Poe's Supernatural Ambiguity: A Historical Stylistic Study

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Abstract

Recent Gothic and stylistic studies have shown a gap between the characteristic of ambiguity in Edgar Allan Poe's Gothic works and his stylistics. This thesis aims to combine these two individual areas of Gothic and stylistic studies and strengthen the intersection of Poe's Gothic ambiguity and his stylistics, investigating the ambiguity, under the themes of horror, the uncanny, and terror, created through Poe's wordplay in his Gothic poems and fictions, a usage that often generates double meaning and results in unresolved equivocation between supernaturalism and natural effects. In this thesis, I argue that the supernatural ambiguity in Poe's Gothic works is a reflection of his Gothic, critical, and rhetorical contexts. His adoption and application of the devices of literalisation, repetition, polysemy, and antithesis, which evoke a sense of supernatural ambiguity in his Gothic writings, can find correspondences in sources in his time. The methodology of historical stylistics is adopted to fulfil the aims of my project: earlier and contemporary Gothic writers as well as the critical and rhetorical theories of Augustus William Schlegel, Hugh Blair, and Henry Home, which were influential and contemporaneous to Poe, and essays and reviews published in the early and mid-nineteenth century are employed to recontextualise Poe and examine how his supernatural ambiguity emerged and was, at the same time, informed by those historical texts. Through exploring Poe's Gothic ambiguity in its context and how he engenders the effect of ambiguity via certain stylistic devices of double signification, this study sheds light on the interrelation between Poe's ambiguous Gothicism and stylistics, bridging these two important areas of studies of Poe's writing and filling, thus, the gap in the scholarship of his stylistics of Gothic ambiguity.

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Author's Declaration

I declare that this thesis is my own work and that all critical and other sources (literary and electronic) have been specifically and properly acknowledged, as and when they occur in the body of my text.

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Introduction: Poe's (Super)naturalism in Its Time: A Historical Stylistic Approach to the Contextualisation of Poe's Ambiguous Gothic Stylistics

Deep into that darkness peering, long I stood there wondering, fearing,

Doubting, dreaming dreams no mortal ever dared to dream before…

Edgar Allan Poe, 'The Raven'

In the Gothic field, Poe's writing is known for, as well as characterised by, a sense of ambiguity between the supernatural and the natural. Very often, the phantasmal trace in Poe is neither objectively demonstrated to be a ghostly experience, nor to be a subjective projection by an obsessed psyche. This thesis focuses on this ambiguous supernatural style in Poe's Gothic writing. In order to investigate the emergence of Poe's ambiguous stylistics in relation to its context, I selected the method of historical stylistics, a new approach that combines stylistic analysis with factors in history. I argue, in this study, that Poe's supernatural ambiguity is not an abrupt or singular presence of compositional idiosyncrasies but, rather, a style that emerges from and reverberates with the author's nineteenth-century Gothic, critical, and rhetorical contexts. His use of devices of literalisation, repetition, polysemy, and antithesis, which are related to the Gothic elements of horror, terror, and the uncanny respectively, to create the equivocality of supernaturalism can find their sources in his literary contemporaries and leading rhetoricians in his time. By reading Poe from the angle of historical stylistics, this research will illuminate recent stylistic discussions of Poe's writing, modern Gothic scholarship on Poe's supernatural ambiguity, and Poe studies' apprehension of the author and his historical context, all of which, so far, have posed enquiries and researched into subjects from their specific perspectives individually but have not yet been integrated with each other altogether to explore the very topic of Poe's supernaturally indeterminate stylistics and its relationship

with the pertinent contexts. A dialogue between the three study fields outlined above as well as the innovative application of historical stylistics to the project, will make its original contribution to the current academic platform on Poe.

Before advancing into the sections of the methodology and the review of recent Gothic studies, stylistic studies, and Poe studies, it is indispensable to reflect on Poe's connection with stylistics and ambiguity in writing. David S. Reynolds refers Poe to '[c]linging to rules of prosody and syntax with an almost neurotic devotion' (229), Martin Scofield acknowledges that 'Poe is the first theorist of the short story as a literary form' (31), and Donald Barlow Stauffer considers Poe 'one of the great stylists of the nineteenth century' (465). In Poe's stylistic theory, the centrepiece is unquestionably his concept of the unity of effect. Poe's straightforward or indirect reference to it is seen in his essays, such as the 'Chapter of Suggestions' (1845), 'The American Drama' (1845), 'The Philosophy of Composition' (1846), 'The Rationale of Verse' (1848), and the posthumously published 'The Poetic Principle' (1850), as well as his reviews of several writers like Elizabeth Barrett Barrett (then Elizabeth Barrett Browning), Friedrich de la Motte Fouqué, Edward Bulwer-Lytton, Charles Dickens, Thomas Moore, William Harrison Ainsworth, Frederick Marryatt, James Fenimore Cooper, Nathaniel Hawthorne, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, Theodore S. Fay, L. H. Sigourney, and William Gilmore Simms. Among them, 'The Philosophy of Composition' is the work that captures the gist of Poe's theory of the unified effect. In that essay, Poe says, 'It is only with the *dénouement* constantly in view that we can give a plot its indispensable air of consequence, or causation, by making the incidents, and especially the tone at all points, tend to the development of the intention' (13). Also, the form of a shorter poem and short story is another desideratum for the creation and reception of the designed effect. 'If any literary work is too long to be read at one sitting, we must be content to dispense with the immensely important effect derivable from unity of impression—for, if two sittings be required, the affairs of the world interfere, and every thing like totality is at once destroyed' (15). Poe then, in the essay, self-referentially makes use of his poem

'The Raven' – as if the poem itself is a production following his compositional principles – to exemplify his theory of style. The refrain, sounds, the setting of a single closed space, the climax, and the denouement are considered, selected, and arranged for the fulfilment of a unity of effect in the poem.

However, despite Poe's assertion and demonstration of his theory of a single unified effect,[1] an alternative sense lurks in his essay and poem, and it further triggers the potentiality of ambiguity in the reading of his work. In 'The Philosophy of Composition', Poe admits his adoption of a sense of supernaturalism for the character of the raven in the poem, which is other than the natural effect of the denouement. He calls his use the effect or 'force of contrast', apparently seeing the opposition between the 'air of the fantastic' (22) and his intended denouement of 'seriousness' (23). In the remainder of the essay, as if disconcerted that he himself would trespass on the sphere of the supernatural and/or break his rule of unity, Poe says, 'From this epoch the lover no longer jests—no longer sees any thing even of the fantastic in the Raven's demeanor' (23), 'So far, every thing is within the limits of the accountable—of the real' (23), and 'the narration, in what I have termed its first or obvious phase, has a natural termination, and so far there has been no overstepping of the limits of the real' (24). Subsequent to his concerned and self-assuring statements, Poe concludes his essay with the guideline of the insertion of an undercurrent meaning that runs beneath the upper current of the dominant sense. This 'suggestiveness', 'under current', or 'under current of meaning', as he terms it (24), is a 'metaphorical' import added to 'The Raven' (25). The creature of the bird is not only an exterior entity, but also an interior burden, 'emblematical' of the grief and loss of the bereaved speaker (25). Though Poe stresses the subdued suggestiveness of his undertone, the metaphorical signification, with its distinction from the literal sense, is a second meaning and effect in writing. That is, Poe's theory of composition is not, as he perceives and claims, a unity of one single effect but double effect. And it is this doubleness of significations, combined with the contrasting forces of

[1] Poe does not really use such terms as 'a single effect' or 'a single unified effect' in 'The Philosophy of Composition'. He says it elsewhere, in his different reviews of Hawthorne's *Twice-Told Tales* (572) (586).

supernature and nature, that often begets ambiguities in Poe's Gothic poems and tales. Jerrold E. Hogle thus, when discussing Poe's Gothic works, rightly says that 'readers cannot readily distinguish what is "out there" from what is (perhaps falsely) "inside" the mind as quite physical spectres appear to arise in artificially antiquated spaces – as in *The Raven*, 'Ligeia', or 'The Fall of the House of Usher', adding 'that may be more projections of the observers, more deceptive symbols of *their* obsessions and desires, than any *ding an sich* independent of the subject or its verbal representations' (156).

Although several scholars have made observations of Poe's doubleness in his theory of the unity of effect, his double style of the literal and metaphorical and the ambiguity of supernaturalism has not yet been properly explored. Terence Whalen, for instance, calls Poe's dualism of the (literal) effect and the symbolic undercurrent the theory of the 'divided text' (79), and suggests that Poe does so with an intention to address the divided popular and critical tastes of the audience, especially in view of Poe's saying that a poem 'should suit at once the popular and the critical taste' in 'The Philosophy of Composition'[2] (79). Whalen further points out that 'Poe sought to satisfy multiple tastes with a single poem, so too did he seek to combine multiple discourses into a single (literary) text' (89), and his 'contradiction between the material presence of the divided audience and the artistic imperative of the single effect' (89). Yet Whalen focuses on Poe's relation with the antebellum American capitalist publishing culture, rather than Poe's stylistics and ambiguities in his creations. Like Whalen, Betsy Erkkila recognises 'Poe's double-edged poetics' for divided tastes, but Erkkila proposes that Poe is in a position to both satirise and criticise the democracy and socio-political turbulence in the Age of Jackson (69). Poe's double effect of the literal and the metaphorical are therefore not in the contemplation of Erkkila. Another scholar, James L. Machor, interprets Poe's 'double addressee' of audiences as the writer's ambivalent attitude toward authorship, writing, and the reader (95-96). As a writer, Poe seeks, according to Machor, to see his creations thoroughly understood by his

[2] In 'The Philosophy of Composition' p15.

reader, but in so doing, he would lose his authorial domination over them (96). Considering this, Poe takes a double approach to make the reader 'simultaneously engaged and kept at a distance, enlightened and mystified, even amused and ridiculed' (95-96). Through this lens of Poe's concerns for his authorship authority to see his double approach to the reader, Machor likewise does not enter into the discussion of the two distinct senses in Poe's stylistics. On the other hand, with a focus on Poe's treatment of sensationalism in his works, Reynolds observes a 'dual process of enthusiastic absorption and studied redirection of the sensational' in Poe (226). Though Reynolds makes suggestions of Poe's adding 'control and intentionality' (230-31) and his method of '*exaggeration* and *analysis*' for his adaptation of sensationalism to his writing (231), Reynolds does not distinguish Poe's literal and metaphorical senses in his theory or address the ambiguity between the supernatural and natural in Poe's poems and fictions, the areas that I am going to work on in this thesis.

While Poe's utilisation of double effect generates ambiguities in his Gothic pieces, his equivocal attitude towards supernaturalism also, jointly, results in his style of double-faceted writing. As aforementioned, in 'The Philosophy of Composition', Poe seems to caution against the transgression of the borderline between the marvellous and the real, and he articulates that he quits the depiction of the supernatural early in the ninth stanza of his poem for the preconceived natural denouement. Nevertheless, in his 1846 epistle to George W. Eveleth, Poe elucidates that his lexical choice of '*tinkling*' for the raven's footstep sound (in the fourteenth stanza of total eighteen stanzas) has a 'sense of the *supernatural*' for the purpose ('Letter 241' 601). Poe says, 'No human or physical foot could tinkle on a soft carpet—therefore the tinkling of feet would vividly convey the supernatural impression', and affirms, 'This was the idea, and it is good within itself…' ('Letter 241' 601). In fact, not only the raven's unusual footfall, but also, on a larger scale, Poe's continuum of a superstitious and supernaturalism-infused discourse to the closure of the poem, renders ambiguous 'The Raven'. This is the reason why Hogle and another scholar, Benjamin F. Fisher, both read the poem a

piece of plurisignation. Fisher states that '"The Raven" has often been construed as a wholly supernatural poem, which, because of folklore that links ravens to the devil, offers one convincing approach to the poem', but '[e]qually convincing are the conditions that give credence to a non-supernatural interpretation, in which the speaker's delusions prompt him subjectively to incline *toward* supernatural underpinnings for his interaction with the raven' (*Cambridge Introduction* 43).

Poe's ambivalence to supernatural writing is further reflected in a number of his reviews. For example, in his review of William Godwin's *Lives of the Necromancers* (1834), Poe expresses his enlightened remark about supernature, saying 'There are many things, too, in the great circle of human experience, more curious than even the records of human credulity…had we been in any degree skeptical, the *Lives of the Necromancers* would have convinced us' (259-60). Poe then differentiates Godwin's supernatural work from David Brewster's *Letters on Natural Magic*, commenting that the latter is a treatise wherein 'delusion acts upon mankind' whereas the former evidences 'the great range and wild extravagancy of the imagination of man' (260). In another review of Simms's *The Wigwam and the Cabin* (1845), Poe even more openly praises his 'Grayling, or Murder Will Out' in the collection for 'the best ghost story every written *by an American*' (905). However, when a ghost or phantom is tackled in composition, Poe tends to elude the solution of clear supernaturalism. In his consideration, 'intoxication, (from whatever cause,) is an almost irresistible impulse to counterfeit a farther degree of excitement than actually exists', and so is another contrivance of 'madness' ('William Hazlitt' 273). Regarding William Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, Poe supposes that 'his hero [Hamlet] excited to partial insanity by the disclosures of the ghost—he (the poet) [Shakespeare] *felt* that it was natural he should be impelled to exaggerate the insanity' ('William Hazlitt' 273). More importantly, in his review of Robert M. Bird's *Sheppard Lee* (1836), Poe compares different methods of writing about supernaturalism, and favours the unresolved ambiguity over the other approaches of genuine supernature and explained supernature. He expounds:

> For this and other reasons, we are led to prefer […] the *second* general method to which we have alluded. It consists in a variety of points—principally in avoiding as may easily be done, that *directness* of [supernatural] expression […] and thus leaving much to the imagination—in writing as if the author were firmly impressed with the truth [of nature], yet astonished at the immensity, of the wonders he relates, and for which, professedly, he neither claims nor anticipates credence […] by making use of the infinity of arts which give verisimilitude to a narration—and by leaving the result as a wonder not to be accounted for. It will be found that *bizzarreries* thus conducted, are usually far more effective than those otherwise managed. The attention of the author, who does not depend upon explaining away his incredibilities, is directed to giving them the character and the luminousness of truth, and thus are brought about, unwittingly, [by] some of the most vivid creations of human intellect...On the other hand what difficulty, or inconvenience, or danger can there be in leaving us uninformed of the important facts that a certain hero *did not* actually discover the elixir vitæ, *could not* really make himself invisible, and *was not* either a ghost in good earnest, or a bonâ fide Wandering Jew? (402-03)

This 'indirectness of expression' of the supernatural is regarded as superior to the direct use of supernaturalism by Poe, inasmuch as it avoids the certainty of the latter. At the same time, compared with the explained supernatural, this indirect approach, 'leaving the result as a wonder not to be accounted for', evades Poe's critique that 'in truth, the whole matter was a dream, and that we were very wrong in being worried about it at all' (402). This type of uncertain, undecided supernaturalism characterises Poe's Gothic tales of the middle and late period of his career, such as 'Ligeia' (1838), 'The Fall of the House of Usher' (1839), 'William Wilson' (1839), 'The Black Cat' (1843), 'A Tale of the Ragged Mountains' (1844), and 'The Raven' (1845). These works show differences from, on the one hand, his early more supernatural yet not unambiguous creations like 'Metzengerstein' (1832), 'Shadow – A Parable' (1835), 'MS. Found in a Bottle'

(1833), and 'Morella' (1835), and on the other hand, his late more obviously psychological piece 'The Tell-Tale Heart' (1843). These works, with their varied degrees of supernaturalism and ambiguity in the periodisation of different stages of Poe's writing span will be examined in my chapter one on Poe's Gothic poetry; chapter two horror and literalisation; chapter three the uncanny, indeterminate supernaturalism, and repetition and polysemy; and chapter four terror, prophecy and antithesis in this thesis.

