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21st Century Readings of Gothic Elements in some of EA. Poe Works

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Dedication

We here by dedicate this dissertation titled “21st century readings of gothic elements in some of EA Poe’s works” to our dear families who have been nothing but loving.

Acknowledgements

First of all, I would like to express my gratitude to the almighty Allah for enabling us to complete this dissertation.

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Abstract

This dissertation, titled "21st century reading of gothic elements in some of Edgar Allan Poe's works," aims to investigate the gothic elements (*the settings, atmosphere, suspense, and the uncanny*) in order to gain a better understanding of what made gothic fiction very significant in the nineteenth century but less notable in the twenty-first. In this regard, the existing body of research consists of three parts, the first part is a literature review; the second part is a psychoanalytic reading as well as the interpretation of the selected stories, *The Black Cat* and *the Fall of the House of Usher*; the third part is a study of gothic elements on various levels. Reader response theory and psychoanalysis theory were opted for. The basis of its significance, according to this study, derives from the emotional and psychological connection that people of that era have with works that are perceived as reflections of societal fear and anxiety, as opposed to readers in the twenty-first century who seek artistic enjoyment and aesthetics.

Key words: Gothic elements, Edgar Allan Poe, Psychoanalysis, gothic literature.

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General Introduction

Background of the study

In the 18th and the 19th centuries, the Gothic tradition arose in reaction to a period of rapid and far-reaching social, cultural, and spiritual upheaval. Works in this genre are inextricably tied to the social environment in which they were written, and much critical attention has been paid to the depiction of societal and cultural fear in the face of the breakdown of tradition, gender roles, oppression, and racism in Gothic literature. Gothic literature adapts to its social context, enabling individuals to act out their anxieties in a safe environment. *Frankenstein* is a reaction to a burgeoning science and industrialization that looked to promise humanity a great deal of power at the turn of the nineteenth century; the novel examines what accountability comes with that power. *Dracula*, at the other end of the century, addresses a variety of quick developments — the New Woman, technology, the other experienced through empire; the other at home, and the uncontained dread of disease.

Some Gothic expressions were also sexualized; expressing repressions and fears about women's sexuality (*Dracula* is excellent for all of this). The Victorians regarded medicine as a formal science being taken over by males, and one of the things that men did was establish what defined normal sexual health for women, with terrible repercussions. Industrial growth, technological advances, and imperialism had influenced every area of life by the end of the nineteenth century. England had transitioned from a feudal, agricultural civilization to an urban, industrialized society. Although classes were maintained, power had moved as literacy and voting rights increased. Women have begun to campaign for equality and independence. All of these significant shifts have prompted people to reconsider their beliefs, as well as worry and concern about the future. These worries might be expressed safely in Gothic literature.

Edgar Allan Poe was an American writer, poet, critic, and editor who most is known for his vivid short tales and poetry that captivated people all over the world. The contemporary detective fiction was born as a result of his inventive storytelling and stories of mystery and terror. Many of Poe's writings become literary classics

including *The Black Cat* and *The Fall of the House of Usher* Some elements of Poe's life, much with his writings, are shrouded in mystery, and the borders between reality and fiction have been more muddled since his death. His writings are 'the representative' of gothic literature.

Aim of the study

The aim of this study is to understand what is particular about the gothic fiction that made it significant in past eras and why it is less notable in the 21st century.

Objectives of the study

This study inspects the use of the gothic elements in Poe's *the fall of the house ofusher* (1839) and *the black cat* (1843). It has three primary objectives:

To examine how suspense, atmosphere and settings are created.

To investigate the uncanny motif in *the Fall of the House of Usher* and *the Black Cat*. To offer an interpretation of *the Fall of the House of Usher* and *the Black Cat*.

Justification

The Fall of the House of Usher and *the Black Cat* by Edgar Allan Poe were chosen for a variety of reasons rather than at random. First and foremost, with the thought that gothic literature is a mirror of societal fear and behaviours, we picked these stories to get a sense of the world Poe is attempting to convey via his characters. *The Fall of the House of Usher* was picked for its notions that reflect Freudian theories and might offer us an insight into Poe's knowledge of the human mind, as well as its gothic features. *The Black Cat* was picked because it suits the gothic genre on several levels, as well as having themes and points in connection with the previously chosen story.

Motivation

Gothic fiction has been huge and significant during the 18th and 19th century, we conducted this study to better understand what was unique about Gothic fiction at the time and why it is of minor importance in the 21st century.

Research Questions

To achieve our aim, we investigate the use of the gothic elements as 21st century readers taking EA Poe works as cases, and to answer the following questions:

- 1-How does Edgar Allan Poe create the gothic elements in his both stories *the Fall of the House of Usher* and *the Black Cat* to achieve a perfect gothic short story?
- 2-What presumably happens in *the Black Cat* and *the Fall of the House of Usher*?
- 3- Is gothic literature a reflection to societal anxieties and emotions?

Methodology

In order to conduct our study, the reader response theory and psychoanalysis are to be used. The reader response theory is opted to conduct a reading, specifically a reading of a 21st century reader to form an understanding over the difference between the two eras. Freud's psychoanalysis theory is selected for the concepts needed to investigate the uncanny motif, examine Poe's portrayal of the psychological state of the characters, and analyze the gaps in the stories to offer our interpretation.

Dissertation structure

This study is divided into three chapters. The first chapter is a literature review; the second chapter is a psychoanalytic reading of *the Fall of the House of Usher* and *the Black Cat*, an examination of the uncanny motif and its utilization and the different features Poe used; as well as an interpretation of each story. The third chapter is more or less an examination of left the gothic elements i.e. the settings, atmosphere, and suspense on the various levels given in the stories.

Chapter one:

Literature Review

Introduction

Poe's great interest and awareness of psychology and the human mind has been evident in many if not all of his works, he wrote in a tone that made the reader feel the uncanny, his exploration of the human mind is done through his characters and narrators who are suffering psychologically, either they are being projected to torture or they are simply insane; the psychological horror Poe presents indicates how he believes that the human mind is the source of one's sufferance. "The Fall of The of Usher" and "The Black Cat" are great examples of Poe creating maniacs and psychologically suffering characters. Many critics and researchers have interpreted both stories thoroughly, and several interpretations arisen as a result make the stories even more ambiguous, in this chapter we will be discussing several works that are dealing with the Fall of the House of Usher and the Black Cat and their results.

Starting with works that deal with the uncanny motif, whether as a central theme or as an extension to another, as well as related concepts such as trauma, estrangement, mind portrayal, and psychological interpretation using psychoanalysis, The first is Marita Nadal's Trauma and the Uncanny in Edgar Allan Poe's "Ligeia" and "The Fall of the House of Usher". Nadal suggests in her paper that trauma and the uncanny are linked in the sense of crisis in history and truth. The uncanny, like trauma, connotes haunting, uncertainty, repetition, a tension between the known and the unknown, and the unwelcome return of the past. The characteristics of these concepts are used as a starting point to examine the relationship between trauma and the uncanny in both stories, but we will only focus on the analysis concerned with "The Fall of the House of Usher." Many years before the concepts entered the domain of psychoanalysis, Poe explored this relationship in

an original way; trauma involves "a crisis of representation, a history of truth, and a narrative of time," while the historical uncanny is "a disquieting feeling that the past has not passed....It arises when temporal boundaries are breached... The historical uncanny can be provoked by not-so-welcome reminders that we consign to a bygone era—in this case, caste and blood-borne privilege—remain alive (and wailing!) today, signs of an era to which we resist returning and yet are ineluctably drawn" (Norman, *Dead Women Talking*, 31). The Ushers are cut out from the national time and flow of time as society changed from the 18th to the 19th centuries; additionally, the lack of historical and geographical background contributes to highlighting the unreadability of the Ushers' past and the nature of their ailment, all of which is characterized by the "conflation of loss and absence" that characterizes "structural trauma."

The ushers were stuck in the house and were wasting away, victims of a "family evil" and a "peculiar" atmosphere, but they had no choice but to survive. Soon after the narrator arrives at the mansion, Madeline dies, and her brother's melancholy and nervousness worsen. Madeline returns later to claim her brother for burying her alive, which is a metaphor for the return of the repressed; she returns from her burial, and Roderick dies a victim of "the terrors he had anticipated". In fact, his anxious anticipation is linked not only to the future and Madeline's return, but with the past too. As Lyndsey puts it in Paul Crosthwaite's *Trauma, Postmodernism, and the Aftermath of World War II*, "Anxiety is predicted on the repetition of a past trauma: anxious anticipation has the potential to plunge the ego into traumatic anxiety anew and devastate its defences." "'Dreading forward', for Freud, carries the seed of a past trauma." Madeline is a figure of catachresis, which is the incorrect use of something; Poe created her to convey everything that the story implies but does not tell. Madeline exists in a liminal space between the present and the past, between the known and the unknown. Lacapra describes the story's dark context as "related to transhistorical absence—absence of/at origins," and structural trauma may be triggered by "in terms of the separation from the mother... the encounter with the "real," alienation from species-being." According to this, it may seem doubtful to conclude that the twins suffer structural trauma. In his words, "when absence, approximated to loss, becomes the object of mourning, the mourning may (perhaps must) become impossible and turn continuously back into endless

melancholy." The equivalence or even conflation of absence and loss produces a melancholy or mournful reaction to the closure of metaphysics, a generalized "hauntology." The melancholy depicted in *The Fall of the House of Usher* is linked to absence: abstract, unspeakable, and difficult to pinpoint.

In Norman's interpretation of the story, the twins are cut off from the outside world: "the uncaniness of the text is related to the breach between the new American nation and the old world." They are cut off from national time and they have become "anachronisms," frail, decaying relics." It is important to note that the narrator never gives a concrete reference to place and time, only "singularly, dreary track of country" (206) "very ancient family" (207) "the discoloration of ages had been great" (208) the narrator remarks. As a result, the lack of a specific geographical and historical context only serves to highlight the undreadability of the Usher's past and the enigmatic core of their ailment: in short, the "conflation of absence and loss" that characterizes structural trauma. The truth is that its words are self-reflexive rather than explanatory, and in the end, the text offers no explanation for the twins' prison-like situation, the malignant atmosphere of the setting, Madeline's premature burial, or the family evil that the Usher reproduces and inherits; it only emphasizes its own cryptic nature, hinting towards a traumatic past that eludes representation. A trauma reading on the fall of the House of Usher is more likely a way to clear up some ambiguities surrounding the story.

Another paper that discusses *the Fall of the House of Usher* and dealing with the uncanny is *The Gothic Uncanny: Selected Mind-Images in Literature and Film* by Graça P. Corrêa. In her study, she suggested that the uncanny comes from the setting, the atmosphere, and eerie domestic environment as well as themes presented in the tale, such as premature burial and a sentient house. This paper chose the notion that suggests that the events of the tale are those of a dream, a reflection of an insane mind. Freud reckons that the uncanny is likely to arise "when the distinction between imagination and reality is effaced" (Freud, *The Uncanny*, 15), when the line between reality and imagination is blurred and perception becomes foggy. Correa notes that the confusing relationships, impossibilities, contradictions, and the narrator's description of events and lost connections encapsulate the features of dreams, and she basically says that the *Fall of the House of Usher* is set in an

uncanny place where reality and unreality have blurred. For me, the lost narratives, contradictions, and inconsistencies stem from the narrator's unreliability and insane mind; it could not be a dream, but it could also be hallucinations.

