). Like his fated double, this time Bedloe's body perishes along with his previously traumatized mind. If one is acutely conscious of Bedloe's American citizenship, as is commented before, then his sick body and mind could signify the "problems within the American body politic" (Kennedy 379).

Accompanied by the troublesome twosome above, Templeton and the leech also make a corrective and curative pair. In addition to conforming to the archaic meaning of leech, Templeton is reckoned by some critics to be a malicious quack and poisonous "leech." Thompson, among others, suggests that Templeton might cling to Bedloe like a leech in light of an "ambiguous financial arrangement" between them (457). That Bedloe has been killed by the venomous leech sticking in his right "temple" apparently alludes to the double of Templeton and the leech. And Templeton's intentional murder of Bedloe is further underpinned by the fact that "[t]he poisonous sangsue of Charlottesville may always be distinguished from the medicinal leech by its blackness, and especially by its writhing or vermicular motions" (664). So here comes a vital question—why does Templeton "consciously" kill Bedloe? The key may be found in both the murderer and the murdered.

Having served in Hastings's troop, Templeton became a bosom friend of Oldeb but failed to rescue him in the Insurrection of India. Undoubtedly, Bedloe's presence gives rise to Templeton's "regretful memory of the deceased" and "uneasy, and not altogether horrorless curiosity" (663). Yet in contrast to his murder of his friend's very double, Templeton's deep regret for not saving Oldeb's life seems paradoxical and illogical. That seeming paradox, however, reveals a lot about Templeton's inner thoughts and behavioral logic: once a perpetrator of politically motivated aggression against Indians, the seventy-year-old Templeton now feels anguished over his youthful folly and decides to erase that traumatic memory. In this sense, Templeton's memory is better

termed "repressed" than "regretful" because he pretends to mourn the loss of Oldeb but actually intends to repress or even cleanse Oldeb's colonialist double, Bedloe.

In order to disclose Templeton's ulterior motive, it is worthwhile scrutinizing what the patients/victims symbolize. Before the two adventures, the narrator is indirectly informed that "a long series of neuralgic attacks" have resulted in what Bedloe now looks like (656). Prior to Bedloe's acquaintance with Templeton, those "neuralgic attacks" arise from his own unconsciousness. And that accounts for the "great benefit" that Bedloe receives from Templeton's mesmeric experiment since it helps repress his unconsciousness (656). Unfortunately, by means of morphine,[10] Bedloe's unconsciousness is inexorably reawakened and regresses to its submerged colonialist mentality. To Templeton's horror, however, Bedloe's resurfacing colonialist unconsciousness reminds him of his own (as well as Oldeb's) youthful folly, so he struggles with repression and even purgation of that haunting memory.

Perhaps it is even no more of a stretch to infer that Bedloe's experience in Benares is merely Templeton's unconscious projection[11] because Templeton admits archly at the end, "at the very period in which you fancied these things amid the hills, I was engaged in detailing them upon paper here at home" (664). Since Bedloe's will "succumbed rapidly to" that of Templeton after numerous experiments, it is possible for Templeton to put Bedloe under hypnosis even if the latter is "unaware of his presence" (656). In this case, it is highly likely that Bedloe's exotic experience is initiated (and recounted) by Templeton because by then the former has been mesmerized. For that reason, the embedded narrative seemingly told by Bedloe (compared with the frame narrative by the narrator) is divided into two parts—one narrated by Bedloe, and another by Templeton. The narrative lines of demarcation are marked first by a "small spring of water" which makes Bedloe a "new man" and then by "a shock as of a galvanic battery" through which he reverts to the "original self" (659, 662–663). Here Poe makes use of the crude punning of "current" to indicate Templeton's mesmeric practices. As Doris V. Falk has brilliantly noted, animal magnetism (or to put it another way, mesmerism) is related to a "continuous current" known as "galvanic electricity" (537). Hence, amid the state of being a "new man," Bedloe is in fact possessed by Templeton and thus experiences the Indian adventure that actually happens in Templeton's mind. Before and after the incident, Bedloe as the "original self" is just roaming, as analyzed above, in a colonialist manner in the Ragged Mountains. Supposing Templeton re-experiences and re-tells the Indian event in the person of Bedloe, it is necessary to scrutinize Templeton's mental state and his attitude towards the past colonial event.