By this study of Poe's ambiguous double writing, I am intent on exploring his ambivalence towards supernaturalism and the corresponding ambiguity of the supernatural composed in his Gothic poems and fictions. Whalen and Erkkila, as mentioned earlier, associate Poe's bifurcated writing with the divided popular and critical tastes in the market in Poe's time. In a similar vein, Fisher states more clearly that 'Poe perceived that he had to write for two audiences', supernatural writing for the majority and the (realistic) psychological import extracted from the supernatural for the fewer (*Cambridge Introduction* 57). Indeed, apart from Poe's sayings in 'The Philosophy of Composition' about his intention of writing for both popular and critical audiences, and his consideration of 'that degree of excitement which I deemed not above the popular, while not below the critical, taste' (16), he also, in his review of Charles James Lever, provides a more illuminating view of the different popular and critical tastes. In that review, Poe makes a distinction between the mass readers, those with 'uneducated thought', 'uncultivated taste', and 'unrefined and unguided passion', and remaining minority of 'the highest intellect and genius' (312). The proportion of the former and the latter is 'half or two-thirds' to 'one-half or one-third' (312). Considering the sales and popularity of a written work, Poe alludes to Horace's saying, '*omne tulit punctum qui miscuit utile dulci*' (translated into English: 'He gains everyone's approval who mixes the pleasant with the useful')[3] (312), and suggests 'so will the writer of fiction, who looks most sagaciously to his own *interest*, combine all votes by intermingling with his loftier efforts such amount of less ethereal matter as will give general currency to his composition' (312). This

[3] From <https://todayinsci.com/H/Horace/Horace-Quotations.htm>.

distinction between a popular and critical audience is also reflected in his conclusion to The Philosophy of Composition' that 'the *skill*, with which the author addresses the lower taste of the populace, is often a source of pleasure, because of admiration, to a taste higher and more refined, and may be made a point of comment and of commendation by the critic' (313).

If, as Fisher argues, Poe differentiates and attributes supernaturalism and non-supernatural psychological reading to the mass and critical readers respectively, his ambivalence towards the use of supernaturalism in composition as well as the ambiguities and double writing in his Gothic works can then be, partly, ascribed to this awareness of divided tastes in the reader. In this thesis, I will take further Fisher's view and will suggest that Poe's plurivalent style is a corollary of the post-Enlightenment sensibility and critique, and the stylistics of the unity of effect and other dominant contemporary rhetorical theories. The Gothic compositions of other American Gothic predecessors and contemporaries of Poe's such as Charles Brockden Brown, Washington Irving, John Neal, Hawthorne, and Bird, also demonstrate a different range of supernaturalism-involved ambiguity, including the type of uncertain supernaturalism that is characteristic of Poe's Gothic aesthetic. This means that in contrast to the mass desire for and popularity of Gothic supernaturalism in America during the late eighteenth century and early and mid-nineteenth century, an opposing movement decrying supernaturalism partly arising from the Enlightenment arose as the more educated critical taste against supernatural writing, especially in view of Emory Elliott's discussion of the context of Brown's Gothicism in the collision between Christian providence and 'Enlightenment philosophy's privileging of reason, order, and science as the appropriate means for gaining knowledge of and control over nature' (xvi). On the other hand, although Poe writes undecided supernatural pieces, he also creates a few works of verified supernaturalism, which indicates that the divided tastes are not the only factors in his double writing, if we also take into account his unambiguous and supernatural creations in the study of his bipartite writing. Meanwhile, Poe's adherence to the method of the unified effect and other prevalent rhetorical theories known to him also significantly shape his

Gothic style and ambiguous writing. He either writes supernatural or undecided supernatural pieces, but very rarely supernatural-explained Gothic[4] that would revoke his effect and ravage the consistency of his writing. Given all these factors, stylistic and contextual, I adopt the approach of historical stylistics for this project of Poe's ambiguous double writing, which will both address the aims of this thesis and assist me to explore Poe's stylistics in context.

Historical Stylistic Study of Poe's Supernatural Ambiguity

The approach of historical stylistics is a relatively new theory in the linguistic and stylistic field, despite the fact that the conception of 'a historicised approach to literary style' has long been formed by Leo Spitzer since 1948 (Auer et al. 2), and then developed by Robert Adolph, Douglas Biber and Edward Finegan, and Sylvia Adamson in the 1980s (Auer et al. 3). In view of the fact that 'the potential of historical corpora for an *explicit historical stylistic* investigation has only rather tentatively been exploited', Beatrix Busse, in 2010, proposes what she termed, 'New Historical Stylistics' (33), addressing the 'lack of a theoretical framework' of historical stylistics in the field (Bray 486). By New Historical Stylistics, Busse defines its aims 'to investigate diachronically changing or stable and/or foregrounded styles in historical (literary) texts, in a particular situation, in a particular genre, writer, and so on' and to undertake 'synchronic investigation of particular historical (literary) texts from a stylistic perspective' (34). According to Busse, '[a] New Historical Stylistic analysis of texts from older stages of the English language presupposes a comprehensive knowledge of the period, the context, and the language in which the text was produced' (35). Busse then names the means of the application of the approach, such as 'generic knowledge', 'encyclopaedic background knowledge' (35) and '[c]ontemporary sources, such

[4] The only exception of this type of Gothic in Poe is his tale, 'The Sphinx' (1846). His '"Thou Art the Man"' (1844) is also a piece of explained supernaturalism, as the revived victim is actually a trick of ventriloquism. However, it is more like a detective piece in nature.

as dictionaries, grammars, and rhetorical handbooks [that] serve to enhance modern (linguistic) theories and methods' (36).

My project of analysing Poe's ambiguous double writing fits Busse's definition of exploring 'diachronically changing' and 'foregrounded styles in historical (literary) texts… in a particular situation, in a particular genre, writer', given that I focus on Poe's ambiguous style in his Gothic poems and fictions and his employment of the stylistic devices of metaphor, repetition, polysemy, and antithesis in the generation of supernatural ambiguity in writing. To apply the approach of historical stylistics to my thesis, I will, following what Busse suggests, utilise contemporary 'rhetorical handbooks' as the stylistic theories to examine and analyse Poe's style and his texts. Hugh Blair's *Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres* (1783), Henry Home, Lord Kames's *Elements of Criticism* (1762), and August William Schlegel's *A Course of Lectures on Dramatic Art and Literature* [henceforth *Lectures*] (1809-11) are the rhetorical and composition-guiding treatises that I will adopt in this thesis. Besides rhetorical sources, in view of what Joe Bray exhorts, 'historical stylistics should involve more than the application of the tools of stylistics to texts, with knowledge of the context of the period in which the texts were written' (487), and to apply Busse's 'a comprehensive knowledge of the period, the context' and generic and background knowledge, I will also make use of contemporary reviews and essays regarding Gothic supernaturalism in my analysis. My choice of the tool of reviews is particularly to address the significance of 'the reception of the [examined] literary text(s)' in its time stated by Auer et al. (1) and Donatella Montini's comment that the '*production and reception*' of a historical text are equally important for the study of historical stylistics, and 'paying attention both to historical sources and to the socio-pragmatic conventions of the period under investigation' (4). I will include contemporary reviews of both Poe's texts and other Gothic writers' works published in Poe's time to delve into the reception of supernatural writing in the early and mid-nineteenth century. The following is the details of those selected rhetorical texts and reviews that will be applied to my historical stylistic analysis

in this thesis, and a brief introduction to the historical context of Gothic writing and rhetoricians as well as its relationship with Poe's supernaturally ambiguous stylistics.

Ghosts or preternatural occurrences in writings are an issue ever since the publication of the first Gothic novel, Horace Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto* (1764). John Langhorne, in his 1765 review in the *Monthly Review*, comments, 'Those who can digest the absurdities of Gothic fiction, and bear with the machinery of ghosts and goblins, may hope, at least, for considerable entertainment from the performance before us […]' (71). Later, in another review, after finding out that *Otranto* is not derived from, as Walpole himself claimed in the initial preface to the novel, an ancient Italian manuscript of around the eleventh and thirteenth century, but a story invented by the author himself, Langhorne adjusted his attitude, from more tolerance to disapprobation of the author's resort to supernaturalism in modern writings. He criticises,

> When this book was published as a translation from an old Italian romance, we had the pleasure of distinguishing in it the marks of genius, and many beautiful characteristic paintings; we were dubious, however, concerning the antiquity of the work upon several considerations, but being willing to find some excuse for the absurd and monstrous fictions it contained, we wished to acquiesce in the declaration of the title-page, that it was really a translation from an ancient writer. While we considered it as such, we could readily excuse its preposterous phenomena, and consider them as sacrifices to a gross and unenlightened age.—But when, as in this edition, the *Castle of Otranto* is declared to be a modern performance, the indulgence we afforded to the foibles of a supposed antiquity, we can by no means extend to the singularity of a false taste in a cultivated period of learning. It is, indeed, more than strange, that an Author, of a refined and polished genius, should be an advocate for re-establishing the barbarous superstitions [*sic*] of Gothic devilism! (71-72)

Langhorne's critique is based on the setting and author of the novel. In the initial publication of *Otranto*, Walpole fabricates an antique Italian manuscript as the source of his story, and the author of that manuscript lives in ancient feudalist times, when superstitious thinking is still popular in people's minds. Thus, when it is eventually revealed that the author of the novel is in fact a contemporary writer living in the eighteenth century, Langhorne finds fault in the novel. Langhorne's disapproval of antiquated superstitions and supernaturalism in an enlightened era finds echoes in Clara Reeve's and Walter Scott's reflections of *Otranto*. Reeve, in her preface to her Gothic novel *The Old English Baron* (1778), disapproves of Walpole's heavy reliance on the supernatural machinery, commenting that its too strong force ruins the predesigned effect and suggesting that '[h]ad the story been kept within the utmost *verge* of probability, the effect had been preserved, without losing the least circumstance that excites or detains the attention' (3). It was to practice her own suggestion that could eschew the imperfections in *Otranto* and modify it to a better work, Reeve published *The Old English Baron* (4), a Gothic imitation of *Otranto*.

In the early nineteenth century, Scott reviewed a series of early and contemporary Gothic writers. Amongst them, Walpole is considered by Scott as the one writer who far more successfully introduces supernatural machinery, and achieves this through setting his *The Castle of Otranto* in an earlier feudal era of the eleventh or twelfth century, a time when superstitious beliefs were still rooted in the minds of those who inhabited the period (51). Yet, even in such a paradigm of writing the supernatural, Walpole is ultimately found by Scott to be overusing and overdoing the marvellous at certain points throughout his romance, a tendency which, as Scott muses, serves to degrade high sublimity into the impression of ludicrous extravagance (55).

Schlegel, the nineteenth-century critic, whose *A Course of Lectures on Dramatic Art and Literature* inspired Poe's idea of the unity of effect, also mentions the contemporary challenge of incorporating supernatural imagination in writing. In *Lectures*, he says, 'The dread of the ridiculous, that conscience of all

poets who write for the world of fashion, is very visible in his avoiding all bold measures not sanctioned by custom, in his avoiding everything supernatural, because a public of this description carries with it no belief in wonders, even to the fantastic stage of the opera' (169). Schlegel's statement reveals the present-day culture of not responding well to supernaturalism and supernatural writings. The current 'world of fashion' has 'no belief in wonders'; even for creative works known to be fictitious and not real, the public still do not approve of materials beyond nature. Due to this, writers tend to avoid 'everything supernatural'. They fear of and exclude ridiculous or bold ideas that are 'not sanctioned by custom'. Schlegel's saying rightly corresponds to Scott and other above-mentioned late eighteenth- and nineteenth-century critics and writers' observations and negative opinions about superstitions and supernaturalism.

The earlier yet significant eighteenth-century critic and rhetorician, Lord Kames, comments more on the tension between the supernatural and natural in modern society, and asserts the difficulties of including supernatural objects in composition. In *Elements of Criticism*, he pronounces:

> That easiness of belief with respect to wonders and prodigies, even the most absurd and ridiculous, is a strange phenomenon; because nothing <164> can be more evident than the following proposition, That the more singular any event is, the more evidence is required to produce belief: a familiar event daily occurring, being in itself extremely probable, finds ready credit, and therefore is vouched by the slightest evidence; but to overcome the improbability of a strange and rare event, contrary to the course of nature, the very strongest evidence is required. It is certain, however, that wonders and prodigies are swallowed by the vulgar, upon evidence that would not be sufficient to ascertain the most familiar occurrence. It has been reckoned difficult to explain that irregular bias of mind; but we are now made acquainted with the influence of passion upon opinion and belief: a story of ghosts or fairies, told with an air of gravity and truth, raiseth an emotion of wonder, and perhaps of dread; and these

> emotions imposing upon a weak mind, impress upon it a thorough conviction contrary to reason. (120)

Kames provides his empirical view over preternatural elements in writing. Events that transgress the natural bounds of knowledge require interrelated evidence to give credit to the described wonders. Belief in the truthfulness of the incredible events, for Kames, is crucial. Therefore, an author cannot simply invent and interject a marvellous circumstance in his or her narrative. Evidence proportionate to the circumstance's peculiarity must be offered to establish readers' belief in the probability of the very event. The more improbable an event is that goes 'contrary to the course of nature', the stronger evidence is needed to verify its plausibility. Based on this premise, it would be rather difficult or even impossible to write about mythical creatures or not-yet proved existences, such as ghosts. Ghost and fairy stories, which should not be accepted or appear fearsome, due to having no evidence to validate those supernatural objects, can only affect vulnerable readers with 'a thorough conviction contrary to reason'.