Another research that touches the uncanny but in another tale we are dealing with is *Animal Invasion: Estrangement and Domestic Uncanny in Edgar Allan Poe's "The Black Cat" and "The Murder in the Rue de Morgue,"* but we are only going to talk about "The Black Cat," written by Kirstin Mollegaard. This paper investigated domestic space in relation to the uncanny; the victim of murder in this story is the narrator's wife, and her corpse is ironically disposed of within the walls of her own home. Freud's concept of the uncanny relates greatly to the concept of home, as the German word for uncanny is *Das Unheimlich*, which means unhomely, and *Das Heimlich* means homely. Through estrangement, Mollegaard explains the uncanny in close, gendered places of home (the wife as pet and the husband as master). The first is the estrangement between the narrator and his wife. As the narrator said, he used to pretty much love and respect her, but he started abusing her later on when his alcoholism got out of control. The second is the narrator in himself; he is estranged from the rest of humanity in his prison cell, on death row.

The Black Cat has two important uncanny themes within domestic space that come up in the Black Cat. The first is estrangement, and the second is madness, or what Poe calls perverse. In his words, the perverse is a kind of irrational, narcissistic madness that, triggered by conflicts with figures of authority or with social norms in general, leads to self-destruction. However, estrangement has to do with anxieties about individuals' experiences, as Mollegaard says. However, unlike the narcissistic megalomania and sadistic violence associated with perverseness, estrangement functions in Poe's works as a vehicle for paranoia, phobias, and irrational fantasies. The prison cell, and by extension, the liminal space of death row and the imminent execution, frames the narrator's isolation from the rest of humanity and from life itself. Estrangement and perverseness lead to inevitable hysteria, yet the narrator blames his violence on the "fiend of intemperance" or alcohol, yet as Mollegaard states, there was no indication of him being intoxicated when he murdered his wife, and he absolutely showed no remorse, even going as far as to call himself a "free

man" after he entombed his wife. Mollegaard questions his wording and why he felt like a free man, and then explains that it is his jealousy.

Using Freud's concept of "the token of repression," the wife tries to protect the cat from her husband's abuse only to be abused herself, and the killing of Pluto, "the favourite son". Mollegaard makes sense in the oedipal concepts¹, and she followed this and thought of Pluto's uncanny and the cats' lost eyes are indications of the castration complex, the fear of losing limbs or organs; these all raise the uncanny within the readers alongside the narrator. Another point this study raises is the lack of motive for killing his wife. He attempted to explain himself for killing Pluto and trying to kill the second cat by blaming alcohol, but he afforded no reason when he assaulted and murdered his wife. It is indeed troubling and especially morally troubling as Joseph Stark explains, "There is no explanation for the murderer's motive" (Stark, *The Mystery of Will*, 261-262). Stark is on the same wave level as Poe, who says in his essay "Instinct vs. Reason—A Black Cat" that "the line which demarcates the instinct of the brute creation from the boasted reason of man is, beyond doubt, of the most shadowy and unsatisfactory character" (1). Stark believes that the story is about issues of moral responsibility and the inexplicability of human evil.

Mollegaard questions the narrator if it is instinct that drives you to kill your wife as a reaction to her stopping him from killing a cat and then proceeds to render that insanity the culprit. As Ed Piacentino argues, "when anxiety and frustration threaten a person's security and self-esteem, as in the case of Poe's narrator, such a combination of repression and displacement – though probably not to the extreme the narrator carries it – though probably not to the degree the narrator carries it – may be regarded as a predictable natural reaction" (Piacentino, *The Black Cat as psychobiography*). The paper concludes that the narrator is trying to sway the readers into believing that the cats are demonic tormentors who invaded and provoked him into murder, which I strongly agree with, and that insane or not, he murdered his wife and walled her in her own home, making the domestic space uncanny.

¹ When a jealous father named Kronos, the archetypal jealous father, cannot bear to share his wife's affection and kills his children.

The next work we are discussing is PREGNANCY AND LEGITIMATE TERROR IN POE'S "The Fall of the House of Usher" by William A. Davis, Jr, a figurative reading of the tale that employs psychosexual theory. In his paper Davis proposes that Roderick impregnated his sister for the sake of continuing the family line. The Usher family holds a tradition of marrying their blood making them a "direct line of descent" (Poe, complete tales, 209) and the fact that Roderick and Madeline are the last of the Usher making them prone to incest, or rather Roderick forcing himself on his sister impregnating her: "The Fall of the House of Usher" is Poe's deliberate study of a "family evil" (91) examined in its ordered stages – incest, pregnancy (or pregnancies), and miscarriage(s). In this reading, Madeline Usher, perhaps a victim of incestuous rape and multiple forced pregnancies, a mere silenced vessel entombed by her brother's will, emerges from her burial place as a tragic but victorious figure" (Davis, Pregnancy and Legitimate terror, 9). This study views Madeline as a victim of incestuous rape performed on her by her twin Roderick, and that she was not a part of the incestuous relationship, as though she is forced into everything. Davis believes that Roderick is not completely inane discusses that his motivation is having heirs and that motivation clears many ambiguous instances in the story. Madeline faces difficulties in her pregnancy and she miscarried, Roderick is torn between keeping it a secret and seeking help for his "pregnant but probably dying sister", and thus he entombs her in the vault of the house, and her coming back bloodied is the evidence of her miscarriage.

Roderick impregnating Madeline seems a bit farfetched to us, because both twins could be guilty of incest, and the legitimacy of Madeline being pregnant is not strong, we have read some interpretations that are indicating this direction and it did not get through. The story's ambiguity allows for many speculations and confusions, but this possibility is not very convincing. To clarify, when Madeline returns to her brother bloodied, it is most likely due to her continuous struggle to get out of the tomb and then the vault, rather than a miscarriage. Furthermore, the twins are stuck in the house with a dwindling bloodline, being the last of it to keep it going; keeping in mind that the family tree is a straight line, which means they only marry from their own family.

The "mere household events" in Poe's "The Black Cat" by William Crisman is another work to be discussed. It takes the relationship between the cat and the wife, the wife and the narrator, and the cat and the narrator, psychoanalysis transference concept is used as a method to understand the story. It suggests that Pluto is not a surrogate for the wife, but rather a rival with the narrator for the wife's attraction. It is discussed how the narrator is deeply influenced by his childhood fear of betrayal and faithfulness, and how the story is a jealousy tale on the part of the speaker, who is responsible for construing the "household" as a place for probable infidelity. Crisman explains that what is happening in the story is a psychopathic reversal of the narrator's expectations. These expectations were set by the narrator himself. As we know, his attraction to animals comes from his appreciation for "the unselfish and self-sacrificing love of a brute, which goes directly to the heart, At the mention of him who has had frequent occasion to test the paltry friendship and gossamer fidelity of mere man (Poe, Complete Tales), he mentioned that he was fond of animals at such a young age, "tenderness of heart was even so conspicuous as to make [him] the jest of [his] companions"(Poe, Complete Tales,).

In summary, he is someone ostracized by his friends and is particularly sensitive to "frequent" infidelity and rejection. He expects animals to have infinite devotion to him and help safeguard fidelity. The black cat should represent supreme fidelity to him; instead, it became a rival for the wife's attraction, the narrator's other possible source of fidelity through a compulsive early marriage. The wife loved the cat, which set the narrator's jealousy ablaze; she admired the cat and played with it; even if she at times made allusions to the famous notion of black cats being witches in disguise, she admired Pluto for its beauty and intelligence, and the narrator becomes intolerable to the wife and the cat favouring each other. The narrator submerges himself in alcohol and starts abusing his wife and pets, and as soon as Pluto ignores him, he gouges his eye, giving him a "frightening appearance". He renders it unattractive, taking its beauty away.

When the second cat comes, who Crisman considers Pluto's double, and is immediately domesticated and loves the wife; the narrator is furious and starts hating it. The wife's murder is taken as "the cat's cat fault" of some sort; Crisman says

that the cat disturbed a normal household errand that the narrator and his wife should have been doing. This enrages him and leads him to murder. He goes on to explain that the narrator killed her because she turned from being an admirer to becoming a defender, committing herself to his competitor, which is the ultimate sin for him. For the most part, this is convincing, and the pattern of the narrator in Crisman's paper reminds us of the Oedipus complex, but it is not about why he is doing this but rather what he is doing and what he is not telling. The story is ambiguous and feels incomplete because of the narrator, and readers must fill in the gaps.

Another study that focuses on the animals of the story is "Such as might have arisen only out of hell": A Note on Poe's Hellenic Motifs in "The Black Cat" written by José R. Ibáñez. The Hellenic undertone is discussed in this work using intertextual assessment, as is the possibility that Pluto is not a normal cat or a demonic spirit, but rather Hades, the God of the Underworld. This paper suggests that Poe was well-versed in Greek mythology, as Pluto bears striking similarities to Hades; in fact Pluto is one of the God's many names. "The evil narrator personifies in the black cat may be metaphysical but is certainly personal" (1672: 256). Says Robert Shulman who supports the idea of the demonic figure "by the end of the story, we are made to realize that, in cutting out the eye of the black demon; the narrator is also irrationally slashing and seeking to destroy his own demons, his own unacknowledged impulses and affinity with evil." (1972: 256). He explains that the Black Cat could be a manifestation of a nightmare from which the narrator is unable to escape. Ibáñez draw on Peeples' *Seminal Edgar Allan Poe Revisited*, which examines the theme of "Loss of Breath" in The Black Cat and several other tales, to emphasize Pluto's Hellenic God identity. On this basis, he contended that this motif should be interpreted as the death experience itself. Since Poe's exploration of Daemonic could serve to signify annihilation and eternal damnation, both physical and spiritual, by a demonic spirit or even death. Kennedy considers the narrator's logic as well, claiming that "better a self grandiosely damned to eternal abuse and punishment, goes this male logic, then the experience of real pain, the experience of loss inseparable from subjectivity"

Poe might be interested in depicting the eternal battle between heaven and hell, as well as the degradation of the soul. Ibáñez mentioned the second cat as Pluto who arose from the dead as a divinity to afflict torture upon the narrator; he bolstered his claims with Susan Amper interpretation which states that both cats are the same. Which we agree with but we do not believe it rose from the dead. The final Hellenic motif that was mentioned and discussed is actually in the final scene, when the narrator taps on the wall and corpse is found a shriek was heard from within the tomb, the which narrator described it as

“cry, at first muffled and broken, like the sobbing of a child, and then quickly swelling into one long, loud, and continuous scream, utterly anomalous and inhuman—a howl—a wailing shriek, half of horror and half of triumph, such as might have arisen only out of hell” (Poe, complete tales, 455).

The narrator’s description is bluntly Hellenic, the cry that turned into a continuous wail inhuman as it arouse from hell, it is comic in some ways, you raised your hand on the alleged God you get damnation. Another thing is that the cat on top of the wife’s head with a red mouth from eating the flesh to survive is a visual representation to Hades². Furthermore, the cat on top of the head represents the famous Hades helmet, which makes him invisible until he takes it, the corpse could not be found till the cat cried out and revealed its hiding place. This work addressed a dominant theme in “The Black Cat” and what it provided is accurate according to the story, but it is somehow unconvincing as an interpretation, it would be if it were a symbolic reading, because I believe all of the Hellenic undertones are symbols to Greek mythology.

Conclusion

This chapter reviewed literature that looked into the stories from different angles and discussed the results presented by said literature. “The Fall of the House of Usher” and “The Black Cat” have been thoroughly examined and interpreted, and many different conclusions have been reached; some prefer a supernatural interpretation, while others prefer a psychological one. However, these studies never came close to resolving the ambiguities created by the stories; they were more

² Hades is well-known for sitting on a mountain of corpses and eating them.

concerned with what appears to be happening in search for answers, never delving into what lies beyond. The literature review raised the following questions: what really happened to the house of Usher and the inhabitants and how true are the narrator's claims in the black cat; such questions will be investigated in the second chapter.