Here the Freudian theory about the "uncanny" can perhaps illuminate the response mechanism of Templeton's (un)consciousness. Sigmund Freud terms the seemingly groundless emotions including anxiety and horror as the "uncanny" which "leads back to what is known of old and long familiar" ("Uncanny" 515). Yet what is familiar turns out to be paradoxically unfamiliar because it has been repressed or forgotten on account of earlier traumas. Freud observes that the repressed does not vanish but becomes "the prototype of the unconscious" (*Ego* 5). It frequently returns in the form of the "double," forcibly repeats past experiences, and gives rise to the "uncanny," a sensation arising from the strangely familiar. Curiously, Templeton makes a typical case for Freud's psychoanalysis. He has been traumatized by the services in Hastings's troop and the violent aggression against Indians. Having repeatedly repressed the "regretful memory" not of the deceased but of his own, Templeton seeks a rather worry-free life after the Indian battle, only to find that the fallen Oldeb has transmigrated into the American Bedloe and that Bedloe even adopts a similar colonialist attitude towards the "Indian" as his departed double once did in the British army. Upon

that discovery, Templeton's "uneasy, and not altogether horrorless curiosity" (663) nicely echoes the Freudian concept of the uncanny. Right at this very moment, what Templeton has long strived to repress unexpectedly returns, accompanied by his "compulsion to repeat" (Freud, "Uncanny," 524). Templeton unconsciously projects his repressed self onto Bedloe, as evidenced by the fact that Bedloe's adventure in the Asian Subcontinent is revealed as nothing more than Templeton's recollection of his youthful experience in India. Templeton's panic over Bedloe's narration (or his remembrance refreshed by the unconscious) again gives a vivid example of the uncanny and foreshadows his violent reaction to what he has invariably managed to repress. Having gained his composure, therefore, Templeton again has recourse to repression and even purgation.

Poe's deviant and even subversive approach in the tale can further corroborate the aforementioned psychological reading. First of all, Poe reverses not only the mesmeric assumption about a close rapport between the patient and the mesmerist but the curing effect of mesmerism. In the eyes of the narrator, Templeton develops such a tremendous rapport with Bedloe that he can easily exert an influence upon the patient without being noticed by the latter. Even Bedloe's sojourn in India turns out to be Templeton's one-sided recollection. In this sense, the cooperative treatment in which both mesmerist and patient should have been involved lapses into Templeton's hoax on and manipulation of Bedloe for a greater purpose. Besides, hypnotherapy has been invariably intended for the patient's recovery while Templeton's therapy only leads to Bedloe's physical and psychological breakdown. In contrast, some critics like Doris V. Falk insist that a "union of wills" exists between Poe's mesmerists and patients and that they are not "aimed at weakening or destroying each other's will" (540, 543). Paying less attention to his deviation from mesmeric conventions, Falk's amoral reading of Poe's mesmeric tale seems to leave the mystery of Bedloe's death unexamined.

Secondly, Poe contrasts the leech's lethality with its medical use. As Thomas Ollive Mabbott tellingly exclaims, "Neither in fact, nor in fable (before Poe's), can a poisonous sangsue (or leech) be found!" (936). Here Poe's originality or re-imagination is once again highlighted. Considering Dupin's useful advice, the "diabolic" mesmerist and the poisonous leech truly make a perfect pair because they are the correlated signs of "what has occurred that has *never* occurred before" in unraveling the mystery around Bedloe's death (414; emphasis added). And Williams's sagacious observation that there is a resemblance between leech and leechee (or lychee, to give its more common spelling), a type of tropical fruit native to India, also provides a revealing insight into the leech's deadliness. Williams concludes from Macaulay's account of Hastings's retirement that Poe may satirically substitute the venomous leech for the delicious leechee which Hastings failed to transplant into Britain, so as to expose the "inevitable fruits of imperial ambition" (58).

Last but not least, Poe deliberately distorts historical fact and allows for potential victory for the Indians. This clue, combined with the first two, confirms the psychological reading above. Having been traumatized in the Indian insurrection, Templeton feels horrified at the "recurrence of the repressed," or namely, the sight of Bedloe whose colonialist consciousness stimulates his repressed unconsciousness and recollection. During the mesmeric experiment he unconsciously projects his mind onto Bedloe and re-experiences the tumultuous incident that once happened in Benares in the person of Bedloe. After that, however, Templeton resorts to repression again. With a poisonous leech, the guilty "leech" disowns and kills his patient as a symbolic apology for his youthful folly and antidote to the colonialist mind.

In tandem with Poe's treatment of and comment on Native Americans elsewhere, "A Tale of the Ragged Mountains," especially its ending, registers his concern on and even sympathy for American

"Indians." Evidently, Poe's compassion for Native Americans is crucial for our understanding of Bedloe's mental distress at the passing thought of the indigenous people. But Poe's vision is broader than it is usually supposed since he has also focused on the Indians of the Asian Subcontinent. In his time, both "Indians" at home and abroad have suffered from exploitation and repression. By means of the tactful word play, Poe contrapuntally correlates the experiences of two marginalized groups, including their potential counteraction against colonizers to imply that "[imperial] expansion and the will to mastery underpinning such enterprises as the Indian Wars lead to violence that threatens indigenous others and US [British] agents alike" (Karafilis 20).

