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Reading Death in the Folds: Transference and Sufferance in Poe's "The Purloined Letter"

Edgar Allan Poe's "The Purloined Letter" has been one of the essential texts of psychoanalytic literary criticism since Jacques Lacan's seminar on it was published in 1956. Lacan conceives of this detective story as a dramatization of psychoanalysis, which places the analyst in a position of a person who repeats his own situation in the symbolic order. Lacan's emphasis on diversion and sufferance implies the perversity of "The Purloined Letter" as a literary text as well as the "letter" in the story. For that reason, his interpretation of the story can be considered not only a new approach to psychoanalytic technique but also a reflection on the act of reading. Departing from this "odd" place occupied by the letter, this paper will discuss how psychoanalysis and reading a literary text implicate each other. Following the traces of Lacan's conception of transference in Poe's "The Purloined Letter," the paper will try to understand the perversity of the text, whereby it aims to reach the site of *jouissance* in literature, as described by Barthes in *The Pleasure of the Text*: "It is not the reader's 'person' that is necessary to me, it is this site: the possibility of a dialectics of desire, of an *unpredictability* of bliss: the bets are not placed, there can still be a game."

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