Chapter Two:

**A Psychoanalytical Reading of “The
Fall of the House of Usher” and
“The Black Cat”**

Introduction

“The Fall of the House of Usher” and “the Black Cat” might be two of the most critiqued short stories, with enigmatic plots, cryptic characters, and a very ambiguous style. The debate surrounding what might the stories true meaning be would never end, and some critics at one point even questioned the validity of the Fall of the House of Usher, but that made it no less popular, Poe himself wrote an essay “Letter to B” directing readers to where one must focus on to find meaning. And the narrator of the Black Cat being a true unreliable narrator, shaping the story the way he wants confused readers and critics. This chapter focuses on exploring the stories through psychoanalytic lenses, zeroing in on the uncanny motif in both stories, while fixating a tad more on the double motif in the Fall of the House of Usher and then giving our own interpretation. As for the Black Cat we are focusing on the narrator analysing him to give what would be our supposition to what the truth is.

I. Parallel between Edgar Allan Poe and Sigmund Freud

Freud’s therapeutic method, psychoanalysis, was adapted into a literary criticism, Freudian criticism, which uses the psychoanalytic theory to interpret a work in terms of its author's known psychological conflicts or, conversely, to construct the author psychic from unconscious revelations in his work. Although Freud did not begin publishing his works until roughly fifty years after Poe's death, the latter's works closely parallel the Freudian theories; ranging from famous theories about psychosexual development, ego and super-ego, Castration Complex, and the unconscious mind; demonstrating Poe’s understanding of psychology, depth of the human mind, and personality development.

II. Poe’s the fall of the House of Usher synopsis

An unnamed narrator arrives at the house of Usher, a creepy mansion owned by his boyhood friend Roderick Usher. Roderick has been ill recently, and is suffering from a mental disorder, and he wrote to his friend asking for company. The

narrator spends some time admiring the eerie house and dreadful atmosphere noticing a crack that runs from the top to the bottom. He mentions that his friend and his sister are the last of Usher bloodline. Roderick appears to be in poor health. He has “acuteness of senses” he is hyper-sensitive to light, certain textures, sounds, and tastes; he believes he will die as a result to the fear he feels. He attributes part of his illness to the fact that his sister, Madeline, has Catalepsy (a disease characterized by seizures) and will die soon, and part of his belief that the house is sentient. The narrator tries distracting him by pouring over Literature, music, and art that he adores.

It does not appear to be any of use. Madeline dies soon, just as Roderick predicted. At least that is what he tells the narrator, she looks dead when he looks at her. They entomb her in a vault beneath the mansion in request to Roderick who is afraid that the doctors may study her because of the rarity of her malady. The narrator begins to suspect that Roderick is harbouring some dark secret. A week later, on a stormy night, they could not fall asleep so they decided to a book “The Mad Trist”. All the sounds from the story can be heard resounding from beneath the mansion as the narrator reads the text aloud. Roderick start freaking out; he declares that they buried Lady Madeline alive and she is now returning. The door slam and Madeline is standing there bloody from her struggle to get out of her metal coffin. She hurls herself at her brother and they collapse to the floor dead. The narrator feels; looking back to see the house of Usher splitting into two and sinking into the dank pond.

II.1. Freud’s concept of the Uncanny

Uncanny in reality is nothing new or alien, but something which is familiar and old-established in the mind and which has become alienated from it only through the process of repression” Sigmund Freud. The Uncanny was published in 1919 and here Freud draws on Jentsch’s notion about “Unheimlich” and goes even deeper. Uncanny means mysterious and strange in an unsettling way, and the experience of something eerie is uncanny. Das Unheimlich is a German word that means “unhomely”, and Heimlich means “familiar” “native” “belonging to home” “homely”... The uncanny has to do with a sense of strangeness, mystery or eeriness.

More particularly it concerns a sense of unfamiliarity which appears at the very heart of the familiar, or else a sense of familiarity which appears at the very heart of the unfamiliar:



Obviously not human and thus it is cute



Almost human (unfamiliar in the familiar) and thus uncanny

Freud states “Friendly, intimated, homelike, the enjoyment of the quiet, content, arousing a sense of peaceful pleasure and security as in one with the four walls of his home. “Is it still heimlich to you in your country where strangers are felling your woods?” “She did not feel all too heimlich with him” “To destroy the heimlichkeit of home” “How heimlich it seemed again of an evening, back at home.” (The Uncanny, 3) Furthermore, he explained that one tends to think that something is ‘uncanny’ and frightening because it is not known, he points to the character of secrecy in correspondence with the word, since this is another meaning of the word in German. “In general, we are reminded that the word heimlich is not unambiguous, but belongs to two sets of ideas, which without being contradictory are yet very different: on the one hand, it means that which is familiar and congenial, and on the other, that which is concealed and kept out of sight”. (Freud, The Uncanny, 4)

Freud is interested in the vague feeling of fear that has nothing to do with one’s safety, as well as the hidden feeling of familiarity in the uncanny. Freud will ultimately argue that that “uncanny” is in fact our recollection of experiencing from infancy that has gotten pressed as our consciousness has become more developed. He states that uncanny “belongs to all that is terrible – to all that arouses dread and creeping horror” (Freud, The Uncanny, 1). Freud defines the concept of the uncanny

as “the class of the terrifying which leads back to something long known to us, once very familiar” (Freud, *The Uncanny*, 1). Freud's general thesis is that the uncanny is anything we experience in adulthood that reminds us of earlier psychic stages, of aspects of our unconscious life, or of the primitive experience of the human species such as: castration, the double, involuntary repetition, the compulsion to repeat, animistic conceptions of the universe, the power of the psyche. These are common conceptions of primitive life, the uncanny arises as the recurrence of something long forgotten and repressed, something superseded in our psychic life, a reminder of our psychic past.

Uncanny motif in literature holds the same concept which Uncanny proposes in psychoanalysis, whereas characters as well as readers may experience Uncanny.

II.2. The Uncanny in the Fall of The House of Usher

In the Fall of The House of Usher, an unnamed narrator is asked by boyhood friend to come and keep him company as ‘mental disorder oppressed him. The narrator arrives and is aghast with the mansion state as it appears in the following:

...but, with the first glimpse of the building, a sense of insufferable gloom pervaded my spirit.” “I looked upon the scene before me—upon the mere house, and the simple landscape features the domain, upon the bleak walls, upon the vacant eye-like windows, upon a few rank sedges, and upon a few white trunks of decayed trees, and with utter depression of soul which I can compare to no earthly sensation more properly than the after-dream of reveler upon opium, the bitter lapse into every-day life, the hideous dropping off of the veil.

In this passage, the author, through the narrator, describes the state of the house to enhance the uncanny reaction. He described the atmosphere surrounding the house “There was an iciness, a sinking, a sickening of heart—an unredeemed dreariness of thought which no goading of the imagination could torture into aught of the sublime.” The atmosphere surrounding the house is a textbook atmosphere set to heighten the uncanny in one’s mind, being a character of the story or the readers.

Freud explained that the uncertainty whether an inanimate object is dead or alive, can become part of the uncanny (Freud, *Uncanny*, 5). He refers to E.Jentsch and

his theory that “Uncanny sensations are created when there is an intellectual uncertainty whether an object is alive or not, and when an inanimate object becomes too much like an animated one” (Freud, Uncanny, 8). With reference to the code, the house is an inanimate object that seems to be alive; this would explain the narrator reaction and anxieties upon reaching the house. Several events in the tale give the house an animated character, even Poe gives the house eye-like windows and makes its insides feel like a living body. As well as the house representing its master’s mind, Roderick tells the narrator that the building has sentience:

The condition of this sentience has been there, he imagined, fulfilled in the method of collection of these stones- in order of their argument, as well as in that of the fungi which overspread them (...) in gradual yet certain condensation of an atmosphere of their own about the waters and the walls. (Poe, 239)

This passage affirms that house is alive. Another instance in the story that enhance this idea is when lady Madeline was coming up the stairs in an enraged state and Roderick is at verge of losing all reason, the tempest outside rages and the house cracks more and more as if mirroring the owners states; leading us to believe that the house is animate with reference to the context.

Freud argues that repetition is a distinct part of the uncanny if it is an unintentional repetition, that if we notice the involuntary repetition several times then it is uncanny.

“For instance, we of course attach no importance to the event when we give up a coat and get a cloakroom ticket with number, say 62; or when we find that our cabin on board ship is numbered 62. But the impression is altered if two such events, each in itself indifferent, happen close together, if we come across the number 62 several times in a single day, or if we begin to notice that everything which has number addresses, hotel-rooms, compartments in railway-trains always has the same one, or one which at least contains the same figures. We do feel this to be Uncanny” (Freud, Uncanny, 11)

In Poe’s “The Fall of The House of Usher” the narrator reads Roderick a medieval Romance entitled The Mad Trist to calm him down and pass the horrible night. When the narrator is reading he hears sounds that echo the story:

At the termination of this sentence I started and, for a moment, paused; for it appeared to me (although I at once concluded that my excited fancy had deceived me) it appeared to me that, from some very remote portion of the mansion, there

came, indistinctly to my ears, what might have been, in its exact similarity of character, the echo (but a stifled and dull one certainly) of the very cracking and ripping sound which Sir Lancelot had so particularly described. (Poe, complete tales, 243)

The narrator hears noises again when he is reading the part where Ethelred struck the head of the dragon and lets a shriek so loud and he says "I did actually hear [...] a low and apparently distant, but harsh, protracted, and most unusual screaming or grating sound – the exact counterpart of what my fancy had already conjured up for the dragon unnatural shriek as described by the romancer." (Poe, complete tales, 244) And again it happens when the shield of the champion falls to the ground with terrible ringing, the same sound was heard from a portion of the mansion, which is a result of Lady Madeline escaping her tomb. Then, Roderick, in unconscious manner, told the narrator that he had been hearing the noises for a long time "I hear it, and have heard it. Long – long – many minutes, many hours, many days, have I heard it." (Poe, complete tales, 244)

The next uncanny theme presented in this tale is the premature burial or live burial. It is unbelievably uncanny, for we cannot imagine the dread and terror Lady Madeline felt throughout her struggle to break out of a metal coffin. Poe tapped into the fear of being buried alive in several of his works, Poe himself stated "to be buried while alive is, beyond question, the most terrific of these extremes which has ever fallen to the lot of mere mortality".

"We have put her living in the tomb!... I now tell you that I heard her first feeble movements in the hollow coffin." (Poe, complete tales 245) In *The Fall of The House of Usher* Roderick is terrified of his sister coming back and she apparently does and take him with her. "...it is no matter for surprise that the primitive fear of the dead is still so strong within us and always ready to come to the surface at any opportunity. Most likely our fear still contains the old belief that the deceased becomes the enemy of his survivor..." (Freud, *The uncanny*, 13), Freud explained the idea of the fear the dead and how people experience the uncanny to its highest degree with death, dead bodies and the return of the dead. This fear stems from the fact that nobody can truly grasp their own mortality.

II.3. The double motif and duality

“Only this factor of involuntary repetition which surrounds with an uncanny atmosphere what would otherwise be innocent enough, and forces upon us the idea of something fateful and inescapable where otherwise we should have spoken of ‘chance’ only” (Freud, 427)

The quote above is something that I think most people would consider “uncanny”, there is a dread of repetition. The doppelgänger for instance, which also acts as a “double” which Freud discussed in his essay, is a symbol of repetition that will make one feel dreadful. The uncanny other feels unsettling because of an involuntary repetition or a copy that should not exist. It was Otto Rank who focused his study on this baffling atmosphere, putting into practice —The Doppelgänger Theory¹ and developing it in his book *The Double: A Psychoanalytical Study* (1971) also known as *Der Doppelgänger*. According to Ralph Tymms, —Rank bases his interpretation of the theme of the double on the Freudian theory of Narcissism...the double represents elements of morbid self-love which prevent the formation of a happily balanced personality (Id, ego and super-ego). (Tymms 40-41). The myth of the doppelgänger has been used by many literary authors like Shakespeare in *The Comedy of Errors*; E.T.A Hoffmann in — *The Sandman*²; Guy Maupassant in —*The Horla*³; Fyodor Dostoyevsky in *The Double*; Robert Louis Stevenson in *The Strange Case of Doctor Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*; Oscar Wilde in *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, or Edgar Allan Poe in some short stories such as —*William Wilson*⁴ and —*The Fall of the House of Usher*⁵, among others. Doppelgänger³ as a literary motif appeared in the German romantic novel *Siebenkas* by Jean Paul.