In terms of supernaturalism in composition, contemporary rhetoricians also hold a reserved attitude towards supernatural writings. Blair, an influential rhetorician in Poe's time, for example, says,

> But though I cannot admit that Machinery is necessary or essential to the Epic plan, neither can I agree with some late Critics of considerable name, who are for excluding it totally, as inconsistent with that probability and impression of reality, which, they think, should reign in this kind of Writing […] At the same time, in the use of this supernatural Machinery, it becomes a Poet to be temperate and prudent. He is not at liberty to invent what system of the marvellous he pleases. It must always have some foundation in popular belief. He must avail himself in a decent manner, either of the religious faith, or the superstitious credulity of the country wherein he lives, or of which he writes, so as to give an air of probability to events which are most contrary to the common course of Nature […]

> and that if probability be altogether banished from his work, it can never make a deep or a lasting impression. Indeed, I know nothing more difficult in Epic Poetry, than to adjust properly the mixture of the marvellous with the probable; so as to gratify and amuse us with the one, without sacrificing the other. (487)

Blair's *Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres*, an influential and widely circulated rhetorical work in the late eighteenth century and nineteenth century, offered a belletristic theory that conjoined rhetoric with the practices of language of diverse disciplines to contribute to both creation and criticism (Moran 4). *Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres* was published in two volumes in 1783. Between its initial publication and the first decade of the twentieth century, Blair's *Rhetoric* appeared in 283 versions including complete, abridged, and translated editions (Carr 78), which considerably surpassed the 43 versions of George Campbell's *The Philosophy of Rhetoric* (1776), the 80 versions of Lord Kames's *Elements of Criticism*, and the 75 versions of Richard Whately's *Elements of Rhetoric* (1828) (Carr 79), the principal rhetoricians contemporary with or subsequent to Blair.[5] The adoption of Blair's *Rhetoric* as a textbook in the school curriculum perpetuated its publication and popularised it in the United States.[6] Blair's work was first put into use at Yale in 1785 and then at Harvard in 1788 (Charvat 31). In the following years, from 1800 to 1835, the use of Blair's *Rhetoric* was extended to 'Columbia, Pennsylvania, Brown, North Carolina, Middlebury, Williams, Amherst, Hamilton, Wesleyan, and Union' (Charvat 31). There was 'no nineteenth-century rhetoric used in American colleges [that] approaches the total versions of Blair's *Lectures*' (Carr 79). Scholars have noted

[5] Regarding the rhetorical influence and position of Blair, Campbell, and Whately, James L. Golden and Edward P. J. Corbett in *The Rhetoric of Blair, Campbell, and Whately* state, 'Hugh Blair, George Campbell, and Richard Whately constituted the great triumvirate of British rhetoricians who came at the end of a long tradition of rhetoric which had its beginning in fifth-century Greece. But these men did not so much terminate a tradition as initiate the period of modern or new rhetoric' (1).

[6] Carr mentions, 'The publication history of the *Lectures* is intimately bound up with its frequent use in schools, for textbooks have distinctive patterns of publication, use, and preservation. A popular textbook may be reprinted far more often than comparable texts not regularly included in school curricula' (77).

that '[t]he immense popularity of Hugh Blair's *Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres* was unrivaled by any language text for a full half-century' (Ferreira-Buckley and Halloran xv).

The influence of Blair's *Rhetoric* on Poe has been suggested by Margaret Alterton, Stauffer, Robert D. Jacobs, J. Lasley Dameron, and Brett Zimmerman. Alterton mentions that Poe's idea of the length of writing and its effect may derive from Kames and Blair: 'doubtless Poe was aware of their comments' (74). Stauffer states that Poe's ratiocinative style can be attributed to 'his reading and his study of Blair's *Rhetoric*' (457). Jacobs associates Poe's viewpoints regarding simplicity and figures of speech in composition with Blair's. Both Poe and Blair, according to Jacobs, value simplicity, a style that is opposed to affectation (172), and both hold similar opinions about the proper use of figures (197). Especially relevant to Poe's criticisms are Blair's rules concerning metaphor, including his warnings about employing degrading comparison, mixing metaphorical and non-metaphorical language, and employing multiple metaphors (198-99). Dameron likewise suggests the probability of Poe's knowledge of Blair's *Rhetoric*, indicating that 'Poe was very likely much aware of Blair's critical principles and standards as he developed his own literary standards and theories' relating Blair's conceptions of simplicity and perspicuity to Poe's critical criterion (200). Similarly, Zimmerman assumes that 'Poe did indeed receive training in rhetoric, either formally or otherwise' (252) and that Blair was one of the major rhetoricians who shaped Poe's creation and criticism (331-32).

Poe mentions Blair in his 1842 'Exordium'. Poe compares, in this article, such German critics as Johann Winckelmann, Novalis, Friedrich Schelling, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, August William Schlegel, and Frederick von Schlegel with the English critics and says that 'their magnificent *critiques raisonnées* differ from those of Kaimes [sic], of Johnson, and of Blair, in principle not at all, (for the principles of these artists will not fail until Nature herself expires,) but solely in their more careful elaboration, their greater thoroughness, their more profound analysis and application of the principles themselves' (1030).

Poe clearly was sufficiently aware of Blair's *Rhetoric* and principles so as to compare and comment on the differences between the German and the English critiques. Although Poe had a higher evaluation of the German ones, his assertion that there is no difference 'at all' between the German and the English critiques in principle encourages the recognition of the importance of Blair's rhetorical theory, an 'unrivaled' language treatise in Poe's time. Consequently, Blair's *Rhetoric*, especially his guidelines on tropes and sentence structure, is a useful tool to examine the stylistic effects of horror and terror that constitute Poe's Gothic double writing.

In addition to the stylistics of Blair, Lord Kames's *Elements of Criticism* and German critic Schlegel's *A Course of Lectures on Dramatic Art and Literature* are also included as historical tools to analyse Poe's Gothic style in this thesis. Both influential critics are mentioned above, along with Blair, by Poe in his essay. The circulation of Kames's *Elements* came only second to that of Blair's *Rhetoric*, while Schlegel's *Lectures* is mentioned on different occasions by Poe as the source of his compositional theory of the unity of effect. In his review of Sigourney, H. F. Gould, and E. F. Ellet, Poe says that 'in the contemplation of the picture *as a whole*—and thus its effect will depend, in a very great degree, upon the perfection of its finish, upon the nice adaptation of its constituent parts, and especially upon what is rightly termed by Schlegel, the *unity or totality of interest*' (877). The same statement will be repeated later in another review of Longfellow (691). It is also noteworthy here that the conception of the suggestive undercurrent, as Poe points out, is derived from Schlegel's notion of the '*mystic*' ('Thomas Moore' 337). It is this mystic undercurrent of meaning that fosters Poe's metaphorical undercurrent, the second effect residing in the unified effect that produces ambiguities in his Gothic works. Schlegel, in his *Lectures*, builds on Aristotle's unity of action and proposes his own definition of unity, which, he terms it '*unity of interest*' (189). By stressing unity, Schlegel emphasises the 'original free-activity of our mind', more than Aristotalian empirical experiences (189). Unity is not only perceived but also felt or sensed in a composition. He elucidates:

> The external sense perceives only in objects an indefinite plurality of distinguishable parts; the judgment, by which we comprehend these parts in one entire and perfect unity, is always founded on the reference to a higher sphere of ideas. Thus, for example, the mechanical unity of a watch consists in the aim of measuring time; this aim however is only obvious to the understanding, and can neither be seen by the eyes, nor laid hold of by the hands: the organical unity of a plant and an animal consists in the idea of life; and the inward contemplation of life, which is itself uncorporeal, although it appears through the medium of the corporeal world, is brought by us to the individual living object, otherwise we could not obtain it through that object.
>
> The separate parts of a work of art, and consequently, returning immediately to the question before us, the separate parts of a tragedy, must not be received by the eye and ear alone, but be taken in by the understanding. They are all subservient to one common aim, namely, to produce a joint impression on the mind. They unity consists therefore as in the above examples, but in a higher sphere, in the feeling or in the reference to ideas. This is the same thing; for the feeling, in so far as it is not merely sensual and passive, is our sense, our organ for the infinite, which forms us for ideas. (189)

It can be seen here that Schlegel's concept of unity does not refer to a uniformed whole. Rather, it consists of plural parts that form an organic system. He especially underscores that unity does not depend on uniformity but is created by an overarching sense which depends on intuition. The 'external' and more superficial level of meaning and the 'higher sphere of ideas' of the internal import, according to Schlegel, constitutes unity. His sense of unity – comprising the exterior and interior parts, like the appearance of a watch and the watch's inner, hidden, structure – significantly influenced Poe's development of the idea of unity of effect. The upper current and under current referred to by Poe for the unity of effect correspond to Schlegel's unity of the exterior and interior senses. This is the reason why Whalen, Erkkila, Machor, and Reynolds have made an observation of

double effect in Poe's unity of effect. To follow Schlegel's notion of unity, whereof each part has its own function and contributes to the sphere of completion, Poe also needs to maintain every part that is required to form a full picture of wholeness. In so doing, he cannot cancel any effect that has been commenced and developed in his writing. This explains well why Poe rarely writes supernatural-explained Gothic pieces.

Given their importance and contemporaneity, both Schlegel's *Lectures* and Kames's *Elements* will, therefore, be employed and applied together with Blair's *Rhetoric* to my historical stylistic analysis of Poe.

Meanwhile, early and mid-nineteenth-century English and American reviews will, as said, serve as another contemporary benchmark in my historical stylistic study of Poe. The 'popular and critical taste' that leads to Poe's ambiguous Gothic writing will be well reflected in those reviews, i.e. contemporary reception of Gothic supernaturalism. They will be representative of nineteenth-century attitudes towards supernature and supernatural creations. Contemporary reviews of Poe's works, including letters, critical notices, and critical reviews from magazine editors and other writers will be investigated in the following chapters of this thesis. Those contemporary texts, with the selected rhetorical and compositional handbooks circulated in Poe's days, will be useful tools for my contextual analysis of Poe's ambiguous stylistics.

The ambiguities in Poe's writing have also been explored by several scholars through deconstructive theories,[7] and 'poststructuralist and deconstructive critics' often make reference to Poe's texts to exemplify the undecidability of literary language (Whalen 87). However, these theories will not be employed (with historical stylistics) as the approach for this thesis. Rather, I

[7] Susan Amper says, 'Another key text for deconstructionists was *The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym*, a novel of baffling indeterminacy, filled—even more than is usual for Poe—with narrative lapses and contradictions, along with forged notes, hieroglyphic writing, and other explicit references to the problematic nature of the written word' (50-51). Scholars, such as 'John Carlos Rowe, John Irwin, Dennis Pahl, and G. R. Thompson', take the approach of deconstruction to read Poe's *Pym* (51). In his third chapter 'Out of Space, Out of Time: From Early Formalism to Deconstruction' in *The Afterlife of Edgar Allan Poe*, Scott Peeples mentions other scholars like Michael J. S. Williams, J. Gerald Kennedy, and Louis Renza, who discuss deconstructive indeterminacy in Poe's *Pym* and tales.

aim to take a stylistic rather than deconstructive approach and, though this study of Poe's ambiguous double writing, probe into the relation between ambiguity and Poe's wordplay, which contributes to insolvable supernaturalism. Besides this, both deconstruction and poststructuralism, unlike historical stylistics, do not provide a historical angle or an elaborate stylistic theory for the reading of Poe. They cannot elucidate the emergence of the style of Poe's Gothic ambiguity in mid-nineteenth-century America or how his style was influenced by other stylistic theories circulated in his place and time. To fulfil the objective of the contextual and stylistic study and the scope of this thesis, historical stylistics is a more suitable methodology for this thesis. By such adoption of approach, I will also participate in the discussion of historicising Poe, as Peeples mentions 'the large body of recent scholarship situating Poe in the midst of nineteenth-century popular culture and politics' ('Teaching Poe' 32).[8] My contextualisation of Poe and stylistics by the original method of historical stylistics will not only extend the investigation of early- and mid-nineteenth-century reception of Gothic supernaturalism, but will also offer a new dimension of prevalent stylistic theories to contemporary Poe studies.

Current Gothic and Stylistic Studies of Poe

Despite the fact that recent scholarship has made observation of the characteristic of ambiguity, especially the type of undecided supernaturalism, in Poe's Gothic writing, his stylistics of ambiguous Gothicism is a subject that has not yet been written about in the area of Gothic studies. Allan Lloyd-Smith in *American Gothic*

[8] Take for example, J. Gerald Kennedy, ed., *A Historical Guide to Edgar Allan Poe* (2001); Kennedy and Liliane Weissberg, eds., *Romancing the Shadow: Poe and Race* (2001); Fisher, ed., *Poe in His Own Time: A Biographical Chronicle of His Life, Drawn from Recollections, Interviews, and Memoirs by Family, Friends, and Associates* (2010); Kevin J. Hayes, ed., *Edgar Allan Poe in Context* (2012); Kennedy and Jerome McGann, eds., *Poe and the Remapping of Antebellum Print Culture* (2012); Richard Kopley and Jana Argersinger, eds., *Poe Writing/Writing Poe* (2013); Kennedy, *Strange Nation: Literary Nationalism and Cultural Conflict in the Age of Poe* (2016); Kopley and Barbara Cantalupo, eds., the special issue of *Influencing Poe* in the journal *The Edgar Allan Poe Review* (2018), vol. 19, no. 2; and John Gruesser, *Edgar Allan Poe and His Nineteenth-Century American Contemporaries* (2019).

