

Englisch-Sprachklausuren

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7. April 2004 – [Nicola Gess](#)

Edgar Allan Poe: „The Poetic Principle“ (1850).

in: **Edgar Allan Poe:** *The Complete Tales and Poems*. With an Introduction by Hervey Allen. New York (The Modern Library) 1938, S. 889-907.

In speaking of the Poetic Principle, I have no design to be either thorough or profound. While discussing, very much at random, the essentiality of what we call Poetry, my principal purpose will be to cite for consideration, some few of those minor English or American poems which best suit my own taste, or which, upon my own fancy, have left the most definite impression. By ‚minor poems‘ I mean, of course, poems of little length. And here, in the beginning permit me to say a few words in regard to a somewhat peculiar principle, which, whether rightfully or wrongfully, has always had its influence in my own critical estimate of the poem. I hold that a long poem does not exist. I maintain that the phrase, ‚a long poem,‘ is simply a flat contradiction in terms.

I need scarcely observe that a poem deserves its title only inasmuch as it excites, by elevating the soul. The value of the poem is in the ratio of this elevating excitement. But all excitements are, through a psychal necessity, transient. That degree of excitement which would entitle a poem to be so called at all, cannot be sustained throughout a composition of any great length. After the lapse of half an hour, at the very utmost, it flags – fails – a revulsion ensues – and then the poem is, in effect, and in fact, no longer such.

[...]

It is to be hoped that common-sense, in the time to come, will prefer deciding upon a work of Art, rather by the impression it makes – by the effect it produces – than by the time it took to impress the effect, or by the amount of ‚sustained effort‘ which had been found necessary in effecting the impression.