II.3.1. the double motif in the Fall of the House of Usher

Poe uses the double motif in this tale in several patterns, and one that to my mind is presented through the characters is id, ego and super-ego⁴. Freud associates

³ The novel tells the story of a man unhappily married, Siebenkas consults his friend Liegenber, who in reality is his alter-ego, or doppelgänger. Liegenber convinces Siebenkas to fake his death and burial and start a new life. The word “doppelgänger” was coined by Jean Paul in the same novel, ‘doppel’ means double and ‘gänger’ means goar.

⁴ One of Sigmund Freud’s most known ideas was his theory of personality, which proposed that the human psyche is composed of three separate but interesting parts: the Id, ego, and super-ego. Id is presents at birth and is run on your instinct, desire, and need. It is unconscious and more like the primitive part of the personality. The ego though arises from id, it acknowledges and deals with reality and is a ‘reality principle’. Ego seeks pleasure in a realistic way and is not interested in right and wrong but how to maximize pleasure and minimize pain without getting in trouble. The last part is the super-ego, it is the more compass of the personality,

the experience of the double with the ego development; the double is an insurance against the destruction of the ego, “an energetic denial of the power of death” as Otto Rank says; he claims that the positive infantile notion of the ‘double’ turns and suddenly the ‘double’ “becomes the ghastly harbinger of death” (Freud, *The Uncanny*, 9). In the tale, Roderick’s extreme guilt and suffering is not only caused by Lady Madeline “wasting away” (Poe, *complete tales*, 220) it is a product of his super-ego punishing him for straying from the standard behaviours and having incestuous desire towards his twin and is more or less killing him.

There are several types of groups of doubles which are: physical doubles, reflection doubles, transformation doubles and narratology doubles (Boyle, *Scalar.usc*). But we are only going to talk about the ones that are relevant to the story. First is the identical doubles, simply are twins. The narrator is shocked with the similarity between Roderick and Madeline and realising they’re twin I learned that the deceased and himself had been twins. (Poe, *complete tales*, 216)

Poe made Roderick and Madeline biological twins and doubles of each other to explore the mind-body dualism. Poe suggests that a complete split between mind and body is ultimately impossible which brings interactionism⁵ into the picture. Descartes argues that the mind and body are two separate substances; Roderick and Madeline represent these substances respectively. Roderick states that his “mental disorder” oppressed him, the narrator upon arriving learns that Usher suffers ‘a mere nervous affliction’ and “He suffered much from a morbid acuteness of senses” which means that he is sensitive to certain scents, sounds, textures, flavours, and even light. This could all be mental or at least neurological. Roderick suffers from an ever-increasing terror “I dread the events of the future... I feel the period will sooner or later arrive when I must abandon all life and reason together, in some struggle with the grim phantasm, FEAR” (Poe, *complete tales*, 210). He is paranoid and it is escalating, he is aware that he will lose reason soon. Both his paranoia and acuteness of senses are experienced by him only implying that it is entirely mental. According

holding a strong sense of right and wrong, it consists of two parts, the conscious which is the part that forbids unacceptable behaviours and punishes with intense feeling of guilt. The other part is the ego ideal, is the rules and standards behaviours, and these rules are so high the person will feel like a failure and experience guilt.

⁵ Interactionism is a philosophical theory that was morphed from René Descartes theory of substance dualism. It has the same general principal of mind-body dualism that states that the body and mind are separate entities but interactionism proposes “mind and body—or even mental events—casually influence each other” (Robinson). This theory suggests that mind and body are separate but they can interact and therefore influence one another.

to this Roderick is fit to be the representation of mind. Alternatively, Madeline illness is completely physical. The narrator states that her malady has a strictly cataleptic character (Poe, complete tales, 211). According to Peter Wolf, "Epilepsy and Catalepsy were not clearly separated in the minds of people in the early 19th century, and catalepsy may have been used as a diagnostic euphemism for epilepsy". From this, one can tell that Madeline was suffering from seizures⁶. Madeline's "gradual wasting away" and seizure tendencies conform to the idea that her malady is entirely bodily, thus it is accepted to say that she represents the body, just like Roderick represents the mind.

The other type is reflection doubles and is hinted at the start of the story where the narrator is examining the house; he sees its reflection in the water, and it was uncanny and unsettling that he lifted his eye to avoid looking the narrator states that ".... it might have been for this reason, only, I again uplifted my eyes to the house itself, from its image in the pool" (Poe, complete tales, 207). Poe doubles people with inanimate objects, the house being Roderick double. The house seemed aware and connected to its master's state. The unnamed narrator, as he is asked by his childhood friend, Roderick Usher, arrives at the Usher residence. Poe does not hesitate to strike us immediately with strong images to describe the surroundings of the house, the house itself. Images that create a very troubling, gloomy atmosphere create a certain sensation of discomfort in us as reader right from the beginning of the story. As the narrator approaches the house he is surrounded by decaying trees, murky ponds, heavily emphasizing the diseased environment in which the house is placed. The narrator very keenly observes that the structure of the house altogether seems still solid, but there are a few individually disintegrating stones, this being the very first allusion to the fact that the house stands for the damaged psyche of Roderick Usher. In the end of the story when Madeline gets out of her tomb the tempest rages and the cracks grow bigger as Roderick crumbles to the pits of madness. The moment he dies, the house falls and sinks into the pond.

⁶ Seizures cause the body to violently jerk, convulsing, these convulsions without doubt are bodily symptoms.

II.4. The Fall of the House of Usher interpretation

For a better understanding of this tale, some very pertinent questions emerge. G. R. Thompson, in his essay *The Face in the Pool: Reflections on the Doppelgänger Motif in 'The Fall of the House of Usher'*, asked a series of questions:

What is the significance of the close resemblance of Roderick Usher and his sister, and are the two the products of and, simultaneously, guilty of incest? Did Roderick intentionally try to murder Madeline, and did Madeline actually return from her tomb, vampire-like, to claim her brother's life? Is the physical House actually "alive" and by some preternatural force of will controlling the destinies of the Ushers? Or is the story not a tale of the supernatural at all, but rather a work of psychological realism? What then is the precise role of the narrator? And can the work be read in Freudian or Jungian terms? If the tale is a psychological or symbolic work, what is the meaning of the interpolated story of "The Mad Trist" of Sir Launcelot Canning? What significance have the titles of the books in Usher's library, and what significance are we to attach to Usher's strange, neurasthenic art works?(1972, p. 17)

It would be wrong to give a final interpretation without considering all these perspectives and questions, for this tale has an ambiguity that comes from the subjective narrator which we know very little about. The narrator has a huge control over events of the story, nothing could be true and it could be all true, but what we know is that the narrator is unreliable; if we look into the narrator from this point of view we may see the sign of mental instability. Both Roderick and the narrator are victims of paranoia and crippling fear, the moment he laid eyes of the house he was overcome with a sense of "insufferable gloom", and Roderick has asked his friend to come because of fear too, and the two fed each other's paranoiac mind throughout the events in an uncanny environment. They're both aware of Roderick's mental state but does the narrator take into consideration that he, as well is mentality incompetent. Thompson believes that both characters suffer from hallucinations fed by the supernaturally charged atmosphere (Thompson, 1976, 18). The narrator is portraying his uncanny surrounding in a subjective way and he even tries to rationalise his feelings, at the start he notices the pond but he uplifts his eyes to examine the house but he follows the fissure that leads his focus to the pond again.

The narrator seems rational and mentally capable at the start, but he is superstitious, the house feeds the superstitions and Roderick lodges the idea that the house is alive making him paranoid. He starts noticing very small details like how his friend's library contains titles that deal with strange journeys, death watches and eerie meetings. Usher then reads the narrator a poem "The Haunted Palace" which is as a whole is a metaphor of descending into madness and irrationality. Poe then hides some information to be found only by a careful reader, which also strengthens the idea that both Roderick and the narrator were hallucinating. The dungeons under the house were oxygen-less and they used to serve as a storage place for gunpowder, thus when the House crumbles it is not a supernatural phenomenon at all, only the hysterical narrator imagines it as such. Lightning during the storm may have generated the remnants of the powder to ignite and explode, destroying the house. The miasma⁷ surrounding the house has been believed to have hallucinatory effects. Therefore the resurrection of Madeline and the hysterical fear may only be imagined by the characters (Thompson 1972, 19). A question arises if we follow this pattern. How could they both hallucinate the very same thing? And we arrive yet again at the supernatural explanation: the narrator and Roderick Usher were linked, in other words, they may be considered each other's double. They were very close friends back in their boyhood; the narrator at some point remembers that he was the only friend of Roderick's.

We can see that Poe uses the motif of the double very resourcefully, the motif can be recognized in several ways of reading, and these readings only together give a complete picture of the story's effect. Poe doubles inanimate objects with people (the House and Roderick), he uses the ancient twin-double (Roderick and Madeline), and very conveniently makes us realize that the narrator is Roderick's double to a certain extent.

III. Poe's The Black Cat synopsis

The Black Cat was published in 1843; the narrator of the story explains how from a young age he was noted for his tenderness and humanity, as well as his fondness for animals. When he married, he and his wife acquired a number of pets,

⁷ Miasma is a phenomenon that is defined as coloured fog that disturbs the mental process and causes hallucinations.

including a black cat, named Pluto. But as the years wore on, the narrator became more irritable and prone to snap. One night, under the influence of alcohol, he sensed the black cat was avoiding him and so chased him and picked up the animal. The animal bit him slightly on the hand, and the narrator – possessed by a sudden rage – took a pen-knife from his pocket and gouged out one of the cat's eyes. Although the cat seems to recover from this, the narrator finds himself growing more irritated, until eventually he takes the poor cat out into the garden and hangs it from a tree. Later that night, the narrator wakes to find his house on fire, and he, his wife, and his servant, barely escape alive. All of the narrator's wealth is lost in the flames. A crowd has gathered around the smouldering remains of the house. Setting foot in the ruins, the narrator finds the strange figure of a gigantic hanging cat on one of the walls, the dead cat having become embedded in the plaster (the narrator surmises that a member of the crowd had cut down the hanging cat and hurled it into the house to try to wake the narrator and his wife).

A short while after this, the narrator is befriended by a black cat he finds in a local tavern, a cat that has shown up seemingly out of nowhere, and resembles Pluto in every respect, except that this cat has some white among its black fur. The cat takes a shine to the narrator, so he and his wife take it in as their pet. However, in time the narrator comes to loathe this cat, too, and once, when he nearly trips over the pet while walking downstairs into the cellar, he picks up an axe and aims a blow at the animal's head. His wife intervenes and stops him – but, in a fit of rage, he buries the axe in his wife's head, killing her instantly. He conceals the body, but when the police call round to look into his wife's disappearance, a sound from the place where the narrator has concealed the body exposes the hidden corpse. When the body is revealed, the black cat is there – and it was the cat that had made the noise that gave away the location of the corpse. The narrator had walled up the animal when he had hidden his wife's body. And with this revelation, the narrator's story comes to an end.