Fiction: An Introduction, for instance, notes that Poe's Gothic tales of imagination and mystery often 'invite and challenge interpretation' (32). Lloyd-Smith suggests that Poe was under the influence of the Scottish common sense realism to tend to explain extraordinary events by a dysfunctional mind (of his narrator) and to have a restrained use of supernaturalism (32-33). However, Poe, according to Lloyd-Smith, was also a writer, nourished by Romanticism, to display a disordered, imaginative realm, with forceful effects, not actually rationalising incredible circumstances (33). Here, Lloyd-Smith acknowledges the unresolved ambiguity in Poe's Gothic short stories, but in his study of Poe's Gothic ambiguity he does not extend his discussion to Poe's use of language, the area that I will work on in my project of Poe's supernatural ambiguity in his Gothic creations. In his deliberation of Poe's ambiguity and not explaining away supernaturalism, Lloyd-Smith explicitly references Poe's theory of the unity of effect (32), and implies its origin from *Lectures* by Schlegel, that influential figure of German Romanticism. In my historical stylistic study of Poe, I will strengthen this relation between Schlegel and Poe in stylistics, and I will demonstrate Schlegel's profound influence on Poe as one of the factors in his ambiguous writing.

Another contemporary scholar, Charles L. Crow, emphasises the connection between ambiguities and Poe's unreliable narrators. In his *American Gothic*, when discussing Brown, one of the earliest American Gothic writers, Crow points out that Brown's 'experiments in ambiguity and narrative unreliability' are later further developed by some of his American Gothic latecomers, whereof Poe is included (25). 'Developing techniques of ambiguous narration pioneered by Charles Brockden Brown and John Neal', Crow says, 'Poe's first-person narrators are often self-deluding psychopaths' ('American Gothic' 17). Poe's 'Ligeia' and 'Hop-Frog', in Crow's analysis, are both considered ambiguous tales. 'Ligeia', according to Crow, is a text of 'typical Gothic ambiguity'; the interpretation of it can be either that of human will overcoming death in nature or the other way round (*American Gothic* 43). Similarly, as another story 'typical of Gothic's ambiguity' by Poe, 'Hop-Frog'

may be a work concerned with the author's imagination of being a tormented slave in his time or a slave's usurpation, though the climactic burn scene in the story is still itself reminiscent of lynchings and slavery in the American South (*American Gothic* 44-45). Although Crow mentions the devices of ambiguous narration, he, like Lloyd-Smith, also does not read Poe's ambiguous Gothicism from the perspective of stylistics. What is more, in Crow's analysis of Poe's unreliable narratives, he includes 'Hop-Frog', a piece which, while it involves ambiguity does not contain supernaturalism. Unlike Crow, I will focus particularly on Poe's ambiguity between supernature and nature.

Nick Groom states 'Poe's plots blend excruciatingly protracted suspense with implacable authoritarian power' (115). His narrators are oftentimes found having illusions, or sometimes, they are even mad persons themselves (115). Mary Ellen Snodgrass classifies the narrators in Poe's 'Ligeia', 'Usher', and 'The Tell-Tale Heart' as unreliable narrators, whose 'unstable or questionable point of view' is a useful device for Gothic writers to amplify the effect of ambiguity of their works ('unreliable' 342). In Agnieszka Soltysik Monnet's analysis of 'Ligeia', 'The Facts in the Case of M. Valdemar', and 'Hop-Frog', unreliable narrators, foreign sources, and pseudo-science (63) are regarded as devices that Poe adopts to create ambiguous narrations. Among them, questionable narrators and narrations are especially marked by Monnet. She elaborates that 'Poe frequently used this device in order to allow readers to make connections and inferences that he wanted to leave unsaid, believing that they made a more powerful impression if suggested rather than stated' (66).

However, like Crow, none of these critics continue their remarks into Poe's rhetoric. At the same time, a number of scholars have linked Poesque ambiguity with the uncanny. In her 'Gothic and the Romantics', Emma McEvoy says that Poe's Gothic stories often involve the issue of not making clear the division between a subject and an object, and his characters 'are complicit with their Gothic settings' (27). The uncanny and doubles are tropes that are often seen in Poe (27). Julia Briggs in 'The Ghost Story' comments that Poe does not really

write, in the strictest sense, a ghost story (125). Rather, his works are filled with the Freudian concept of the uncanny (125). Alan Brown, in 'The Gothic Movement', also connects Poe's supernatural-natural ambiguity, as seen in 'Ligeia' and 'Usher', with the uncanny. Brown deems that 'the supernatural aspects of the tales are not totally destroyed by rational explanation, thereby enabling even the most sceptical reader to experience the thrill of the uncanny' (249).

Fred Botting, in 'Poe's Phantasmagoreality', discusses further the in-distinction and uncanniness of phantasmagoria-reality in Poe's Gothic tales. Botting firstly compares Poe with his Gothic predecessor Ann Radcliffe, saying that unlike the former's treatment of the supernatural, 'Poe's work refuses an authorial and moralizing third-person resolution' (9), which is an echo of his earlier claim, regarding that Poe's prose often 'leaves boundaries between reality, illusion and madness unresolved rather than, in the manner of his contemporaries, domesticating Gothic motifs or rationalising mysteries' (*Gothic* 120). Botting, through his so-termed 'phantasmagoreality', argues that Poe's Gothic ambiguity is more towards the 'non-meaning' and 'non-origin' of Derrida's conception of the uncanny (14). In Botting's analysis, as well as the statements from McEvoy, Briggs, and Brown, Poe's indistinctive borderline between the supernatural and natural has been interpreted as the ambiguity of the uncanny - Freudian or Derridean, yet Poe's style of the uncanny is not considered, especially given that Freud conceptualises uncanniness by looking into the double sense of the word *heimlich*. I will, in the third chapter of my stylistic study of Poe, discuss the interrelation between Freud's concept of the uncanny, repetition and polysemy in Poe. Starting from Freud's notion of the uncanny and words of double signification, I will then move to expound Poe's Gothic ambiguity of unresolved supernaturalism using a stylistic approach.

There are also some scholars, who read the plurivocal of the literal and the figurative meanings in Poe's unresolved ambiguity. David Punter and Glennis Byron in *The Gothic* note that 'he [Poe] is startlingly good – as in, for example,

"Usher" – at creating in short order a sense of an external landscape; but simultaneously the reader is led to wonder constantly whether this landscape is indeed really external or rather a projection of a particular psychological state' (156). And in Poe, such ambiguity between the external/supernatural and the internal/natural is often left 'irresolvable' (156). Punter and Byron's division of the external world and the inner workings of the narrator in Poe's ambiguity reverberates with Hogle's critique, mentioned earlier, about the two options of the outside objects and the symbolic psychological projections in the interpretations of Poe's Gothic pieces. More distinctly, Fisher, in his 'Poe and the Gothic tradition', says: 'Many of his [Poe's] characters' movements from place to place lead to actual or figurative vertigo or bewilderment. Many of the buildings or even individual rooms may symbolize the interiors of human heads, i.e., minds', adding 'Poe found in Gothic tradition the very kinds of settings and characters that, transformed in his imagination, would contribute wonderful symbolism to psychologically plausible narratives of multiple outreach' (84). Correspondingly, Alfred Bendixen, in 'Romanticism and the American Gothic', also acknowledges, through Poe's 'Usher', 'the capacity of the Gothic to move in multiple directions, suggesting a wide number of interpretations that can exist in surprising harmony with each other' in Poe (35). Those views from the above scholars are very similar to my reading of some of Poe's Gothic compositions, but they stop short of analysis of linguistic choices and techniques. In my project, I will develop their discoveries of the ambiguity and multiplicity of meanings from the literal and figurative senses in Poe's Gothic texts into the stylistic analysis of Poe's Gothic equivocation. Particularly in my chapter 2 and 3, I will suggest stylistic devices of literalisation, repetition and polysemy as Poe's ingenuity in creating ambiguities in his Gothic works. By my systematic stylistic analysis of Poe's ambiguous Gothicism, I aim to fill in the gap, as this review has demonstrated, in the current Gothic studies of Poe.

Poe's ambiguous Gothic style is also neglected in the field of stylistics. Though Poe's writing style has been analysed by several scholars, his Gothic

ambiguity is still a subject underexplored. Wanlin Li, in 'Ambiguity as Aesthetic Strategy: Edgar Allan Poe's Ambitions for the American Short Story', examines how Poe's unresolvable supernatural ambiguity is achieved through a 'naturalizing' narrative strategy in which gaps, contradictions and deviations from logic force the reader to map their knowledge of the real world onto the literary 'to cope with its necessary incompleteness' (168). Li proposes that Poe's ambiguity 'strengthens authorial control by way of forcing the reader to grapple more with parallel interpretive possibilities' (165), and in so doing, he eventually achieves his goal of 'an aesthetically superior national literature' to British serialised novels that often involve readers' participation and decision-making in the authorial writing process (186). Li's narratological approach to Poe's ambiguous style is different from my historical stylistic analysis of Poe's wordplay of double meaning. Li focuses more on readerly interpretation, rather than Poe's compositional theory and how Poe, following his method of the unity of effect, employs certain stylistic devices to create double effect and ambiguities, the issue that I will investigate in this thesis. Also, Li studies only a few of Poe's unresolved Gothic tales, whereas in my project, I will conduct a systematic study of Poe, exploring both his Gothic poems and fictions of unresolved supernatural ambiguity. Although Li, in her essay, looks into the history of nineteenth-century America and nationalism, she does not provide a strong link between nationalism and Poe's stylistic ambiguity in the form of the short story, particularly in light of the fact that this type of ambiguously-ended Gothic tales is not exclusively written by Poe but is also seen in Brown and Irving, respectively precursor and contemporary to Poe. By my adoption of the approach of historical stylistics, I will avoid this hiatus in methodology, and will be able to contextualise Poe's double writing, via the historical-stylistic tools of rhetorical texts in his time and contemporaneous reception of Gothic supernaturalism.

Zimmerman contributes, by *Edgar Allan Poe: Rhetoric and Style* (2005), a monograph of stylistic study of Poe, the second more complete exploration of Poe's stylistics since the publication of Richard M. Fletcher's *The Stylistic*

Development of Edgar Allan Poe in 1973. Aware that '[m]ore remains to be done to convince the world that Poe's prose deserves more critical attention and that the hostility it has engendered is largely misguided' (xiv), Zimmerman argues for 'Poe as a stylist, offering explanations for some of the more "obnoxious" features of his prose that have been condemned by patronizing critics' (8). In his stylistic analysis of Poe's prosaic works, with the employment of classic rhetoric, Zimmerman tends to show Poe's versatility in style by the analysis of his different uses of stylistic devices for diverse purposes. His latter half of the monograph, the 'Catalogue of Rhetorical and Other Literary Terms in Poe's Works', serves the same intention to support his argument of Poe as a conscious stylist, by providing a large number of Poe's practices of rhetorical techniques in his prose, including his fictions, essays, and reviews. With his research on Poe's prosaic creations, and thus to fill in the gap in Fletcher's stylistic investigation of Poe's poetry, Zimmerman does not look at Poe's poems. Based on his aim to demonstrate Poe's capacity as a stylist, and his claim that 'part of my thesis here is that Poe uses different styles, which depend, for instance, on the nature of the particular mental illness and obsessions of his individual narrators' (7), Zimmerman is also not interested in Poe's stylistic manifestation of Gothic ambiguity. Though in terms of stylistic devices, Zimmerman, in his chapter 'Poe's Linguistic Comedy', delves into Poe's use of puns, his analysis of punning, nonetheless, is for the comical effect, not for Gothic horror or ambiguity. The entry of pun in his catalogue listings, similarly, is a generalised introduction to the function of wordplay, instead of targeting at Poe's double language for the purpose of supernaturalism and nature. My thesis, therefore, will not only address the lack of a lengthy stylistic reading of Poe's prosaic works as Zimmerman has observed, 'I thought it high time that someone devoted a book-length study, a stylistical approach to Poe's prose' and 'As far as I can tell, no one has done this before' (xiv), but will also, with my different focus, approach, and range of selected works from Zimmerman's, make my own contribution to the current stylistic studies of Poe.

Another contemporary scholar, John A. Dern, like Zimmerman, also evinces a research interest in Poe's rhetoric in his tales. In his 'Poe's Public Speakers: Rhetorical Strategies in "The Tell-Tale Heart" and "The Cask of Amontillado"' and '"A Problem in Detection": The Rhetoric of Murder in Poe's "The Black Cat"', Dern examines 'rhetorical subtleties' ('Public Speakers' 53) and 'subtle rhetoric' ('"A Problem"' 169) and argues for the unreliability and culpability of Poe's murderer-narrators. In his other articles, 'Iron Poe: The Rhetoric of "The Murders in the Rue Morgue" and 'A Sense of *Stile*: Rhetoric in Edgar Allan Poe's "Never Bet the Devil Your Head"', Dern also probes into the 'sophisticated rhetoric' ('Iron Poe' 72) in the discourses in Poe's tales, suggesting more lexical complexity hidden in Poe's text or offering an alternative interpretation of the tale, as seen in 'the essential cleverness of the tale's multipronged rhetorical strike against "the high moralizing of the Transcendentalists"' ('A Sense' 164). However, by analysing different types of tales from Poe, Gothic, detective, and satirical, and by reading only one or two piece(s) in each individual article, Dern does not provide a consistent study of Poe's stylistic devices in his short stories. Some devices are argued to function for certain purpose in one work, while in another Poe's tale of similar nature, Dern proposes a different set of stylistic devices in Poe's use. It is a little too intuitive and impressionistic. Despite this, Dern's view of Poe's lexical choices and double meaning is potentially interesting, and it is exactly what I will inquire into in my thesis. Building on Dern's observations of stylistic devices of ambiguous referring words, polyptoton, and pun as Poe's double language, and from Richard Hull's insight into homophone and pun in 'Puns in "The Gold-Bug": You Gotta be Kidding', I will link Poe's ambiguous double writing with literalisation, repetition, polysemy, and antithesis. And by combining stylistics with Poe's historical background of the early and mid-nineteenth century in my approach to his texts, I will read Poe's ambiguous style more comprehensively, and will thus observe Nina Nørgaard et al. 's advice that the stylistic analysis of a historical text 'cannot rely only on individual and purely subjective readings alone'(28-29), and that historical stylistics 'tends to counterbalance the kind of somewhat intuitive,

sometimes unsystematic and impressionistic approach to text analysis that is a particular danger in approaches to literary texts' (Montini 2-3).