By contrast, a comparative reading of Bedloe and Oldeb shows that their diction and manner are both expressive of colonialist discourses on the racial other, whether internally or externally. But their physical and psychological miseries in turn speak volumes for the haunting traumas that the resistant "Indians" have inflicted upon the colonizers, thereby demonstrating how subversive Poe's tale is. Furthermore, Templeton's remembrance via Bedloe's body puts a nice touch to the story and registers Poe's warning against the deeply entrenched imperial mindset. That is, Bedloe's resemblance to and identification with Oldeb reminds Templeton of his early trauma in India and reawakens his long-repressed unconsciousness. Hence Templeton unconsciously and compulsively repeats the Indian experience via Bedloe's body. As soon as he realizes this, however, Templeton resolves to repress and even purge Bedloe through (or as) a poisonous leech. Indeed, the haunting "Indians" loom so large in his mind that they are emblematical of "Mournful and Never-ending Remembrance" (Poe, *Essays* 25).

The 19th century witnessed a keen interest of Americans in "Indians" and an emerging project of nationhood. As Robert F. Berkhofer notes, "the Indian figured prominently in the higher forms of American art and literature […] between the War of 1812 and the Civil War as a result of two trends: cultural nationalism and romanticism" (86). In other words, contrary to their marginalized status in society, Native Americans held a significant position in the imaginative landscape of American literature. However, this alleged cultural centrality did not necessarily validate their societal importance. In fact, by imagining Indians as "safely dead and historically past" (90), the mainstream of United States society sought to bolster its own cultural and historical confidence while simultaneously advocating Manifest Destiny, thereby promoting "nationalism and the project of empire-building" (Carr 167). Similar to the Native Americans, Indians in Asia also suffered from imperial invasion and stigmatization. The British not only occupied their homeland but also tried to portray them as savage and uncivilized in order to "explain and justify European rule" (Dirks 34).

Poe has always been attentive to Anglo-American colonial histories. While he responds to cultural nationalism by actively writing Indian stories and expansion narratives, his approach is often revisionist and subversive. In "A Tale of the Ragged Mountains," Poe's considerable borrowings from other authoritative texts are not derivative but parodic so long as one can fully recognize Poe's departure from and critique of the colonialist discourses. In recounting the triangular relationship between Dr. Templeton, Oldeb, and Bedloe through the central pun of "Indian," Poe not only represents a bizarre case of hypnosis but also tells a story of how colonialism is activated, suppressed, and subverted. In this sense, the ill-fated and decaying body of Bedloe signifies, to cite Kennedy's apt comment, "the site of symbolic retribution for the violent appropriation" of the colonized (381). Accordingly, Templeton's intentional murder manifests a symbolic apology for his youthful folly and antidote to the colonialist mind. A nice finishing touch indeed, the tale's concluding word "error" then marks not so much the misspelling of Bedloe's name

in the obituary as the wrongdoing of Bedloe and his ilk against "Indians." In switching between the domestic and the foreign through "Indians," the story is broader in scope and perspective than it is often expected and is in effect a tale "neither in nor out of" the Ragged Mountains.

Notes

1. This work was supported by the Department of Education of Hunan Province "A Study of the Metahistorical Imagination in Nathaniel Hawthorne's Fiction" (grant number: 24B0071).

2. All textual quotations of Poe's fiction, including this paper's research subject, are from *Poetry and Tales* and all page references for quotations given are from that text.

3. Poe once declared his distance from American themes in "MS. Found in a Bottle": "Of my country and of my family I have little to say" (189). Combined with his penchant for exotic subject matter, Poe often leaves the impression of being denationalized and depoliticized. However, as Terence Whalen points out, Poe adopted this approach to avoid directly representing contentious issues (such as slavery) and instead sought to "overcome political dissension" by presenting his works in a manner "acceptable to white readers" (112). This same logic applies to "A Tale of the Ragged Mountains." As I will demonstrate in the following analysis, although the tale is initially set in the American South, it then shifts between the local and the exotic, weaving connections within the Anglo-American imperial lineage. In doing so, it subtly alludes to the highly contentious Indian Question at the time and critiques Anglo-American imperial expansionism.