III.1. The Uncanny motif in the black cat

Freud argues that there are certain devices can be used to create the uncanny in writing, which are: coincidence, concealment, repetition, animation, surprise, and omnipotence of thoughts. For starters, coincidence was used in the passage "One

night as I sat..." where the use of coincidence creates the aesthetic of the uncanny. Coincidences relate ambiguousness and vagueness of the uncanny, because it suggests similarity to the subject but is not quite the actual subject. When applied in "The Black Cat" the coincidence is the second cat that is similar to Pluto. This causes dread in the narrator because he killed Pluto. In the passage the narrator was lounging in his sitting room and staring at a dark shadow on top of the hung animal heads in his sitting room when "some black object" suddenly emerges out of the shadows (Poe). The black cat was concealed in the shadows and the narrator was unable to identify it. This concealment creates an uncertainty in the narrator to if the moving "black object" had been there the entire time or if it arose out of the shadows. Then the narrator is shocked for the cat looks exactly like his cat, Pluto, which he recently killed. The black cat "resembling [Pluto] in every respect but one" a large white mark is on his chest (Poe). The coincidence of the two cats looking alike, having similar markings, and the dread of a secret coming out, creates the uncanny in this passage in "The Black Cat".

Poe used repetition to create an uncanny atmosphere in this tale, the repetitive violent acts of the narrator and the repetition that is the two cats. The first violent impulse the narrator committed was against Pluto, he at first gouges his eye with a penknife, and he felt remorseful for a short period of time till he did not. The second violent act was against Pluto, again, but this time he kills coldblooded as he hangs him in a tree. What makes his impulses even more frightful is admitting to abusing his wife and pets "I suffered myself to use intemperate language to my wife. At length, I even offered her personal violence. My pets... I not only neglected, but ill-used them." (Poe, complete tales, 449), but had held from doing so to Pluto "I still retained sufficient regard to restrain me from maltreating him". His third violent burst was at the second cat. The narrator started avoiding the cat as it frightened him and filled him with anger yet he held himself from killing it "although I longed to destroy it with a blow" (Poe, complete tales, 452). The restraint came loose and he tries to kill as it almost threw him down the stairs, but he kills his wife the moment she tries to stop him.

The cat persistently reminds the narrator about his crime and the narrator sees it as an omen, something that should be hidden and not revealed open—the

prototypical uncanny – concealment. The climax of the uncanny is visible in the end when the narrator walls his wife's corpse walling the cat unknowingly with it, making the uncanny motif disappear for a time, only to return in the most unforeseeable moment- what should have remained hidden revealed itself. This indicates that the second cat was really an omen to bring doom upon the narrator as it was what revealed his deeds.

Poe used uncanny throughout the story to build the suspense and dread taking an example in the fire that destroys the narrator house almost completely, except for a wall that has a silhouette of a cat with a rope on its neck. This creates a sense of fear that is uncanny to both the narrator and readers; the narrator flimsily attempts to explain it away that someone threw the hanging corpse of the cat to try and wake him up after seeing the fire, but it was weak. One might argue that the image of the cat is a supernatural foreshowing of the beast being his doom. Pluto was so clever and was uncanny, and narrator's wife mentioned its exceptional intelligence frequently "In speaking of its intelligence, my wife, who at heart was not a little tinctured with superstition, made frequent allusion to the ancient popular notion, which regarded all black cats as witches in disguise" (Poe, complete tales, 448). Pluto's behaviours were intelligent, which would not be eerier if it was not for the widely held belief that all black cats are witches in disguise. The next uncanny theme is shared with *The Fall of The House of Usher*, which is the return of the dead. James W. Gurno claims that the second cat is a reincarnation, and called it "The incarnated cat" (Gurno, 181). This is reinforced by the fact that no one knew the cat and have not seen it before "but this person made no claim to it – knew nothing of it – had never seen it before" (Poe, complete tales, 451). Its behaviours indicate that as well "it domesticated itself at once, and became immediately a great favourite with my wife" (Poe, complete tales, 452), it feels like the cat is too familiar with them. One might question its friendliness towards the narrator if it was a reincarnation, the answer to that is when someone or something is reincarnated most of the time they forget their past life memories.

Another theme that causes uncanny in *The Black Cat* is fear of castration

"We know from psychoanalytic experience, however, that this fear of damaging or losing one's eyes is a terrible fear of childhood. Many adults still retain their

apprehensiveness in this respect, and no bodily injury is so much dreaded by them as an injury to the eye." (Freud, *The Uncanny*, 7)

Castration complex is the fear losing one's organs. While not everyone may subscribe to this belief we believe it is a human fear to lose a part of you, especially the eyes. In the tale, the black cat, Pluto, is castrated of its eye by the narrator and then kills it, he then gets another cat that looks exactly like Pluto and does the same thing. This repeated action is certainly creepy, and uncanny. The second cat looks identical to Pluto, even the lost eye, which fills the narrator with dread and castration fear.

III.2. *The Black Cat* Interpretation

III.2.1. The unreliable psychopathic narrator

The narrator is manipulating readers and to truly clear what is ambiguous we have to understand him. The narrator of *The Black Cat* has been analysed by different authors. Fisher for instance, he chose a psychological view. However, Fisher's analysis is facile, because he comes to the conclusion that the narrator is emotionally fragile, without giving a deep argument (Fisher 24). The most comprehensive analysis is done by Susan Amper and Harold Bloom. It discusses different topics and several techniques and approaches are giving to interpret the narrator. According to Amper and Bloom, "*The Black Cat*" could be read supernatural, psychological or sceptical (Amper and Bloom, 147, 148). The interpretations could go on for more. We are adapting both the psychological and sceptical approach to understand what he is doing and not why he is doing it.

Throughout the story the narrator is misleading readers, he imprisons the reader in a casual string of victimization patterns, and he manipulates the events and the emotions of the readers, which is a textbook definition of a psychopath. To understand the depth narrator we have to go through psychopathy and understand how a psychopath thinks.

Psychopathy is generally characterized by diagnostic features such as superficial charm, high intelligence, poor judgment and failure to learn from experience, pathological egocentricity and incapacity for love, lack of remorse or shame, impulsivity, grandiose sense of self-worth, pathological lying, manipulative behaviour, poor self-control, promiscuous sexual behaviour, juvenile delinquency,

and criminal versatility, among others. (CNN) After every horrific crime that shocks us, the next question we often ask is, "How could anyone do such a thing?" If the criminal is a psychopath, the answer is very simple. They don't feel empathy or guilt. So instead of asking, "How could they do this horrible thing?" the more pertinent question might be, "When did they start doing horrible things?" "We don't have a therapy for it, and there's no known pill for psychopathy," said Mary Ellen O'Toole. Any attempt at therapy has to be carefully structured and monitored, particularly in the case of a criminal psychopath, as they are equipped with the skill and motivation to act more as a predator than a patient. They can easily identify weaknesses in their therapists and feign progress to shorten treatment. Psychopaths are not exceptionally intelligent as the prejudice tells; their IQ does not exceed the general scale. Some are stupid they commit crimes and end up in prison, and are very intelligent that they become successful businessmen or politicians. But what all psychopaths share is the ability to feign fake emotions and manipulation.

Poe created a character that lacks remorse, empathy, and conscience, a narrator who manipulates and deceives those around him. The narrator engages in a series of morbid, senseless, and disturbing acts that lands him on death row. He writes the story the day he is to be executed, and explains how guilty he feels about what he has done from the start. "These events have terrified – have tortured – have destroyed me." But he appears far from remorseful and guilty throughout the story. Poe writes this story in first-person perspective, and like many of his narrators, this one is unreliable. We have reason to doubt him from the start "For the most yet homely narrative which I am about to pen, I neither expect solicit belief." (Poe, complete tales, 448) When he says he does not "expect" us to believe him and will not ask us to. "The fear of criminals is not the fear of being caught; it is the fear of being cut off, of being misunderstood." Benfey writes (Benfey, 36). The narrator uses this story as a final chance to help the reader 'understand' what happened by revealing 'the external forces that conquered his mind and made him act in these way'. He specifically blames alcohol and perverseness for his irrational thinking that led him to morbid events; he refers to it as "the fiend of intemperance" and discusses how drinking has changed his once normal personality and life. It is true that he is drunk in the first part of the story but he is sober telling his story and is showing no

remorse, so it is not entirely alcohol that drove him to commit his hideous crimes. The narrator calls "the spirit of PERVERSENESS" – the desire to do something wrong precisely because you know it's wrong.

The story begins with some statement that serves to manipulate the reader for the narrator's justification. The narrator mentions events that drove to murder "In their consequences, these events have terrified – have tortured – have destroyed me." (Poe, complete tales, 448) These expressions give the impression that it is nothing more than a cause effect characterizing him into what he has become. "To me, they have presented little but horror – to many they will seem less terrible than baroques. Hereafter, perhaps, some intellect may be found which will reduce my phantasm to the commonplace – some intellect more calm, more logical, and far less excitable than my own, which will perceive, in the circumstances I detail with awe, nothing more than an ordinary succession of very natural causes and effects." (Poe, complete tales, 448) these words may elicit a Pygmalion effect in the reader's mind, making them feel obligated to meet the narrator's expectations subconsciously resulting in a self-fulfilling prophecy. Because they are outsiders, the narrator expects the readers to grasp the causes and effects with a calm collected mind and accept whatever is given to them.

Many of the narrator's words and occurrences make me question the events; for examples, the cats are so perplexing and the story feels incomplete. How about his wife? What role does she play in the story? Has she been murdered in the cellar by the narrator? Is there actually a second cat? Was Pluto actually killed the night of the fire? Is the servant, who is only mentioned once, an eyewitness to something? Too many questions arise if you only focus on the narrator's unreliability and look for errors in his narrative.

The narrator did not murder Pluto and there is only one cat, there is no second cat and the title tells us "The Black Cat" not the black cats. Poe's philosophy of composition concludes that length, unity of effect, and a logical method are important considerations for a good writing; given this, even the title contributes a significant allusion to what actually happened. The lie of the second cat appearing and him taking it home and trying to murder is made up to keep his other lie about killing the first cat and the cat that is found atop the wife's corpse is actually Pluto.

The narrator murdered his wife the night the fire bore down his house, and may have hid her corpse in the wall of his bedroom, for it has been “recently spread” and the silhouette of the cat is not actually a cat silhouette, he expounded this apparition as the ammonia and fire making the “portraiture”, it could have actually happened to corpse of the wife. The “apparition” is “gigantic” (Poe, complete tales, 450) and Pluto is described as “remarkably large” which is far from gigantic as Amper explained. Another of his speech that makes one think twice is after he allegedly murdered his wife and walled her

Upon the fourth day of the assassination, a party of the police came, very unexpectedly, into the house, and proceeded again to make rigorous investigation of the premises. (Poe, complete tales, 455)

It does not appear very plausible that a large-scale search for the missing wife and investigation have already begun, unless they have been going for some time. Another instance is when the police discover the corpse, and the narrator describes the state of the corpse “The corpse, already greatly decayed and clotted with gore...” (Poe, complete tales, 455) To say the least, a corpse hidden well in a damp cellar cannot be “greatly decayed” in four days, it is odd until one gets rid of any possible supernatural interpretations and thinks about it from this angle.

All of these lies are made up by the narrator to protect him from the law and guilt that manifests subconsciously, such as when the narrator rapped with his cane on the wall where the corpse lies behind. The way he spoke when the police were leaving after their search was strange; he was in frenzy and trying to show off his bravery, but he knew it wasn't exactly smart. Another possibility is the gallows on the 'second cat' or Pluto's chest, which he is picturing due to his guilt. Pluto could have been caught in the fire, and the white splotch was changing because it was healing. His wife is his true victim; he is projecting the guilt of murdering her into Pluto, a process known as transference⁸. And for the servant that was mentioned once and never again, it is possible think of him as Poe contribution to the detective genre: mystery man, he could have witnessed something for would not mention him just as passing thing, he has to have a role.

⁸ Transference, first described by Sigmund Freud, is a phenomenon in psychotherapy in which there is an unconscious redirection of feelings from one person to another.

In conclusion, the narrator begins the story with the intention of directing the reader's reading experience. He accomplishes this not by employing obvious manipulation approaches, but by basing his language on psychological principles. He gives the impression that he has been stripped of his free will and is caught up in a cause-and-effect chain in order to pass off his narrative and manipulate the readers into thinking about the why rather than the what.