Apart from Li, Zimmerman, Dern, and Hull, more recent stylistic reading of Poe's works is also seen in Peeples's 'Poe's "constructiveness" and "The Fall of the House of Usher"', Eve Célia Morisi's 'Poe's "To One in Paradise"', Yu-Fang Ho's 'Stylistics and Its Relevance to the Study of Literature: Edgar Allan Poe's "The Tell-Tale Heart" as an Illustration', Shigeo Kikuchi's 'Poe's name excavated: The mediating function and the transformation of discourse theme into discourse rheme', Gregory Hays's 'Ancient Classics', Peter Stockwell's 'Poe's Gothic Ambience', Christiana Gregoriou's 'A Labovian Approach To Poe's "The Tell-Tale Heart"', Tang Weisheng's 'Edgar Allan Poe's Gothic Aesthetics of Things: Rereading "The Fall of the House of Usher"', and Sarah Ilott's 'Gothic and the Short Story: Revolutions in Form and Genre'. Most of them focus on only a single or small number of Poe's works, either exclusively his poetic or prose creation(s). Poe's supernatural ambiguity in his Gothic writings has also not yet been addressed by them. This indicates a lack of a systematic stylistic study of Poe's Gothic works in contemporary stylistic scholarship. Meanwhile, as the above review of current Gothic studies shows, although scholars have noticed ambiguity in Poe's Gothic writing, they have not extended their research to his style. My thesis, a combination of the interests in Poe's supernatural ambiguity and his stylistics from the recent Gothic and stylistic studies respectively, will thus bridge these hitherto separate disciplines and will contribute an original investigation of Poe to both areas of studies. It is also worth noticing that my methodology of historical stylistics is a newly theorised approach in Poe studies. As far as I am aware, my article, 'Influence of Blair on Poe's Gothicism: The Style of Terror and Horror in Poe's Early Woman-Centered Tales',[9] is the only study with the application of the approach in the field up to date. My adoption of historical stylistics in my thesis is therefore another new move in the stylistic study of Poe.

[9] Janet Chu. 'Influence of Blair on Poe's Gothicism: The Style of Terror and Horror in Poe's Early Woman-Centered Tales'. *The Edgar Allan Poe Review* 19.2 (2018): 177-91.

In this thesis, to demonstrate the distinctiveness of Poe's Gothic style of ambiguous double writing, I will compare Poe with his German and Anglo-American contemporaries, such as *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* authors and Irving, as well as with his Gothic precursors like Horace Walpole, Ann Radcliffe, Matthew Lewis, E. T. A. Hoffmann, and Brown. These comparisons are selected based on Poe's familiarity with them and/or their potential or direct influences on Poe. Gothic writers who came after Poe, such as Herman Melville, will not be discussed in my project, since Poe might cast influences on them instead and it would be anachronistic to state their influences on Poe if any stylistic similarities are found through comparison.

My thesis on the stylistics of Poe's ambiguous double writing comprises four chapters. Chapter 1 focuses on stylistic manifestations of horror and terror in Poe's Gothic poems. Poe launched his writing career by composing poems. I will review the genre of poetry as written by Poe, from his earliest pieces published in the collection *Tamerlane and Other Poems* in 1827 to the last poems published in 1849, and I will demonstrate that Poe's earliest Gothic poems appeared only in 1831, a time quite close to the composition of his Gothic tales in 1831. I will here focus on his Gothic poems 'The Raven' and 'Ulalume', given their styles in relation to the stylistic devices of literalisation and antithesis that often generate ambiguities in Poe's writing. Through my stylistic reading of those Gothic poems, I will show that Poe developed his ambiguous double writing in his Gothic poems later than that in his Gothic fictions. To investigate Poe's double writing, it is indispensable to pay close attention to his Gothic fictions – the origin of Poe's supernatural ambiguity.

Chapter 2 discusses Poe's employment of the devices of literalisation, personification and coporealisation and their relation to the evocation of a sense of horror in his Gothic fictions. Poe's earliest use of literalisation can be traced to his 'Shadow – A Parable', a Gothic tale that was published in 1835, and then in 'The Fall of the House of Usher', 'The Masque of the Red Death', and 'The Tell-Tale Heart'. This technique, derived from the (Gothic) burlesque and satirical essays

and tales published in *Blackwood's Magazine*, is adapted by Poe to his Gothic fictions. It creates, through its use of the double sense of the literal and the figurative, an ambiguous effect between supernaturalism and nature that constitutes the double writing of Poe, differentiating Poe's style from the pure supernaturalism in *Blackwood's* works. The chapter will investigate the influence on Poe's development as a writer of August Schlegel's lectures on literalised metaphor. It will also consider the impact and resonance of the thoughts of contemporary rhetoricians Hugh Blair and Lord Kames.

Chapter 3 explores Poe's creation of the ambiguous sense of the uncanny by dint of his exploitation of the devices of repetition and polysemy. Poe's use of the polysemy, like Sigmund Freud's exemplification of the uncanny polysemic doubles of *heimlich*/*unheimlich*, engenders a strange puzzling effect that eventually leads to unresolved supernatural ambiguity. His 'Ligeia', 'William Wilson', 'The Black Cat', and 'A Tale of the Ragged Mountains' are the pieces that see such utilisation of repetition and polysemy to evoke the uncanny. In my stylistic analysis, I will argue that Poe's supernatural ambiguity can be traced to his Gothic precursors and contemporaries such as E. T. A. Hoffmann and Washington Irving. Rhetorically, he was also influenced by Schlegel's discussion of unity, and went on to develop his own concept of 'unity of effect' which eventually resulted in a sense of ambiguity in his Gothic works. His use of repetition and polysemy also reflect, again, Blair and Kames' ideas about style.

Chapter 4 examines prophecies and riddles in Poe's Gothic fictions of 'Metzengerstein', 'Morella', 'The Island of the Fay' and 'The Oval Portrait'. Beginning with an analysis of works by Horace Walpole, Matthew Lewis, Ann Radcliffe and Charles Brockden Brown, we find that Brown, Poe's American precursor, is the one who shares the use of antithesis with Poe. Blair and Kames' provide the rhetorical foundation for this use. In analysing Poe's language of mystery and terror, it is noted that Poe uses the device of antithesis to construct his prophetic riddles, or a riddle-like effect. While the antithetical pairs' conflicting and contradictory senses form the Poesque riddles and the writer's

ambiguous double writing, Poe's use of antithesis is also found to be a reflection of his allegiance to the compositional principle of the unity of effect. His adherence to the unifying effect leads him to not compose explained-supernatural Gothic fictions but instead, directs him to create an ambiguous Gothic double writing that not only differentiates his expression of the Gothic from his Gothic precursors and contemporaries, but also evinces his distinguished attainment in stylistics.

Chapter 1: The Poetics of Terror and Supernatural Ambiguity: 'The Raven', 'Ulalume', and the Evolution of Style in Poe's Gothic Poetry

On April 30, 1835, Poe wrote to Thomas W. White,[1] the editor of the *Southern Literary Messenger*, defending the sensationalism of his recently published tale 'Berenice' (1835) against readers' complaints. In his epistle, Poe articulated his composition method and style as follows:

> A word or two in relation to Berenice. Your opinion of it is very just. The subject is by far too horrible, and I confess that I hesitated in sending it you especially as a specimen of my capabilities. The Tale originated in a bet that I could produce nothing effective on a subject so singular, provided I treated it seriously. But what I wish to say relates to the character of your Magazine more than to any articles I may offer, and I beg you to believe that I have no intention of giving you *advice*, being fully confident that, upon consideration, you will agree with me. The history of all Magazines shows plainly that those which have attained celebrity were indebted for it to articles *similar in nature — to Berenice* — although, I grant you, far superior in style and execution. I say similar in *nature*. You ask me in what does this nature consist? In the ludicrous heightened into the grotesque: the fearful coloured into the horrible: the witty exaggerated into the burlesque: the singular wrought out into the strange and mystical. You may say all this is bad taste. I have my doubts about it. ('Letter 42' 84)

[1] After the publication of 'Berenice', a story about a narrator's obsession with the teeth of his cousin (then wife), Berenice, and his subsequent sleepwalking and extracting Berenice's teeth in her grave, the latter being still alive, 'many readers were shocked by the tale, and some lodged complaints with Thomas W. White, proprietor of the *Messenger*' (Whalen 69). White then handed over those complaints to Poe (Hayes 49).
Although the complaints from the readers have not been retrieved and discussed by scholars, and they were not revealed but only mentioned, briefly, in Poe's saying 'Your opinion of it is very just' and 'The subject is by far too horrible' in his letter, nevertheless, the editorial notice of 'Berenice', published in the *Messenger* in March 1835 by James E. Heath, probably can reflect a little contemporary readers' reception of 'Berenice'. In his notice, Heath says, critically, that 'we confess that we think that there is too much German horror in his subject' (80).

Herein Poe acknowledged his conscious use of the elements of horror and terror in composing his 'Berenice' and other Gothic tales. His principle of 'the fearful coloured into the horrible', which concerns the fright caused by a sudden possible danger and the emotions of dread and repugnance, is associated with Gothic horror. His affirmation of 'the singular wrought out into the strange and mystical', on the other hand, relates more to the obscurity and the suspense in Gothic terror.

The definition of terror and horror in Gothic literature, the two essential elements that constitute Gothicism, can be traced back to Edmund Burke's *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origins of our Ideas of the Sublime and the Beautiful* (1757). Burke in his treatise proposes that terror is a significant source of the sublime (45). He expounds that owing to the stronger power of pain and its extreme condition, death, it is needful to leave some proper distance between pain and us. He states, 'When danger or pain press too nearly they are incapable of giving any delight, and are simply terrible; but at certain distances, and with certain modifications, they may be, and they are delightful, as we every day experience' (46). That is, if danger and pain are place too closely, we will only feel fear and not any pleasure. Nevertheless, pleasure is part of the sublime. Therefore, to reach the level of the sublime, there is a need to keep the fearful object at some distance. This idea of distance for the effect of terror and the sublime pertains to obscurity, a key component of terror and sublimity. On the later section on obscurity, Burke points out, 'To make anything very terrible, obscurity seems in general to be necessary. When we know the full extent of any danger, when we can accustom our eyes to it, a great deal of the apprehension vanishes' (76). Obscurity, functioning as a psychological distance, makes things not known completely at once. It generates uncertainty and motivates our imagination, leading us to attain the lofty and pleasurable stage of the sublime. This is the reason why the subject matters of night, ghost, and goblins can easily create terror; all of them are not clearly shown or known to us (76). For Burke, obscurity and distance are thus key factors to bring about terror and the sublime.

Burke's notion of terror and the sublime considerably influenced his contemporaries. Walpole, the father of Gothic fiction, is one of them. E. J. Clery notes that Burke's *A Philosophical Enquiry* was 'immediately influential', since its publication in the mid-eighteenth century (xiv). Burke's new definition of the sublime contributes to Walpole's 'rhetoric of originality' in *Otranto* (xiii-iv). He states clearly in his first preface to *The Castle of Otranto* (1764) that terror is the writer's 'principal engine' which 'presents the story from ever languishing' (6). In the same preface, Walpole provides, from his *Otranto*, specific examples of the use of terror through the domestics in Otranto Castle. For instance, '[T]he womanish terror and foibles of Bianca, in the last chapter, conduce essentially towards advancing the catastrophe' is a typical example of terror (6-7). In the second preface (1765), Walpole offers further illustration of creating an effect of terror, saying, 'The very impatience which a reader feels, while delayed by the coarse pleasantries of vulgar actors [i.e. the domestics] from arriving at the knowledge of the important catastrophe he expects, perhaps heightens, certainly proves that he has been artfully interested in, the depending event' (10). Those special moments of terror that Walpole refers to in *Otranto* can be found towards the end of chapter one in the novel, when the current lord of Otranto Castle, Manfred, asks his servants Jaquez and Diego what terrible thing they have witnessed to give them such a fright. Rather than providing a clear and straightforward answer, Jaquez speaks about a series of subject matters irrelevant to what happened:

> I was going to tell you highness, that since the calamitous misfortune of my young lord, God rest his soul! not one of us your highness's faithful servants, indeed we are, my lord, though poor men: I say, not one of us has dared to set a foot about the castle, but two together: so Diego and I, thinking that my young lady might be in the great gallery, went up there to look for her, and tell her your highness wanted something to impart to her. (34)

Jaquez does not answer Manfred's question; instead, he brings up the recent tragedy of Conrad, Manfred's only son, who died mysteriously under a gigantic helmet falling from the heaven. Before he finishes talking about their fear of walking alone in the castle and having to keep each other company after that inexplicable event, Jaquez digresses into his and Diego's faithfulness to Manfred. Following this, he still does not mention what frightening object Diego and he have seen, and instead talks about Princess Isabella and Manfred's command to look for her. After this, Jaquez will digress again into his dread of the devil, the frightened Diego (34), the emptiness of the chamber, Diego as the witness of the spectacular scene, and their inspection of the chamber (35). The enquirer, Manfred, gets so impatient without having the answer to his question, that he exclaims: '[A]m I never to learn what it is has terrified these rascals? But I lost my time…' (34) and 'Trifle not…but tell me what you saw in the great chamber on opening the door' (35), until his servants finally tell him about the armoured giant (35). This characteristic example of terror echoes what Walpole says in the preface, that a piece of key information is delayed to reveal to the reader in order to enhance the latter's curiosity and interest in the missing information.

Similar digression is also noticeable in the female servant Bianca in chapter five, an exemplification of terror that is particularly specified by Walpole in his initial preface to *Otranto*. Reporting to Manfred and Frederic the marquis what has made her so terrified, Bianca clearly is off-topic. She says: 'I believe I look very pale; I shall be better when I have recovered myself.—I was going to my lady Isabella's chamber by his highness's order' (103), and 'I fear my hair—I am sure I never in my life—Well! as I was telling your greatness, I was going by his highness's order to my lady Isabella's chamber: she lies in the watchet-coloured chamber, on the right hand, one pair of stairs: so when I came to the great stairs—I was looking on his highness's present here' (103). Similar to Jaquez and Diego, Bianca does not answer the question about what marvel she has seen at once. She firstly talks about her pale countenance and that she was on her way to Isabella's chamber at Isabella's father, Frederic's command. Subsequent to

this, she gibbers over her hair, repeats that she was walking to Isabella's place, describes the geographical position of Isabella's chamber in the castle, mentions her movement, and now stands in front of Frederic. Bianca includes a variety of things and acts in her discourse, but none of them answers Manfred and Frederic's question. Owing to this, Manfred, again, loses his temper for awaiting the answer, replying, 'We do not want the circumstances', and 'Grant me patience!...will this wench never come to the point?' (103). These examples of terror and digression function to delay the revelation of important catastrophes in *Otranto*. Such delay in the proceeding of the novel generates distance from an answer, mystifying and obscuring the truth and creating suspense for the reader who is prevented from solving the mystery forthwith.