4. As Berkhofer aptly suggests, "Indian" is a misnomer and a "White invention" for Native Americans since the latter "neither called themselves by a single term nor understood themselves as a collectivity" (3). I pun on the meaning of "Indian" here, in large part to highlight the White colonization of Indians and Native Americans, both politically and culturally.

5. Williams has brilliantly identified some resemblances between the Indian and American scenes. Firstly, the Indian city Benares, where Templeton and Oldeb once fought, parallels Saratoga, where Templeton and Bedloe (re)meet since both places are sites of revolution against British rule. Secondly, the "suggestive association" of Thomas Jefferson and Cheyte Sing, and of Charles Cornwallis and Hastings further highlights the revolution motif (57–58).

6. I have benefited greatly from Dallas Hulsey's insightful comment that Poe has rejected the ideology of imperial expansion by "doubl[ing] the plagiarism," or more specifically "plagiarizing the plagiarists, which creates a heavy sense of irony" (35).

7. Zwarg points out that at the time, British colonial activities were widely reported in Anglo-American magazines, and as a keen magazinist, Poe must have been well aware of this. See Zwarg, p. 9.

8. In line with my argument, *Pym* also harbors a sarcastic tone with its description of the assistance given to the *Jane Guy* crew by the Tsalal islanders. It mentions that Too-wit keeps his promise and provides the white crew with a plentiful supply of "fresh provision," including tortoises, ducks, and scurvy grass, the last of which has "proved of incalculable benefit in restoring those of our men who had shown symptoms of disease. In a very short time we had not a single person on the sick-list" (1146). Upon reading this somewhat sentimental and Thanksgiving-like passage, readers would be reminded of the primal colonial scene in America—where the Puritans, initially aided by the natives, survived their hardships but later turned the tables by colonizing and exploiting the indigenous people. Before long this led to a prolonged and bitter confrontation between the two races. Moreover, Jace Weaver contends that the islanders' absurd language and nonsensical names (like Too-wit and Nu-Nu) mirror white dismissal of indigenous speech, thus positioning them as "surrogates for American Natives" (56). Therefore, Poe's veiled irony here provides the foundation for the argument I will present in the following—having immigrated from the British Empire to North America, Euro-Americans not only inherited the imperialist mentality but actively perpetuated its colonial expansionist trajectory.

9. In the 1840s, during Poe's writing period, the United States, due to its growing national strength, gradually

revealed its imperial ambition and even dared to compete with Britain. For example, an ardent supporter of the doctrine of Manifest Destiny, John Tyler exhibited clear expansionist tendencies in both domestic and foreign affairs. He not only defeated and removed Indians in the Second Seminole War, annexed Texas and resolved border disputes with British Canada, but actively expanded America's influence in Asia and the Pacific by signing the Treaty of Wanghia with China and issuing the "Tyler Doctrine" to curb the expansion of European powers such as Britain and France in the Pacific. His successor James Knox Polk demonstrated an even tougher stance toward Britain on the Oregon boundary dispute. He used the popular slogan "Fifty-four forty or fight" to warn Britain that if it was unwilling to compromise, the United States was prepared to resolve the dispute through war. This firm position apparently reflected Polk's ambition to expand US territory. In fact, Poe exposes America following (or even surpassing) Britain's footsteps in overseas expansion in *Pym*. In the colonization of Tsalal Island, although the British Captain Guy is the direct decision-maker, the instigator behind him—Pym of America—should not be underestimated. Pym dismisses Captain Guy's plan to return home due to difficulties as "timid and ill-timed suggestions" and strongly urges him to continue the southern expedition, which nearly leads to their complete annihilation (1134). From this, Poe not only alludes to Britain's overseas colonization but also hints at America's imperial ambition to replace Britain as the new colonial hegemon. In "A Tale of the Ragged Mountains," this imperial lineage is further evidenced by Oldeb, a British subject who is believed to be reincarnated as the American citizen Bedloe.

10. In the 19th century, morphine or opium was not only closely associated with romantic sentiment (such as in Thomas De Quincey's *Confessions of an English Opium-Eater*), but also, as a product of British colonial economy in regions like India, becoming a catalyst for colonialist imagination. Therefore, that Bedloe enters India from the Ragged Mountains under the influence of morphine metaphorically represents the collusion between American and British colonialism. See Roy, p. 484.
11. I have been greatly inspired by Sidney E. Lind's sagacious observation that "Bedloe's strange experience is revealed in its true light as being a mesmeric trance transmitted from Templeton's mind, and not the workings of metempsychosis" (1083). Having elaborated on a series of coincidences (including Bedloe's death) in the tale, however, Lind still fails to grasp the real reason why Templeton would "accidentally" kill Bedloe. Therefore, I would like to continue where Lind leaves off from a more plausible perspective.

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