Conclusion

Poe employed the uncanny motif in both stories in a variety of ways and themes. In the Fall of the House of Usher, he employs the double motif and we can see throughout the reading that he doubles inanimate objects with people (Roderick and the house), the ancient double-twin (Roderick and Madeline) and makes us realise that the narrator is also Roderick's double as well. We discovered that the narrator is unreliable and he displayed signs of instability, leading us to believe that his account of the events may not be objective. We discussed the uncanny motif in the Black Cat as well, and then we looked into the psychopath narrator's unreliability and untangled his lies to uncover the truth and learn that he killed his wife prior to the timeline he claims and that there was no second cat and Pluto had not been killed.

Chapter Three:

Creating Settings, atmosphere, and
Suspense in *the Black Cat* and *the Fall of
the House of Usher*

Introduction

In his stories, Poe uses his words, characters' actions, and the text to create a gothic atmosphere, haunting settings, and intense suspense that appease to readers. These elements are linked because the atmosphere is created by the settings and suspense is increased by the settings, all of which contribute to the gothic story mood. This chapter will be a breakdown of these gothic elements in *The Black Cat* and *The Fall of the House of Usher* on various levels, as well as an examination of how they are created to achieve the perfect gothic story.

I. Settings and Atmosphere in *the Black Cat* and *the Fall of the House of Usher*

Simply put, the setting is the time and place of a story; the natural and artificial scenery or environment in which characters in literature live and moves; says Edgar V Roberts. Whilst the atmosphere is the emotional response of a reader produced due to the kind of setting that a story presents. The depiction of the settings provides an image that evokes the atmosphere the author is trying to convey. Poe created settings that feel like new worlds in obscure locations, or it is set in a distant time in the past, so that his readers could focus entirely on the themes and atmospheres with which he infused his stories. Poe believed that the highest art existed in a realm distinct from this one, and that in order to create this realm, ambiguity and indefiniteness were required to alienate the reader from the mundane and direct him toward the ideal and the beautiful. As a result, Poe's stories are either set in an unknown location, such as "The Fall of the House of Usher" and "The Black Cat".

I.1. The Settings in *The Black Cat*

Poe's specialty is writing haunting stories; he creates a horror atmosphere through multiple channels, including first-person narration, foreshadowing, setting,

and the appeal of suspense and "The Black Cat" is no exception. No plot can take place without a setting (i.e. the location, the time and the socio-cultural circumstances). The unnamed narrator is on death row in a prison cell, which creates a gloomy atmosphere right away, and then he takes the readers on a journey to tell his story, moving the settings to a homely household, which may shift the atmosphere a bit as he talks about the various pets he and his wife have. Then the settings change into the house that is described as "an old building" (Poe, complete tales, 453), then the cellar that is the main setting where he kills the wife, the cellar is presumably dark, dump, and cold, the narrator describes it as "its walls were loosely constructed with a rough plaster, which the dampness of the atmosphere had prevented from hardening" (Poe, complete tales, 454) the description creates a vivid image that evokes the readers to feel the mystery.

I.2. The Atmosphere of *The Black Cat*

The story begins with a very confusing statement that creates confusion and suspense in the reader's mind: "For the most wild, yet most homely narrative" (Poe, Complete Tales, 448), setting the tone and raising questions; the point to be considered here is that the story, as a whole unit, is described as homely narrative though it is the wildest narrative. But still, the Gothic traits of gloom, mystery, death, superstition and the macabre vision are most features of *The Black Cat*. We cannot help but notice how the transition between settings and atmosphere corresponds with the narrator's mental state. At first, he is in his prison cell telling his story, hoping that some intelligent person will understand what he is about to say, creating an atmosphere of not finality but of the need to be understood before he dies. Then he talks about his pets and how much he loves them, which one is his favourite, and so on, giving the impression of a docile and gentle person. Subsequently, after he begins to change and kills Pluto, we are hit with a darker tone that touches on the narrator's madness and the darkness Poe is aiming for. The narrator's mental state deteriorates in the new house, as evidenced by his mood, and he reaches his breaking point in the cellar, where the second cat nearly knocks him down the stairs.

Poe's style changes in response to the narrator's emotional state; he uses short, simple sentences when discussing his childhood and "peaceful" time when discussing the narrator's emotional state. "From infancy of was noted for the docility and humanity of my disposition" (Poe, complete tales, 448) "I married early, and was happy to find in my wife a disposition not uncongenial with my own" (Poe, complete tales, 448), and even his favourite pet Pluto "I alone fed him, and he attended me whenever I went about the house" (Poe, complete tales, 449). When describes how his emotional and mental state got worse Poe uses longer and more complex sentences "But my disease grew upon me—for what disease is like alcohol!—and at length even Pluto, who was now becoming old, and consequently somewhat peevish—even Pluto began to experience the effects of my ill temper" (Poe, complete tales, 449) the complex sentences represent the deteriorating mental state of the narrator

"Evil thoughts became my sole intimates—the darkest and most evil of thoughts. The moodiness of my usual temper increased to hatred of all things and of all *mankind*; while, from the sudden, frequent, and ungovernable outbursts of a fury to which I now blindly abandoned myself, my uncomplaining wife, alas! Was the most usual and the most patient sufferers" (Poe, complete tales, 453)

These all contain several clauses and complex ideas with multiple punctuation marks. Poe used comas 339 times throughout the story to make sure the reader understands what the narrator wants us to clear any ambiguities surrounding what he means. What is more, Poe uses repetition and omission to dramatize the speech of the narrator and vivid by describing many details. The conjunction "and" was used multiple times to create a sort of intensity to the atmosphere in the next part "It was now the representation of an object that I shudder to name—and for this, above all, I loathed, and dreaded, and would have rid myself of the monster had I dared...And now I indeed wretched beyond the wretchedness of mere humanity." (Poe, complete tales, 453) One function is to create an effective style to explain the things about the main idea in detail because the narrator needs to explain his confused mind and the other one is to guide the reader to have some interpretation. And omission is used to dramatize the actions of the narrator and convey the horrors to readers, evoking a more horrific atmosphere "I took from my waist-pocket a pen-knife, opened it, grasped the poor beast by the throat" (Poe, complete tales, 449). In addition to these,

Poe employs several figurative tropes to establish the haunting atmosphere which are foreshadowing, repetition, alliteration, simile, symbolic language and thus build up suspense.

I.3. Settings in *The Fall of the House of Usher*

The setting in Poe's stories serves three purposes: to establish the atmosphere he needs the reader to be in, which is usually gloomy, dreary, and full of suspense, to foreshadow the happenings, and to disclose the personal qualities and how they will be affected by the setting and atmosphere, especially if the scenery is unrealistic, because a building or a room bespeaks the character of those who build and inhabit it. There is a sense of geographic isolation and indefiniteness – that is, we are never told where or when the story's events are happening in contexts of setting; the family house is in a remote location in countryside in an unknown place. The story could take place anywhere as long as it is remote from the reader and away from his normal surroundings. The unspecified location and period lead the reader to believe that the setting is English or German, based on the age of the building and the family. The narrator mentions that it is an autumn day giving us a very vague timing; however, he did not specify the place. He describes the surroundings of the mansion “I looked upon the scene before me – upon the mere house, and the simple landscape features of the domain – upon the bleak walls – upon the vacant eye-like windows – upon a few rank sedges – and upon a few white trunks of decayed trees –” (206) there was an ethereal glowing cloud and a dark and scary lake, not to mention the ominous fissure running down the centre of the mansion. Then as he entered the house he started “the Gothic archway of the hall” (208) he then was led through “many dark and intricate passages” (208) He takes in the blackness of the floor and the tapestries of the walls, all seemed like normal stuff screamed uncanny and suspense to the narrator. The narrator was led to his host room and he takes notice to it saying:

“The room in which I found myself was very large and lofty. The windows were long, narrow, and pointed, and at so vast a distance from the black oaken floor as to be altogether inaccessible from within. Feeble gleams of encrimsoned light made their way through the trellised panes, and served to render sufficiently distinct the more prominent objects around; the eye, however, struggled in vain to reach the

remoter angles of the chamber, or the recesses of the vaulted and fretted ceiling. Dark draperies hung upon the walls. The general furniture was *profuse*, comfortless, antique, and tattered. Many books and musical instruments lay scattered about, but failed to give any vitality to the scene." (Poe, complete tales, 209)

The next days for the narrator and Roderick are spent in the latter's room reading and spending time to over the melancholy; however, the next major event is set in a vault under the mansion where they entomb Madeline. The vault was sheathed with copper with no windows, was small, damp, and entirely without means of admission for light; the door was made of heavy iron lying, at great depth, directly under the narrator's room, and it was designed to be a dungeon meant to keep combustible substances in feudal eras.

I.4. The Atmosphere of *the Fall of the House of Usher*

The fall of the House of Usher is a great example of a story's setting creating an atmosphere that achieves the suspense intended by the author; it takes Poe a mansion and a fallen family to create a gothic tale of suspense. The story begins on a "dull, dark, and soundless autumn day when the clouds hung oppressively low in the heavens." Through its carefully chosen words and reference to autumn, the season of death and despair, this sentence by the unnamed narrator effectively summarizes the atmosphere of this gothic story of death and the uncanny. As he reaches the building, the narrator alludes to it as "the melancholy House of Usher," describes his feelings, and then speaks in a foreboding tone. There seem to be depressed, melancholy, and quite often frightening surroundings that, thanks to Poe's skillful description, could be mistaken for a dream, and there is frequently a hint of surrealism in the story in the surroundings not to mention the mansion itself. A sense of claustrophobia is presented faintly throughout the story, and knowing how Roderick has not left the house for years; it only heightens. In fact, the narrator himself doesn't leave until the story's ending—which makes us feel just as trapped. The entire story is crammed within the prison walls of the dreary halls on an overbearing autumn day, in which every object and sound is diluted to Roderick's

hypersensitivity, from the time the unnamed narrator enters the House of Usher till the conclusion of the narrative when he escapes in terror.

Furthermore, the narrative wonderfully exhibits Poe's composition principle, which argues that everything in the story must contribute to a single, cohesive impact. Poe has clearly picked the spooky and ghostly atmosphere of "the grim phantasm FAER" (p.210) as the story's primary effect, and in doing so, he stresses the physical characteristics of the numerous structures - details of the mansion from the outside and inside, as well as its settings. As a result, each phrase, image, and description in the story is taken with the fundamental aim of instilling extreme suspense and fear in both the narrator and the reader in mind. The syntax of the story is prominent in Gothicism; fear, horror, death, and gloom are prominent trait of this style. He used expressions like "soundless" "ghastly" and "vacant" to set an empty and sombre atmosphere upon the readers. The narrator described the atmosphere to be icy and sickening to the heart, dreary, and unsettling; giving the impression that Poe is aiming to have the characters and readers be on the same page.

II. Suspense in *the Black Cat* and *the Fall of the House of Usher*

Poe uses the structure to create and achieve suspense in the Black Cat story, unlike what he does in the fall of the house of Usher where he uses the settings, atmosphere, and the events to achieve it; and thus each is going to be studied differently.

II.a. Suspense in *the Black Cat*

Suspense is technically a state of excited or anxious uncertainty about what may happen. In literature, suspense is an uneasy feeling that readers get when they do not know what is going to happen next, it is a device writers use in order to engross the readers into the tense atmosphere and the anticipation of what is going to happen next. Suspense is achieved through the employment of many features and channels such as narrative manipulation (through different approaches such as disposition, victim disposition, and figures of speech), syntax, and semantics.

Suspense, like most mental states, is difficult to define and is usually associated with uncertainty, expectation, apprehension, and anxiety. Because the word's etymological meaning refers to interruption, to the idea of "being suspended," the art of suspenseful storytelling necessitates more than mysteries that rely solely on people's curiosity – it necessitates a skilled manipulation of the reader/viewer for the arousal of lingering sensations and impressions, EA Poe had done just that in "The Black Cat".