Ann Radcliffe, another prominent Gothic novelist of the late eighteenth century, likewise evokes terror in her works. A notable example is the slow-paced suspense regarding the enigma of the black veil that is initiated in the middle of the second volume of *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794), but is only resolved in the concluding fourth volume. Elsewhere in her novel Radcliffe, like Walpole, makes use of digression in the servant Annette's narrative of the castle's mysteries to create relevant suspense. When Annette recounts to Emily, her mistress, the disappearance of Signora Laurentini, i.e. the rightful owner of Udolpho Castle, she says: '"But, as I was saying, she was very melancholy and unhappy, and all that, for a long while, and—**Holy Virgin! What noise is that? did not you** [Emily] **hear a sound, ma'amselle?**'" [emphasis added] (237), and '"[…] she was very melancholy and unhappy a long while, and used to walk about upon the terrace, there, under the windows, by herself, and cry so! **it would have done your heart good to hear her. That is—I don't mean good, but it would have made you cry too, as they tell me**"' [emphasis added] (237). Instead of offering a smooth and clear narration of Signora Laurentini's mystery, Annette digresses into an interjection, asking her audience, Emily, about a sudden noise she just heard in the chamber. As Annette resumes her story, she unnecessarily involves Emily in the narrated past incident. She imagines that Emily would sense the poor

heroine's low spirit and weep for her. In practice, however, Annette could have narrated things in a linear order, without mixing the narrated people and event with those in her world and hence lengthening and delaying her narration for irrelevant reasons, thereby creating suspense. Before she reaches the end of her story, Annette will be distracted again by the lamp light in Emily's chamber, exclaiming, '"Holy St. Peter! ma'amselle…look at that lamp, see how blue it burns!'" (237). Due to Annette's interrupted digressions in her narration, Emily loses her patience. She cannot but urge Annette, '"[B]ut do come to the end of your story"' (237), '"[D]o tell me the substance of your tale"' (237), and '"Pray let me hear the end of your story, I am weary"' (237). From the above examples in *Udolpho*, it can be observed that Radcliffe, similar to her precursor Walpole, also incorporates the element of terror in her novel. She makes use of the device of digression to prolong her narrative, so that the conclusion will be put off and a sense of mystery and suspense will be engendered in the reading process.

In addition to her employment of terror in her Gothic novels, Radcliffe takes a step further. She discusses and distinguishes terror from horror in a posthumously published essay 'On the Supernatural in Poetry' (1826). In that essay, she acknowledges Burke's idea of terror and the sublime in her words, 'The union of grandeur and obscurity, which Mr. Burke describes as a sort of tranquility tinged with terror, and which causes the sublime[…]' ('On the Supernatural' 47). This demonstrates Radcliffe's knowledge of Burke's philosophy when she develops her distinction between terror and horror. Soon following her mention of Burke, in the next paragraph in her essay, Radcliffe states, 'Terror and horror are so far opposite, that the first expands the soul, and awakens the faculties to a high degree of life; the other contracts, freezes and nearly annihilates them' ('On the Supernatural' 47). Terror, according to Radcliffe, is strictly defined as the gloomy, the magnificent, and the obscure that excite one's imagination and elevate one to reach the sublime; horror, on the other hand, is defined as an immediate and distinct presence which creates a forceful yet transient impression ('On the Supernatural' 47). In other words, the notion of

terror is primarily associated with a psychological sense of suspense triggered by uncertainty, obscurity, and distance, whilst the sentiment of horror is achieved by a physical sense of immediacy, distinctness, and corporeality.

Poe's awareness and use of horror and terror, as demonstrated in 'the fearful coloured into the horrible' and 'the singular wrought out into the strange and mystical' in his letter, is no different from the senses of horror as physicality and terror as obscurity defined by Walpole and Radcliffe. In this chapter, Poe's evocation of terror in his Gothic poems, particularly his employment of antithesis, a device that is frequently used to create the suspenseful effect of terror, will be investigated.

Contrasts and Antithesis from Schlegel, Blair, and Kames

We may reasonably contend that Poe's use of antithesis is derived from Schlegel, along with his conception of unity in writing. In *A Course of Lectures on Dramatic Art and Literature*, when he reviews Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*, Schlegel says:

> The sweetest and the bitterest, love and hatred, festivity and dark forebodings, tender embraces and sepulchres, the fulness of life and self-annihilation, are all here brought close to each other; and all these contrasts are so blended in the harmonious and wonderful work into a unity of impression, that the echo which the whole leaves behind in the mind resembles a single but endless sigh. (325-26)

A cluster of contrasting senses, emotions, and events is mentioned by Schlegel to be 'brought close to each other' and eventually, to reach 'a unity of impression'. Poe might have read this passage in Schlegel, since the term, the 'unity of impression', is specifically adopted by Poe in his review of Hawthorne: 'We need only here say, upon this topic, that, in almost classes of composition, the unity of

effect or impression is a point of the greatest importance' and 'And, without unity of impression, the deepest effects cannot be brought about' (571), and in 'The Philosophy of Composition': 'If any literary work is too long to be read at one sitting, we must be content to dispense with the immensely important effect derivable from unity of impression' (15). Given that this is the only place where Schlegel uses the phraseology of unity of impression in his *Lectures*, Poe has most likely acquired the term from here and had the idea of blending contrasts when applying the unity of effect in his composition.

In 'The Philosophy of Composition', aside from using the phrase 'unity of impression' and elaborating on the writing principle of the unity of effect, Poe speaks about his practice of contrasts in 'The Raven'. Poe notes that 'I made the night tempestuous, first, to account for the Raven's seeking admission, and secondly, for the effect of contrast with the (physical) serenity within the chamber', 'I made the bird alight on the bust of Pallas, also for the effect of contrast between the marble and the plumage', and 'About the middle of the poem, also, I have availed myself of the force of contrast, with a view of deepening the ultimate impression', as discussed earlier in the introduction of the thesis, about the contrast between the fantastic and the real (22). Poe may have read Schlegel's *Lectures* and then incorporated the sense of contrast, and more specifically – the concept of antithesis as shown in Schlegel's contrasting instances of 'sweetest and the bitterest', 'love and hatred', 'festivity and dark forebodings', 'tender embraces and sepulchres', and 'the fulness of life and self-annihilation' that are 'brought close to each other' – in his Gothic works in order to generate, as this thesis will demonstrate, an intended unified effect of suspense and terror that contributes to the ambiguity of his Gothic.

When discussing the use of contrast in his *A Course of Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres*, Blair, like Schlegel, puts emphasis on the juxtaposition of opposite objects and significations. In lecture xvii on Comparison, Antithesis, Interrogation, Exclamation, Other Figures of Speech, Blair claims:

> As Comparison is founded on the resemblance, so Antithesis on the contrast or opposition of two objects. Contrast has always this effect, to make each of the contrasted objects appear in the stronger light. White, for instance, never appears so bright as when it is opposed to black; and when both are viewed together, Antithesis, therefore, may, on many occasions, be employed to advantage, in order to strengthen the impression which we intend that any object should make. (189)

For Blair, contrast functions to make distinction between two opposite concepts; particularly so that, when being 'viewed together', the two opposing objects make a stronger impression. In this way, Blair's idea of contrast is similar to Kames's conception of contrast. In the chapter on Comparisons of *Elements of Criticism*, Kames underscores the importance of contrast, noting that 'I begin with observing, that nothing can be more erroneous than to institute a comparison too faint: a distant resemblance or contrast fatigues the mind with its obscurity, instead of amusing it; and tends not to fulfil any one end of a comparison' (517). A proper use of contrast in rhetoric, according to Kames, therefore, is supposed to be a strong and distinct pair of opposition; otherwise, it does not serve its purpose of contrast.

Bringing together the above perceptions from Schlegel, Blair, and Kames, it thus can be concluded that contrast is best achieved by clear opposition of notions or objects, and the two compared items are best put in proximity. In this sense, the contrast of the two opposite ideas functions like antithesis. In this chapter, and later, in chapter four on riddles and antithesis in Gothic fictions, it will be shown that Poe's adoption of antithesis in 'The Raven' and 'Ulalume' and his Gothic prose works is based on his reading of Schlegel, Blair, and Kames, and that he takes the use of this device further, adapting it to the mystery and terror of Gothic literature.

Antithesis and Polysemy in 'The Raven' and 'Ulalume'

The effect of suspense and terror is foregrounded in Poe's 'The Raven' (1845), a Gothic masterpiece by which Poe's 'The Philosophy of Composition' is instantiated. 'The Raven' has been regarded by Thomas Ollive Mabbott, Arthur Hobson Quinn, and Richard Kopley and Kevin J. Hayes[2] as a work inspired by Dickens's *Barnaby Rudge* (1841). Poe reviewed twice that work between 1841 and 1842. In his 1842 review of Dickens's novel, Poe comments:

> The raven, too, intensely amusing as it is, might have been made, more than we now see it, a portion of the conception of the fantastic Barnaby. Its croakings might have been *prophetically* heard in the course of the drama. Its character might have performed, in regard to that of the idiot, much the same part as does, in music, the accompaniment in respect to the air. Each might have been distinct. Each might have differed remarkably from the other. Yet between them there might have been wrought an analogical resemblance, and, although each might have existed apart, they might have formed together a whole which would have been imperfect in the absence of either. (243)

Poe's critique here echoes his own prediction, in an earlier review (1841), of the development of the plot of *Barnaby Rudge*, which was, at that time, still being serialised in *Master Humphrey's Clock*. In that review, Poe envisioned that the story of *Barnaby Rudge* would proceed with Barnaby's 'raven, [i.e. Grip], whose croakings are to be frequently, appropriately, and prophetically heard in the coarse [sic] of the narrative' (222). However, Dickens, eventually, did not retain or develop Grip's ominous sayings such as 'Never say die' and 'I'm a devil' through his novel. They only appear sparsely in *Barnaby Rudge*. Yet the raven is arguably a significant creature in the novel. Dickens concludes his novel with Grip, 'advanc[ing] with fantastic steps to the very door of the bar' and croaking '"I'm a devil, I'm a devil, *I*'m a devil!" with extraordinary rapture' (661). In the preface

[2] Dickens's influence on Poe's 'The Raven' has been suggested by Thomas Ollive Mabbott (355-56), Arthur Hobson Quinn (440), and Richard Kopley and Kevin J. Hayes (192).

to the 1849 edition of *Barnaby Rudge*, Dickens writes about his ravens, the prototypes of Grip, which had 'preternatural sagacity' and could 'drive imaginary horses with great skill' (5). It is supposed that Dickens would make use of and develop the superstitions about the raven in the novel. In reality, nevertheless, he did not. Therefore, Poe, in his later review of *Barnaby Rudge*, criticises the underdeveloped effect of the fantastic regarding the raven. The rationale behind Poe's criticism is his notion, derived from Schlegel, of the unity of effect where every word in a work is written for a pre-planned effect and the denouement is the direct result of the effect that has been gradually developed across the work. This is why Poe says here that two distinct parts of a work should analogically resemble and correlate with each other insofar as they construct 'a whole', a completion that would be 'imperfect in the absence of either'. Dickens's treatment of Grip did not engage sufficiently with supernaturalism or Grip's master, Barnaby; it lacks the unity of effect for Poe. Three years later after he reviewed *Barnaby Rudge*, Poe wrote 'The Raven', a piece that is centred on a bereaved lover and a mysterious raven. A sense of supernaturalism is interwoven with mournfulness and lovesickness in the course of the poem, which avoids the lack of effectiveness and unity in Dickens's *Barnaby Rudge* and serves as an exemplar of the unity of effect in composition.

In 'The Raven', the first-person narrator has a midnight confrontation with a raven, whose repeated doomful, 'Nevermore', in answer to any question the speaker asks gravely distresses him, who has been permanently separated from his love, Lenore, by death. The poem begins with a suspenseful atmosphere on a December midnight: the speaker is in his meditation of 'many a quaint and curious volume of forgotten lore' (line 2), being dormant, 'nearly napping' (line 3), when suddenly, a tapping comes at his chamber door. The speaker then recalls his lost mistress. Lines 11-12 of the poem read 'For the rare and radiant maiden whom the angels **name** Lenore – / **Nameless** *here* for evermore' [emphasis added]. The opposition between the naming of Lenore by angels in heaven and, in the human world, the nameless deceased Lenore, contrasts existence in Paradise and

non-existence in the earthly realm. It pronounces clearly the demise of Lenore at this point in time. The fact that Lenore has become one of the dead is thus linked to the unknown midnight visitor tapping at the speaker's door, creating a sense of suspense about who that visitor is. A human being or the ghost of Lenore? Here, it is also noteworthy that the contrasting words 'name' and 'nameless', which are evident opposites, are placed adjacent to each other. This is reminiscent of the guidance from Schlegel, Blair, and Kames about selecting clear oppositions and juxtaposing them for the effect of contrast.

To find out who the unexpected midnight visitor is, the speaker flings open the door: 'But the **silence** was **unbroken**, and the **stillness** gave **no token**, / And the only word there **spoken** was the whispered word, "Lenore?"' [emphasis added] (lines 27-28). The rhyme words create strong contrasts: the 'unbroken' silence and the stillness that provides 'no token' are opposed by the 'spoken' word 'Lenore'. Since it is known that Lenore is already dead, the name, 'Lenore', spoken here by somebody that breaks the silence in the dark night evokes a sense of suspense. It makes the reader wonder if it is Lenore's ghost which is speaking and which knocked the door at midnight. In his 'Philosophy', Poe also declares his use of suspense and terror here. He states that he intends 'to increase, by prolonging, the reader's curiosity, and in a desire to admit the incidental effect arising from the lover's throwing open the door, finding all dark, and thence adopting the half-fancy that it was the spirit of his mistress that knocked' (22). Through the adoption and employment of contrasting oppositions of unbroken silence, stillness with no token, and a spoken word in successive lines, Poe creates suspense by distinguishing the sound of the spoken word, 'Lenore', from the absolute silence. Though the antithesis is not as clear as the contrasting pair used earlier, the poetic rhyming effect of 'unbroken', 'token', and 'spoken' ties the words together and brings about the sense of contrast between silence and sound. After this line 'And the only word there spoken was the whispered word, 'Lenore?'', it is revealed, 'This I whispered, and an echo murmured back the word, "Lenore!"' (line 29). The speaker's evident willingness to consider the

apparition of a ghost, reduces his reliability to some degree in his following narration, particularly his encounter with seeming supernatural beings, which may be simply imaginary objects in the speaker's mind or a projection from the speaker, nourished by his bereavement and grief of losing his beloved, as well as by his imagination after musing on pieces of quaint lore at this atmospheric time of the year.