In Poe's "The Black Cat" story, from the very beginning, he begins to intrigue the reader. He wrote a first person account of how the narrator did something wrong. As he begins to explain what he has done, he repeatedly stops to remind the reader that he is not thinking properly and to make excuses for what he has done. He then went on to write, "Mad indeed would I be to expect it, in a case where my very senses reject their own evidence. Yet, mad am I not – and very surely do I not dream. But to-morrow I die, and to-day I would unburden my soul." This makes the reader even more nervous and worried about what will happen to them. The narrator of "The Black Cat" begins by warning us that his story may not be believable and that he wants to confess his actions have terrified him. It can be seen that the narrator is very superstitious about his black cat, Pluto, and is scared of him after cutting off his eyes and realizing his mistake and is horrified with his actions and then he kills the cat by hanging. The second cat can be thought of as a modified version of Pluto or a completely different cat. It's full of suspense precisely because we don't know who the second cat is. If the narrator is to be believed, the cat not only lost an eye like Pluto, but it also has an image of a gallows on its chest. We also know that the narrator writes from "Felon's cell". Waiting to see what gets him in jail adds another layer of suspense to the story.

II.a.1. Suspense through narrative manipulation

Suspense can be done through narrative manipulation using characters, and this is done by the narrator right off the start "For the most wild, yet most homely narrative" (Poe, complete tales, 448) "I neither expect nor solicit belief. Mad indeed would I be to expect it, in a case where my very senses reject their own evidence. Yet, mad am I not – and very surely do I not dream." (Poe, complete tales, 448) These passages hold a great deal of manipulation and this creates an immediate sense of

suspense that makes the reader anticipate what is to happen. According to Poe's manipulative writing style you tell one story while another is being told, and you manipulate your reader by switching facts from those two story lines and by playing with narrative time, expanding unimportant passages to build tension and accelerating those events that, given proper attention, might reveal too much of the second story before it is time to bring it up "In the brief tale [...] the author is enabled to carry out his full design without interruption. During the hour of perusal, the soul of the reader is at the writer's control." (Poe 2004, 692) Given this, we can safely say that the story's timeline and events are manipulated by the narrator to suit his needs; this creates an involuntary suspense, he directs the reader focus and imposes his point of view and implies that it is a cause-effect relationship to make it seem like it is a simple coincidence after he turns the story into a puzzle made by the reader's own assumptions.

The narrator had used distortion of events as well as timelines to further throw off the reader's attention and shape the story the way he needs, one we should be bringing up is when he apparently lies about the timing of his wife's murder, he changes the whole thing and lies about killing Pluto as well. However, since there was no change of narrative perspective, the clues that clear out the ambiguity are given by the narrator himself through some slip ups Poe put "The corpse, already greatly decayed and clotted with gore" (Poe, complete tales, 455) this one passage is an example of the narrator's lapses. This disposition creates a sense of confusion if the reader does not consider the narrator's unreliability on various depths; he is prone to the loop of the unknown and thus suspense.

II.a.1.1. Narrative manipulation through literary devices

Foreshadowing

Other ways Poe used manipulated context to create suspense is through foreshadowing, it is used to hint on what is going to happen later, dropping a major plot twist out of nowhere is going to get negative reactions so foreshadowing is a common way to keep readers anticipating or fearing what is to happen next. The narrator's scheduled execution on the gallows is foreshadowed first by the narrator's hanging of Pluto, next by the outline of the dead cat on the wall (after the fire) and "The Black Cat" biggest example of foreshadowing that made the readers and the

narrator tense in suspense is the appearance of the second cat that is deprived of one eye and white patch of fur that resembles the gallows; foreshadowing the narrator's own dismay and that this cat is bringing him to the hands of the law.

Irony

Another literary device Poe uses in order to deliver the suspenseful tension is irony, it is when the intended meaning is different from the literal meaning and Poe does that in many of his stories. The irony in "The Black Cat " emerges when the narrator cuts one of Pluto's eyes. Although the cat can no longer see with that eye, the cat now acknowledges its caretaker for what he is: unpredictable and dangerous. Poe employs irony to carry the cat's new understanding and dislike towards the narrator after experiencing his abusive tendencies. It is ironic that the cat could not see the narrator's true self when it had both eyes; however, when the cat loses an eye, it sees its proprietor for whom he is barring a doubt for the first time. In addition to this, the narrator's drastic change of personality is suspenseful as much as it is ironic. "From my infancy I was noted for the docility and humanity of my disposition. My tenderness of heart was even so conspicuous as to make me the jest of my companions." (Poe, complete tales, 448) He was so gentle that his companions made fun of him, only to grow up into a psychopathic murderer as an adult is ironic to a great extent, and this exact change gives one a kind of chill uncanny suspense. Additionally the wife's murder could be taken as the climax of the story and the suspense has been built up for that moment, what makes even more suspenseful is that she presumably was murdered trying to save the cat from her husband's wrath only to get the blow.

Repetition

Another literary device that could give fruitful results towards creating suspense is repetition

"One morning, in cool blood, I slipped a noose about its neck and hung it to the limb of a tree-hung it with tears streaming from my eyes, and with the bitterest remorse at my heart-hung it because I knew that in doing so I was committing a sin-a deadly sin that would so jeopardize my immortal soul as to place it-if such a thing were possible-even beyond the reach of the infinite mercy of the Most Merciful and Most Terrible God" (Poe, complete tales, 450)

This excerpt above reveals repetitive use of a number of words: hung four times, because three times, and sin twice. When the frequency of words is considered regarding the theme of the story, it is understood that Poe is intentionally using repetition while describing the narrator's inner crisis and strife to increase the suspense. "This dread was not exactly a dread of physical evil—and yet I should be at loss how otherwise to define it. O am almost ashamed to own—yes, even in this felon's cell, I am almost ashamed to own—" (Poe, complete tales, 452) this passage shows how Poe used repetition to create certain tension while describing the emotions of the narrator.

II.a.2. Suspense on the level of syntax

Suspense could be on the level of syntax could be created by various ways such as delaying the main clauses, imperative constructions, asyndeton, inversion, short sentences, ellipsis.

II.a.2.1. Ellipsis

One device Poe uses in this story is ellipsis which is the omission of a word in a clause; when it is inserted in the readers are allowed to feel the narrator's emotions. "Who has not a hundred times, found himself committing a vile or a stupid action, for no other reason than because he knows he should not?" (Poe, complete tales, 450) "During this period there came back into my spirit a half sentiment that seemed, but was not, remorse" (Poe, complete tales, 451) in the first extract the verb is omitted, and in the second the subject is omitted. Poe has added suspense in a different way using ellipsis. Ellipsis also helps communication become easier and more economical by avoiding repetition (Wales, 1990). Alongside ellipsis, substitution is also employed by the author as shown in the following extracts "The walls, with one exception had fallen in" "This exception was found in a compartment wall, not very thick" (Poe, complete tales, 450) *Exception* substitutes for the wall "We had bird, gold-fish, a fine dog, rabbits, a small monkey, and, a cat. This latter was remarkably large and beautiful animal, entirely black, and sagacious to an astonishing degree" (Poe, complete tales, 448) *Latter* substitutes for cat "My wife had called my attention, more than once, to the character of the mark of white hair, of which I have spoken, and which constituted the sole visible difference between the strange beast and the one I had destroyed" (Poe, complete tales, 452) *The one*

substitutes for the black cat. Using short sentences enhanced with ellipsis could initially be a tool to give edge to the story and draw attention without losing style.

II.a.2.2 Capitalization and Italicization

Furthermore, Capitalization and italic use stand out in this story; Poe used capitalization during stressful and dreadful moments. Throughout the text words like “horror”, “agony”, “gallows”, and “death” are capitalized to emphasize the narrator’s nervous state. The overuse of capitalization could also be used to draw attention to the narrator’s changes “And then came, as if to my final and irrevocable overthrow, the spirit of PERVERSENESS” (Poe, complete tales, 450) the capitalization of perverseness indicates a change in the protagonist's mood. Italics are also used in sections where the author talks about the cat “We had birds, gold fish, a fine dog, rabbits, a small monkey and *a cat*” (448) “It was this unfathomable longing of the soul to *vex itself*” (450) *because....* hung it *because* I knew that it had loved me, and *because* I felt it had given me no reason offense-hung it *because* I knew that in so doing I was committing a sin” (450) This usage could be related to the author’s perception of the cat’s uniqueness. This graphological marker, which assigns a distinct role to the cat, may imply that the cat is the main character in the story. In one extract, the Italic use of “*vex itself*” heightens the narrator’s suffering from perverseness. The other italicized word is the word “*because*”. The graphological deviation in the word “*because*” makes it more conspicuous, giving the impression that what the narrator is interested in is to make people understand his reasons. In addition, considering the desperate situation of the narrator, it could also show the deep remorse and agony of the narrator and as a result, the reader is drawn into the narrator’s web of lies and manipulation, creating an inexplicable sense of suspense.

II.a.3. Suspense of the level of semantics

On the semantic level suspense could be built by the usage of epithets⁹, metaphor, semantic contrast, narrative details, and semantic repetition.

II.a.3.1. Epithets:

⁹ Epithet is basically a characterizing word or phrase occurring in place of the name of a person or thing. Poe employed this feature throughout the story for instance; he used epithets rendering superstitions and epithets rendering horror, and descriptive epithets.

Epithets associated with devil
"Fiendish Intemperance"
"Fiendish Malevolence"
"Demonical Interference"
"Damnable atrocity"
"Evil Thoughts"

All of these expressions relate to the devil that is a constant symbol in the story; this symbolism is carefully crafted to create a suspenseful atmosphere.

Epithets associated with God and the Soul
"The Most Merciful and Most Terrible God"
"High God"
"Deadly Sin"
"Immortal God"
"Immortal Sin" (regarding the soul)

Epithets rendering horror
"The fury of a demon"
"spirit of perverseness"
"phantasm"
"Hideous beast"
"Crafty monster"
"Rage more than Demonic"
"ghastly"
"GALLOWS"

These epithets are all related to the psychopathic moments the narrator undergoes; denotatively speaking, the gallows is the structure or the device where the criminal is to be executed with so it is interlocked to his own horror creating the suspenseful code. Moreover epithets serve to develop the themes which are determined by the author's style and thereby they emphasize the significance of these elements.

II.a.3.2. Semantic repetition:

Poe uses semantic repetition in which a word or phrase is repeated at the beginning of a clause or another group of words. Semantic repetition imparts emphasis and balance. Here are examples that present the suspense created by this feature:

"I grew, day by day, more moody, more irritable, more regardless of the feelings of others". (Poe, complete tales, 449)

"These events have terrified - have tortured - have destroyed me". (Poe, complete tales, 448)

"I blush, I burn, I shudder, while I pen the damnable atrocity" (Poe, complete tales, 449)

"I am almost ashamed to own--yes... I am almost ashamed to own" (Poe, complete tales, 452)

"One morning, in cool blood, I slipped a noose about its neck and hung it to the limb of a tree - hung it with the tears streaming from my eyes, and with the bitterest remorse at my heart - hung it because I knew that it had loved me, and because I felt it had given me no reason of offence - hung it because I knew that in so doing I was committing a sin" (Poe, complete tales, 450)

Poe is able to control the pace of the narrative and create tension for the reader by slowing down the action with repetition. The more he draws out the action, the more suspense develops naturally. We know it is coming and all we have to do is waiting; this creates suspense.