As the narrative progresses, it turns out that a raven, rather than a ghost or a living person, is the mysterious midnight visitor who was tapping at the chamber door. The speaker describes, 'Then this ebony bird beguiling my **sad** fancy into **smiling**, / By the grave and stern decorum of the countenance it wore' [emphasis added] (lines 43-44). The contrast of sad and smiling strengthens the two different senses of the speaker's sorrow due to losing Lenore and his present merriment caused by the unknown raven. But this merry mood is depicted as the raven 'beguiling my sad fancy into smiling'. It creates a tension about the raven, in that it deceives the speaker into smiling, which may be a misfortune or disaster in disguise. The raven, the 'ebony bird' with graveness and sternness, is an ominous creature of superstition itself. Soon following this, the speaker says, '"Ghastly grim and ancient Raven wandering from the Nightly shore – / Tell me what thy lordly name is on the Night's Plutonian shore!" / Quoth the Raven "Nevermore"' (lines 46-48). The raven is clearly thought to be linked with the underworld and Pluto, and it might be its dark lord's courier to send distressing messages to the bereaved speaker. Its spoken word now, 'Nevermore', connected with the death and loss of Lenore, puts an end to the 'smiling', and attests to the 'beguiling' nature of the raven's appearance. In what follows, the raven continues to respond to the speaker with 'Nevermore', worsening his melancholy, and the speaker repeats, 'But the Raven still beguiling my **sad** fancy into **smiling**' [emphasis added] (line 67) to describe the marvel, suspense, and hostility of the bird of seeming to know his sorrow yet intending to torment and torture him. The contrasted and juxtaposed antithesis of 'sad' and 'smiling', employing Schlegel,

Blair, and Kames's principle, intensifies the supernatural terror around this mysterious ebony bird.

In the subsequent stanzas of the poem, the double meaning of graphically similar words and the double meaning of the raven is further developed to heighten the suspense and ambiguity of the poem. The speaker says, emotionally and irrationally, '"Prophet!" […] "thing of evil! – prophet still, if bird or devil! – / Whether **Tempter** sent, or whether **tempest** tossed thee here ashore"' [emphasis added] (lines 85-86) and '"Take **thy beak** from out my heart, and take **thy form** from off my door!"' [emphasis added] (line 101). In the first case of tempter and tempest, though two different words with their individual meanings, the similar spelling and sound, like a quasi-homophone, brings together the two different ideas of a supernatural cause – a devilish tempter – or a natural cause – a tempest that sends the raven to him. The ambiguity also stems from the separated but combined effect of the literal and metaphorical senses. '"Take **thy beak** from out my heart"' is to delineate the raven as a metaphor in the speaker's mind whereas '"take **thy form** from off my door"' is about the concrete form of a literal raven at the door of the speaker's property. While presenting the two different senses here, however, Poe does not jumble them but assigns each a matching complete sentence. This reflects the guidelines of Blair and Kames on the use of metaphor as explained earlier in this chapter and gives equal valence to two distinct but ambiguous ideas about the raven itself as a supernatural animal or a natural and/or imaginary being.

In the closure of the poem, it is described how '[…] the lamp-light o'er him streaming throws his **shadow** on the floor; / And my soul from out that **shadow** that lies floating on the floor / Shall be lifted – nevermore!' [emphasis added] (lines 106-08). The literal shadow is obvious in the first reference to the light that casts the raven's shadow on the floor. In the second part of the sentence, though it is still about the raven's 'shadow that lies floating on the floor', the meaning is metaphorical, referencing the dark mood of the speaker. He says that his 'soul' from the shadow '[s]hall be lifted – nevermore'. Although the literal and

metaphorical senses are presented here close to each other, they are nevertheless arranged in succession and not mixed with each other, as Blair and Kames urge about the proper use of metaphor in writing. By building up the supernatural ambiguity about the raven, Poe makes use of the polysemy of the word 'shadow'. It has the significations of both shade and darkness in the contemporary definition and use of the word. According to *A Dictionary of the English Language* (1755) by Samuel Johnson, the dictionary known to Poe,[3] shadow has the meaning of 'Opacity; darkness; shade' that is associated with sorrow and pain, as shown in the example sentence: 'His countrymen probably lived within the shake of the earthquake and *shadow* of the eclipse' from Addison. Poe employs the double sense of the word to wrap suspense and ambiguity around the mystic creature of the raven and closes the poem with that mystery unresolved.

The ambiguity in 'The Raven' made Poe's contemporaries read this piece of work with a greater or lesser sense of uncertainty about the fowl. George Washington Peck, for instance, in a review published in the *American Whig Review* (1850), commented that 'we never know, in "The Gold-Bug" [a tale by Poe], whether the *scarabeus* is a supernatural insect or only a mechanical contrivance; we never know who sent the Raven from "the Night's Plutonian shore!" it would have been less mysterious in either case if we had been told' (352). Lucius Alonzo Hine, in his review in *Quarterly Journal and Review* (1846), criticised the supernaturalism used in 'The Raven' (248), but he then amended his own critique, saying that 'we may be in error, – for perhaps he [Poe] has represented himself with more truth than fiction, and the whole matter is natural [, not supernatural]' (249). Like Hine, Elizabeth Barrett, in her 1845 letter to Richard Hengist Horne, was not very certain about the nature of the raven in Poe's 'The Raven'. Barrett firstly questioned the sanity of the speaker, and suggested that if he truly did not have a sound mind, this should have been pointed out in the title of the very work (144). Barrett continued to say, 'There is a

[3] In a footnote in Poe's review of John L. Stephens's *Incidents of Travel in Egypt, Arabia Petræa, and the Holy Land* (1837), when mentioning the accusation of plagiarism in *Sketch of the Evidence from Prophecy* by Alexander Keith, he made a comparison that '[i]t would be quite as reasonable to accuse Dr. Webster of having stolen his Dictionary from Dr. Johnson' (931).

fantasticalness about the “sir or madam”, and things of the sort, which is ludicrous, unless there is a specified insanity to justify the straws’, adding ‘Probably he – the author – intended it to be read in the poem, and he ought to have intended it’ (144). Barrett recognised the supernatural descriptions of the raven, but considered it more likely to be a mere production of the speaker’s madness. In her subsequent 1846 letter to Poe, however, Barrett seemed to be more inclined towards the marvelousness of the raven, which is counter to her earlier interpretation of the speaker’s insanity and the non-supernaturalism or non-existence of the raven. She stated that ‘The Raven’ had created ‘a sensation, a “fit horror”, here in England’: ‘Some of my friends are taken by the fear of it’, ‘I hear of persons haunted by the “Nevermore”’, and ‘one acquaintance of mine who has the misfortune of possessing a “bust of Pallas” never can bear to look at it in the twilight’ (144). Barrett’s uncertainty and changing views of ‘The Raven’ rightly credit Poe’s ambiguous use of supernaturalism in the work.

There are other contemporaries who, while tending to read the poem as depicting a natural occurrence, sensed Poe’s design of supernaturalism. John Moncure Daniel, another critic in Poe’s time, introduced ‘The Raven’ in the *Richmond Examiner* (1849) by calling it ‘a mere narrative of simple events’, in which the raven is taught the distressful word by its master, and in a stormy night, flies into the speaker’s abode (146). Such simple events, however, are coated, by Poe, with ‘the strange, beautiful and fantastic imagery and colours’ as well as ‘the grave and supernatural tone with which it rolls on the ear’, ‘the extraordinary vividness of the word painting’, ‘and the powerful but altogether indefinable appeal which is made throughout to the organs of ideality and marvelousness’ (147). Similarly, Thomas Dunn English, in his review in *Aristidean* (1845), read Poe’s ‘attempt to evolve interest from a common-place incident, and by means of the mechanism of verse, to throw beauty around a simple narration, while the very borders of the ludicrous are visited’, adding ‘[t]he reader is interested and borne away in spite of himself by what, on a cool examination, appears to be nothing’ (231). Although both Daniel and English considered the events in ‘The Raven’ to

be simply natural, they perceived supernatural dynamism wrought deliberately by Poe that engendered an effective sense of marvelousness, so that the reader was affected by it and even after rereading the poem, could probably only conclude that there 'appears' to be no supernaturalism in the work. There is ambiguity in the work itself that impedes one's certainty about the reading of the poem. Such supernatural ambiguity is associated with Schlegel's unity and Poe's concept of the unity of effect.

In 'The Raven', Poe uses the devices of antithesis and polysemy to create the ambience of terror and ambiguity. In his use of antithesis, he accords with what Schlegel, Blair, and Kames say about deploying strongly contrasted words and putting them together close to each other. When he applies polysemic words in his writing, he also follows Blair and Kames's regulation on not mixing the literal sense with the metaphorical language. To fulfil the unity in writing, Poe, from his reading of Schlegel, creates the literal and figurative senses, which is related to Schlegel's teaching about the concept of externality and internality of a work, and sustains this unity to the end of his poem. His 'The Raven' is not a work of explained supernaturalism, like some of the Gothic works by Brockden Brown, Irving, and Hawthorne; it does not declare clearly that the raven is a figment of the speaker's delusion. Rather, his poem ends ambiguously, with the mystery of the raven unsolved, and this ambiguity thus maintains the potential for supernaturalism. Poe's sense of the unity and consistency in writing forbids him from providing explanations in his supernatural works and thus cancel the effect of the supernaturalism like his American contemporaries do. This characteristic of voiding supernatural-explained Gothic but rather creating ambiguous Gothic in 'The Raven', as well as in several of his other Gothic works, such as 'The Fall of the House of Usher', 'Ligeia', 'William Wilson', and 'The Black Cat', distinguishes Poe's Gothicism (which is influenced by Schlegel, Blair, and Kames) from that of other Gothic writers.

Following Poe's poetical penchant for the aesthetic of the death of a beautiful young woman, his later work, 'Ulalume – A Ballad' (1847), similar to

‘The Raven’, revolves around an unnamed speaker’s bereavement and his grief and loss of his beloved mistress, Ulalume. Having obliterated the traumatic death of Ulalume from his memory, the ‘I’ speaker, on a depressing October day, presumably Halloween, strolls to a lake area. He has a companion, his ‘Psyche’, on the way. During his journey, his attention is seized by Astarte, Venus’s stellar luminosity, whereas Psyche, distrustful of it, urges him to flee from the spot. He eventually wins over his Psyche, keeps treading to continue his journey, but only finds out a tomb of his Ulalume. All his memories are restored to him at once: he remembers that this is the lake region where his sweetheart was buried and where he visited her last year this time. Anguished once more by his painful remembrance of lost Ulalume, he wonders – ambivalently, and probably paradoxically as well – if the appearance of the star had been caused by compassionate ghouls in the woods in order to distance him from the heartbreaking locus of Ulalume’s grave. Due to its ambiguity, Poe’s contemporaries have widely diverging interpretations of the poem. Evert A. Duyckinck, in his editorial note to ‘Ulalume’ in the *Literary World*, 1849, finds that the poem contains ‘a certain cold moonlight witchery’ (66). Duyckinck seems to give credit to the sense of supernaturalism developed in this poem, just as the poetess and Poe’s one-time fiancée, Sarah Helen Whitman, in her memorial poem, ‘“The Raven”’ (1853):

> Once, where Ulalume lies sleeping,
>
> Hard by Auber’s haunted mere,
>
> With the ghouls a vigil keeping,
>
> On that night of all the year,
>
> Came thy sounding pinions, sweeping
>
> Through the leafless woods of Wier. (lines 49-54)

A later 1859 article in *Wheeling Daily Intelligencer*, titled ‘Edgar A. Poe’s Influence’, also brings to fore ‘the ashen skies, and sere, crisped leaves in the

ghoul-haunted woodland of Weir, hard by the dim lake of Auber' from Poe's 'Ulalume', highlighting the seemingly-enchanted setting. In contrast to Whitman and Duyckinck's interpretation of 'Ulalume', Gilfillan suggests a naturalistic reading: the story-teller, the speaker, is insane. For him, this poem is concerned with 'madness or misery which *sings* out its terror or grief' (185). Modern critics also split into camps reading Poe's work either supernaturally or realistically. Fisher proposes that Ulalume's death has made the speaker 'irrational'; the name of the mistress, 'Ulalume', pertinent to lunar light, 'may also point to lunacy in the speaker' (*Cambridge Introduction* 45). It may be that the narrative is set on the day of Halloween, 'when temporary influence of supernatural powers may motivate the speaker's forlorn quest' (*Cambridge Introduction* 45). Richard Kopley and Hayes provide an equivocal reading, claiming that Poe 'leaves one ligature between the worlds of imagination and reality unsevered' (202). In their interpretation, Poe does admit that influences which appear supernatural are merely 'artifice', but finally discloses that this artifice is made not by human beings but ghouls (202-03).

The ambiguity regarding the ghoulish supernaturalism is centred on the speaker's encounter with Ulalume's burial place in the woods and the return of his memory. The contrasting forgetfulness and remembrance coexist, mingle with each other, and suspend the semantic flow, with antithetical imports, in the third stanza. He says:

> Our talk had been serious and sober,
>
> But our thoughts they were palsied and sere –
>
> Our memories were treacherous and sere:
>
> For we **knew not** the month was October,
>
> And we **marked not** the night of the year –
>
> (Ah, night of all nights in the year!)

We **noted not** the dim lake of Auber,

(Though once we had journeyed down here)

We **remembered not** the dank tarn of Auber,

Nor the ghoul-haunted woodland of Weir. [emphasis added] (lines 20-29)

The opening 'serious' and 'sober' conversations do not really pair antithetically with the succeeding 'palsied' and 'sere' thoughts, yet a tension is deliberately formed between rationality on the one hand and weakness on the other. It foreshadows the issue of the speaker's memory in the following lines. He says, analeptically, that he and his Psyche at that moment 'knew not' it was October, 'marked not' this night, 'noted not' the lake of Auber, or 'remembered not' Auber tarn 'nor' ghoul-infested Weir woods. By negating all verbs that reference his consciousness, he insinuates the problematic confrontation between knowing and not knowing. The temporal and locative names supplied here, October, nighttime, Auber, and Weir, also intensify the antithesis of his impaired memory on the one hand and his knowledge on the other. They succeed in constructing an oppositional sense without truly using Blair and Kames's recommendation of juxtaposing antithetical words, such as black and white - in this case, it would have been remembering or forgetting – for their strong impression of contrast.