II.a.3.3. Metaphor:

Metaphor is another feature used to encourage a more philosophical approach, or it can be used to create suspense and drive the storyline. The main and

most prominent metaphor should be the cat itself, including the cat's eyes, the fire, the painting on the lonely wall after the fire, and many more. The title of the story was strong enough to establish that. But what is Poe trying to convey by naming the cat Pluto? One of the most prominent metaphors used here is the name of the cat. Pluto may be named after the Roman god of the underworld. According to many people, the underworld is a dark, gloomy and lonely place. The author chose the name "Pluto" because the appearance of the black cat is most likely related to the dark underworld or possibly also the god of the underworld. Pluto in the narrator's messed up mind is more than a cat, perhaps he is God, or perhaps universe, or perhaps truth, or perhaps all, or perhaps one, or perhaps in some sense the narrator himself; in the sense of being the center of everything in the story, he is the start and the end of it all. This all is an absolute writing genius on Poe's part.

II.b. Suspense in *the Fall of the House of Usher*

Poe deliberately portrays the sense of impending doom throughout the story as a literary technique to create suspense from the beginning of *The Fall of the House of Usher* Poe. The unnamed narrator's gloomy observations enhance the sense that he is doomed, as the narrator constantly emphasizes how an "insufferable melancholy pervaded my spirit." Poe's aesthetic technique of foreshadowing establishes a sombre "atmosphere of grief" that is unmistakably linked to the Gothic genre. As a result, Poe's aura heightens the feeling of dread around the unnamed narrator, who suffers from "intolerable agitation of soul" and "nervousness," both of which are linked to his portrayal. Poe teases the reader with the spine-chilling impression of 'spiralling escalation' of the reader's emotions in the microcosm of his short narrative due to this foreshadowing through the narrator's emotions to anticipate a disastrous ending. Poe may 'engender anomalous states of mind' to convey the sense of impending doom that his lead is bound to, according to Kaplan, due to the obvious rising gloom within the story.

Poe blends the real and imagined in *The Fall of the House of Usher* to create a feeling of suspense within the story's setting. This bloodcurdling aspect of the Gothic literature would induce uncertainty and ambiguity in the reader about what is truth and what is fantasy in the narrative. The 'phantasmagoric effect of the gloomy furniture,' reinforced by the 'vacant eye-like windows,' anthropomorphizes the

house, giving it a powerful sense of liveliness amid what appears to be a miserable surroundings. This, therefore, blurs the line between the actual and the imagined in the narrative, as the reader is accustomed to think of a home as an inert object rather than something living. Without a doubt, Poe's most important stylistic method is infusing a theme terror and fear within the text, which is transmitted to the reader. The horrible picture of Madeline with "blood upon her white robes" in *The Fall of the House of Usher* instantly conjures up a terrifying vision of ghastly blood on a body that has returned from the dead. The clashing tone of the colours white and red adds to the scary quality of this imagery. The colour 'white' has connotations of purity and an uncorrupted nature of a character, whereas the colour 'red' has implications of violence and death in this context. The 'emaciated' character is depicted with two colours mixed at the story's conclusion.

The metaphorical parallels to the supernatural underpin this nature of clashing colours and gore inside the image of Madeline Usher, thus developing a sense of panic and anxiety for the readers. The narrator is revealed to be disturbed by the "superhuman intensity of his [Roderick Usher's] words," as he mutters a satanic-style rhyme upon seeing Madeline's body. The frightening otherworldly sense established in the passage is amplified by the 'blood-red moon' that surrounds this setting. This symbolic moon might reflect the dreadful atmosphere that hangs over the entire series of events that transpire in this creepy house. The Gothic intensity is heightened by the premodification of the moon with the word 'blood-red,' since the supernatural look of the moon instills fear of damnation within the reader. During this narrative, Poe skillfully conjures a 'hellish realm of rootlessness,' which critics characterize as a 'spiritual sterility and eerie isolation,' while analyzing Poe's gloomy Romantic literature with supernatural sublime aspects just like the 'blood-red moon.' Because it's a groundbreaking sort of Gothic literature, Poe's blending of the supernatural with thematic usage of dread and fear inside the text may eventually generate the foremost focused amount of tension within the narrative of the fall of the House of Usher.

Conclusion

This chapter focused on the gothic elements in both stories, such as settings, atmosphere, and suspense. In "The Black Cat," the setting is minimal to the mood

that Poe created through methods like repetition, omission, manipulation, and the narrator's mental condition. We used a linguistic approach since the suspense was produced by the story's structure. He employs manipulative narrative techniques such as foreshadowing, irony, repetition, and event manipulation; on a syntactic level, he employs ellipsis, punctuation, capitalization, and italicization; and on a semantic level, he employs semantic repetition, epithets, and metaphor. The atmosphere and setting of "The Fall of the House of Usher" are crucially interwoven, masterfully illustrated, and effectively described in order to create a suspenseful tone that foreshadows the impending doom. Suspense is created by combining previous elements but focusing on the story's events rather than the structure.

General conclusion

This dissertation aims to study the gothic elements in EA Poe's *The Fall of the House of Usher* and *The Black Cat* to understand what it is specifically about gothic fiction that made it so significant in the 18th century. We decided on the uncanny, settings, atmosphere, and suspense as the elements to focus on throughout this study. We used reader response theory to gain a 21st-century reader's perspective on what makes gothic fiction unique, and psychoanalytic theory to investigate the uncanny and the stories.

This dissertation is divided into three chapters. The first chapter is a literature review; the second chapter is a psychoanalytic reading, examining the uncanny motif and interpreting the stories; and the third chapter is an examination of the settings, atmosphere, and suspense and how Poe created these. We came to find that Poe made use of the unreliable narrator trope in both tales. In *The Fall of the House of Usher*, we concluded that both Roderick and the narrator had hallucinated the ending, and Madeline had not come back from the dead. As for *The Black Cat*, we deduced that the narrator lied about various events in the story; he did not murder Pluto on the night he claims to; he lied about the apparition on the wall; he lied about his wife's murder; and we come to the conclusion that he killed his wife prior to the timeline he claims and that there was no second cat and Pluto had not been killed.

The uncanny as a literary motif is used in the stories, and we examined it using Freud's concept and psychoanalytic theory; in both works, Poe used the uncanny motif in various forms and themes. He uses the double motif in *The Fall of the House of Usher*, and we can observe how he doubles inanimate objects with individuals throughout the reading. Roderick and the house), the ancient double-twin (Roderick and Madeline), and makes us realise that the narrator is also Roderick's double to some extent. We discovered that the narrator is unreliable and that he displayed signs of instability, leading us to believe that his account of the events may not be objective.

The uncanny motif was studied through psychoanalytic lenses, as for the other gothic elements, suggesting they were studied on other levels. In *The Black Cat*, the setting is minimal to the mood that Poe created through methods like repetition, omission, manipulation, and the narrator's mental condition. Poe uses repetition to dramatize the speech of the narrator and make the story vivid by describing many details; omission is used to dramatize the actions of the narrator and convey the horrors to the readers, evoking a more horrific atmosphere. Poe employs several figurative tropes to establish the haunting atmosphere, which are foreshadowing, repetition, alliteration, simile, symbolic language, and building up suspense. We used a linguistic approach since the suspense was produced by the story's structure. He employs manipulative narrative techniques such as foreshadowing, irony, repetition, and event manipulation; on a syntactic level, he employs ellipsis, punctuation, capitalization, and italicization; and on a semantic level, he employs semantic repetition, epithets, and metaphor. The atmosphere and setting of *The Fall of the House of Usher* are crucially interwoven, masterfully illustrated, and effectively described in order to create a suspenseful tone that foreshadows the impending doom surrounding the family and the characters in the story. For instance, suspense is created by combining previous elements but focusing on the story's events rather than the structure. For instance, the suspense was heightened after Madeline's death as the characters were anticipating some unknown doom.

Edgar Allan Poe was undoubtedly the best writer of the American gothic genre in the nineteenth century, as well as one of the country's most important authors. Poe's macabre tales marked a shift in the Gothic genre and horror writing, emphasizing the psychological over the supernatural, moving from the mysteries of archaic medieval castles to the mysteries that lurk within the common domestic home, and emphasizing the terror and horror that humans inflict on other humans, rather than otherworldly beasts or antagonistic creatures, essentially progressing away from the fantastical and metaphorical to horrific realism. *The Black Cat*, a short story by Edgar Allan Poe published in 1843, can be seen as a racial allegory and a critique of the strict Southern home in connection to slavery. While the search for allegory in a work often comes across as forced and indicative of the critic's own views, there is abundant historical and textual evidence to imply Poe was "conscious

of market trends" and "capitalized on the customs of slavery in his sensationalist fiction." Edgar Allan Poe utilizes grim imagery in his short story "The Fall of the House of Usher" to demonstrate how society has corrupted Roderick and everyone who has come before him. *The Fall of the House of Usher*, a Gothic nightmare tale, questions the delicate borders between perception and imagination, sanity and madness, the physical and the psychical, more than any other story. It pits free will against fate and looks at how fear is both poisonous and spreading.

Edgar Allan Poe once said, "Words have no power to impress the mind without the exquisite horror of their reality." It is only natural to assume that Poe's works reflect the social backdrop of the time; the importance of Gothic works in the 18th and 19th centuries could evidently be derived from how people relate to them emotionally and psychologically. This study revealed that there is an emotional and psychological depth written throughout the story that is presented through the gothic elements by the author. This specific connection is absent in the minds of 21st century readers, and yet, uncommonly, there are individuals that hold this emotional connection.

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Le résumé

Ce travail de thèse, intitulé "La lecture au 21ème siècle des éléments gothiques de certaines œuvres d'Edgar Allan Poe", vise à étudier les éléments gothiques (les environnements, l'atmosphère, le suspense et le bizarre) afin de mieux comprendre ce qui a rendu la fiction gothique très importante. Ce qui a rendu la fiction gothique très importante au XIXe siècle mais moins importante au XXIe siècle. A cet égard, le corpus de recherches existant, la première partie est une revue de la littérature. La deuxième partie est une lecture psychanalytique ainsi qu'une interprétation des histoires sélectionnées, Le chat noir et La chute de la maison Usher. La troisième partie est une étude des éléments gothiques à différents niveaux. La théorie de la réponse du lecteur et la théorie de la psychanalyse ont été choisies. La base de son importance, selon cette étude, découle de la connexion émotionnelle et psychologique émotionnel et psychologique que les gens de cette époque entretiennent avec des œuvres perçues comme des reflets de la peur et de l'anxiété de la société, par opposition aux lecteurs du XXIe siècle qui cherchent l'esthétique artistiques et plaisir.

Mots clés: Éléments gothiques, Edgar Allan Poe, Psychanalyse, littérature gothique.

المخلص

تهدف هذه المذكرة والتي تحمل عنوان "قراءات القرن الواحد والعشرون للعناصر القوطية في بعض أعمال إدغار ألان بو" إلى دراسة العناصر القوطية (الجرمانية) لفهم السبب الذي يجعل الأدب القوطي جزء لا يتجزأ من أدب القرن التاسع عشر وأقل أهمية في القرن العشرين. في هذا الصدد، يتضمن الجزء الرئيسي من المذكرة ثلاث أجزاء، الأول يتمثل في مراجعة أدبيات متعلقة بالقصص المختارة القط الأسود و سقوط منزل آشور؛ الثاني يتمثل في قراءة توظف نظرية التحليل النفسي بالإضافة إلى تفسير القصتين؛ الجزء الثالث يتمثل في دراسة العناصر القوطية في القصتين على مستويات متعددة. تم اختيار نظرية استجابة القارئ ونظرية التحليل النفسي من أجل إنجاز الدراسة. حسب النتائج المعطاة، أساس أهمية الأدب القوطي ينتج عن الارتباط العاطفي و النفسي الذي شكله الناس مع هذه الأعمال الأدبية التي تعكس مخاوف و اضطراب المجتمع في تلك الفترة الزمنية، على عكس قراء القرن الواحد والعشرون الذين يسعون وراء المتعة الفنية و الجماليات.

الكلمات المفتاحية: العناصر القوطية (الجرمانية)، إدغار ألان بو، التحليل النفسي، الأدب القوطي (الجرماني).