After this, the speaker and his Psyche reach a tomb, actually the tomb of Ulalume, his lost mistress. He then pieces everything together and remembers 'It was surely October, / On *this* very night of last year' (lines 85-86) and 'Well I know now, this dim lake of Auber –' (line 91), 'This misty mid region of Weir' (line 92), 'Well I know, now, this dark tarn of Auber' (line 93), and 'This ghoul-haunted woodland of Weir' (94). These serve as oppositions to the earlier negative lines. Poe uses the device of antithesis to create riddles and terror in the poem. In the last stanza of the poem, the speaker wonders if it is the sympathetic ghouls in the woods that have tried to block him from investigating the 'secret that lies in these wolds' and 'the thing that lies hidden in these wolds' (line 99). In this

poem, Poe makes use of antithesis, along with distressful and supernatural objects and landscapes of 'ghoul-haunted woodland of Weir' to create the suspenseful terror. The poem can be read as a supernatural piece that the woodland goblins cast magic on the speaker, blocking his memory of Ulalume; it can also, however, be read as a poem set in the natural world, where it is the traumatic loss of Ulalume that renders the speaker first forgetful, and then un-forgetful, of the death of his beloved one.

While it has been shown in the above examples from 'The Raven' and 'Ulalume' that Poe employs stylistic devices of antithesis and polysemy to create supernatural ambiguities, his Gothic ballad 'Eldorado' does not evoke a sense of ambiguity between the supernatural and natural. 'Eldorado' was published in the last year of Poe's life, on April 21, 1849. The content and the style of this piece as well as another Gothic poem 'Annabel Lee' published in the end of Poe's writing career are comparatively much simpler and more succinct than the ornate Gothic poems Poe wrote earlier. This indicates that there may be a change or shift in the author's writing style over time. As the name of its title suggests, this poem is concerned with a knight's quest for the legendary gold city Eldorado.[4] Just one year prior to the publication of this poem, a gold rush took place in California; Poe referred to this event in a letter[5] dated on February 14, 1849. Poe might be inspired by the real event of California Gold Rush, and his opinion that there were other more valuable things in the world for a poet to do than going to seek for

[4] Mabbott notes: 'According to a story current from the sixteenth century on, somewhere in the region of what is now Colombia in South America there was or had been a ruler who was covered with gold, and he was called El Dorado, "the gilded one". Reputedly, in his domain everything was made of gold and jewels. Naturally many explorers sought for the place…By Poe's day "Eldorado" had come to mean a place, the object of search, where gold (or good fortune) was to be found' (464).

[5] In a letter to Frederick W. Thomas, Poe writes: 'Depend upon it, after all, Thomas, Literature is the most noble of professions. In fact, it is about the only one fit for a man. For my own part, there is no seducing me from the path. I shall be a *littérateur*, at least, all my life; nor would I abandon the hopes which still lead me on for all the gold in California. Talking of gold, and of the temptations at present held out to "poor-devil authors," did it ever strike you that all which is really valuable to a man of letters—to a poet in especial—is absolutely unpurchaseable? Love, fame, the dominion of the intellect, the consciousness of power, the thrilling sense of beauty, the free air of Heaven, exercise of body & mind, with the physical and moral health which result—these and such as these are really all that a poet cares for: —then answer me this—*why* should he go to California?' ('Letter 304' 770).

gold in California as said in the letter, echoes the ending of the knight's frustrated adventure in the poem. However, as Mabbott rightly states, this poem is 'rich in suggestion and allusion', and the expression of the moral is barely recognisable (461). Considering the exotic and mystic setting of Eldorado, the selection of the corresponding rhyming scheme of the Spanish sextilla,[6] a medieval knight and a paranormal shadow as the major characters, and the overall atmosphere of looming dangers and terror in this poem, it may also be proper to read this piece from a different perspective of the Gothic, other than critics' association of it with the author's biographical details.

Though the sound quality of the title is sonorous,[7] and the ballad rhythm of this poem delivers a general uplifting sense, the content of the poem tells a supernatural, instead of supernaturally ambiguous, story of a knight's perilous quest which ends in failure with the tragic death of the knight.[8] Poe exploits the device of antithesis in this ballad but, unlike 'The Raven' and 'Ulalume', antithesis does not contribute to a sense of equivocality of supernaturalism. The use of antithesis in the poem is underscored as follows:

> **Gaily bedight**,
>
> A **gallant** knight,
>
> In **sunshine** and in **shadow**,
>
> Had journeyed long,

[6] Sextilla rhymes as aabccb or ababcc, which is the rime scheme of 'Eldorado'.
[7] In 'The Philosophy of Composition', [o] is thought to be 'the most sonorous vowel' by Poe (108).
[8] Throughout the poem, it is observed that the state of the knight is connected with the shadow. At the outset of his journey, the knight is portrayed as brave and energetic, and shadow only exists on the road. In the following stanza, as the knight ages and he still has not fulfilled his task, a shadow falls in his heart. In the penultimate stanza, 'as his strength / Failed him at length', the knight encounters a shadow phantom (lines 13-14). In the last stanza, there is no description about the knight anymore, and the phantom states that Eldorado is located in the Valley of the Shadow, which is biblically alluded to 'the valley of the shadow of death'. As the knight feels languid and frustrated, the shadow begins to grow relatively stronger and powerful. Therefore, the ultimate depiction of the even more gigantic Valley of Shadow, and the fact that it is the shadow phantom's discourse which closes the entire poem without any voice of the knight, imply the death of him in the end.

Singing a song,

In search of Eldorado.

But he grew **old** –

This knight so **bold** –

And o'er his heart a **shadow**

Fell, as he found

No spot of ground

That looked like Eldorado.

And, as his strength

Failed him at length

He met a pilgrim shadow –

"Shadow," said he,

"Where can it be –

This land of Eldorado?"

"Over the **Mountains**

Of the **Moon**,

Down the **Valley** of the **Shadow**,

Ride, boldly ride,"

The shade replied, –

"If you seek for Eldorado!" [emphasis added] (lines 1-24)

The poem opens with a gleeful and bright picture of a brave knight who is joyfully adorned. However, even at the less threatening beginning of his journey, there is an ominous 'shadow' on the road, which is the antithetical counterpart of 'sunshine', and which appears incongruous with the preceding description of decoration, joviality, and gallantry. Although the knight sometimes journeys in shadow, he nevertheless still cheerfully sings in his quest for Eldorado, a word which is rhymingly linked with the earlier 'shadow'. The gleeful singing and search for Eldorado are thus more or less shadowed and mystified by the resonant reference to the shade.

The second stanza begins with a tonal shift 'but', followed by the aging of the knight. Yet, the succeeding line unexpectedly restates and flashbacks to the youthful days of the knight, by saying 'This knight so bold', which forms a rhyming binary of 'old'. The linking effect of the rhyming in the binary pair of semantic contrast renders salient the incongruity. Following this, the chronological order returns to the present time, and a 'shadow' is cast on his heart, which is temporally and semantically opposed to his youthful boldness in the past. The contrasts that manifest in these three consecutive lines make the knight's journey to the legendary Eldorado even more unsettling. Such expression of tension is also reflected in the last stanza of this poem, regarding a pilgrim shadow's account of Eldorado. To find Eldorado, one has to go '"[o]ver the Mountains / Of the Moon"', and travel '"[d]own the Valley of the Shadow"'. The oppositional pairs of '"Mountains"'/'"Valley"' and '"Moon"'/'"Shadow"' foreground the contrariety at the very beginning of the stanza. The tension is further increased as '"the Valley of the Shadow"', where Eldorado is located, contains a familiar allusion to death,[9] the shadow still urges the knight to '"[r]ide, boldly ride"' to look for the city of gold, which, actually, is a city of death. The emphatic accentuation in this line and the exciting tone in the concluding line '"If you seek for Eldorado!"' also emphasises the connection between Eldorado and death. This explicit connection between shadow of death and Eldorado is not

[9] Psalm 23:4: 'Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death […]' (The Bible).

disclosed until the end of this poem; however, throughout the poem, ‘shadow’ and ‘Eldorado’ are mystically paired in rhyme. In the middle third line of the shadow and the last sixth line of Eldorado in each stanza, the knight’s eager hope to find out the prosperous land of Eldorado rhymingly echoes with the description of the shadow, which thus intensifies the general sense of suspense and discomfort on the knight’s journey.

To strengthen the sentiment of fear in this Gothic poem, another element of ‘the fearful coloured into the horrible’, horror, is also adopted to shape the important supernatural figure of the shadow. From the outset, the shadow is simply a normal shadow on the knight’s journey as expressed in the line, ‘[i]n sunshine and in shadow’. In the second stanza, as the knight is aging and his quest for Eldorado turns out to be fruitless, a shadow falls metaphorically over his heart. The dark shade on the road, at the beginning, starts to be developed into a more influential object. The enjambment used here, ‘And o’er his heart a shadow / Fell,’ in which the semantic meaning of the word ‘Fell’ matches its typography of a lower line, generates a visual effect that a real shadow is, literally, falling, and is crystallised, rather than being merely a concept of unpleasantness or melancholy. As soon as the shadow starts to take shape, immediately in the next stanza, a supernatural shadow as ‘a pilgrim shadow’ makes its debut. The intimate correlation of these adjacent shadow lines forms something like a moving picture, from a spot of shadow to a crystallised shadow and then to a real substantial shadow ghost. Hence, the strained nerves caused by the unsettling shade, and the shadow over the knight’s heart, are rapidly expanded to the horror of the shadow phantom. The effectual narrative coherence and instantaneity establish a dramatic and fantastic sense – a random shade that finally grows into a supernatural shadow.

It is evident that Poe makes use of the plurivalent device of polysemy to transform the shade into a supernatural ghostly shadow in ‘Eldorado’. The polysemic signification of ‘shadow’ of dark shade, melancholy, and a ghost creates the apparitional shadow. Supernaturalism is clear in this poem. There is no

sense of supernatural ambiguity in ‘Eldorado’ as that we can find in ‘The Raven’ and ‘Ulalume’. On the other hand, while ‘The Raven’ and ‘Ulalume’ are examples of Poe’s use of antithesis and polysemy, these devices and his ambiguous supernaturalism are more frequently found in his Gothic fictions than in his Gothic poetry. This difference is owing to Poe’s differentiation between the two genres of poetry and prose, a point which will be elaborated in the following section on the different development of the Gothic in Poe’s poetry and fiction. In his Gothic fictions, his use of antithesis is more saliently associated with terror and suspense, and his application of polysemic words often generates an uncanny sense that characterises the ambiguity of his Gothic.

Generic Differences between Poetry and Fiction

In several of his essays and reviews, Poe propounds the viewpoint that poetry is founded on beauty and fiction based on truth. In ‘The Poetic Principle’, for instance, Poe regards ‘Poetry of words as *The Rhythmical Creation of Beauty*’ (78), claiming ‘*Beauty* […] is the atmosphere and the real essence of the poem’ (79), ‘Beauty [is] the province of the poem’ (78), and ‘the Poetic Sentiment, […] is so easily distinguished from Truth, which is the satisfaction of the Reason’ (78). In ‘Letter to B—’ (1836), Poe declares, ‘A poem, in my opinion, is opposed to a work of science by having, for its *immediate* object, pleasure, not truth; to romance, by having for its object an *indefinite* instead of a *definite* pleasure,’ adding ‘romance presenting perceptible images with definite, poetry with *in*definite sensations, to which end music is an *essential*…’ (11). In his review of Hawthorne, Poe mentions that ‘the poem’s highest idea—[is] the idea of the Beautiful’ while ‘Truth is often, and in very great degree, the aim of the tale’, continuing ‘that the author who aims at the purely beautiful in a prose tale is laboring at great disadvantage. For Beauty can be better treated in the poem’ (573). In his review of Longfellow, Poe also says ‘He must be blind indeed who cannot perceive the radical and chasmal difference between the truthful and the poetical modes of inculcation. He must be grossly wedded to conventionalisms

who, in spite of this difference, shall still attempt to reconcile the obstinate oils and waters of Poetry and Truth' (684-85). In 'The Philosophy of Composition', Poe comments further on the distinction between poetry and prose:

> Now the object, Truth, or the satisfaction of the intellect, and the object Passion, or the excitement of the heart, are, although attainable, to a certain extent, in poetry, far more readily attainable in prose. Truth, in fact, demands a precision, and Passion, a *homeliness* (the truly passionate will comprehend me) which are absolutely antagonistic to that Beauty which, I maintain, is the excitement, or pleasurable elevation, of the soul. It by no means follows from any thing here said, that passion, or even truth, may not be introduced, and even profitably introduced, into a poem—for they may serve in elucidation, or aid the general effect, as do discords in music, by contrast—but the truth artist will always contrive, first, to tone them into proper subservience to the predominant aim, and, secondly, to enveil them, as far as possible, in that Beauty which is the atmosphere and the essence of the poem. (16-17)

The fundamental differentiation made here by Poe between poetry as beauty and prose as truth perhaps can be illustrated by Poe's different treatment of the same subject matter in the two different genres of poetry and fiction. The subject of the premature death of a beautiful heroine – the representation of beauty and the 'most poetical topic in the world', according to Poe ('Philosophy' 19) – appears in his poems of 'Tamerlane' (1827), 'Irene' (1831), 'A Paean' (1831) , 'To One in Paradise' (1834), 'Lenore' (1843), 'The Raven', 'Ulalume' (1847), 'Annabel Lee' (1849), and the posthumously published 'Deep in Earth' (1914). Among them, only 'The Raven', 'Ulalume', and 'Annabel Lee' are Gothic works; the rest of them are poems on beauty, death, loss, lament, and memory of the dead, not about terror or the effect of the Gothic. This same subject of a beautiful woman dying young is written in several of Poe's Gothic fictions, such as 'Berenice', 'Morella', 'Ligeia', 'The Fall of the House of Usher', 'The Island of the Fay', 'Eleonora', 'The Oval Portrait', 'The Oblong Box', and 'The Premature Burial'. However, in

contrast to his poetry, the mystery of life and death, afterlife, reincarnation, resurrection, and the horror of death are the elements in those pieces that often induce suspense and curiosity about the truth.

Through the above analysis of 'The Raven' and 'Ulalume', it can be seen that Poe uses the stylistic devices of antithesis and the polysemy to create the effects of Gothic terror and ambiguity. But in very few of Poe's verse works are Gothic pieces and even fewer of them evoke ambiguity between the natural and the supernatural. Poe started his writing career as a poet as early as in 1827 with his first poetry publication, *Tamerlane and Other Poems*. Some of his earliest poems in this poetry collection, such as 'Visit of the Dead' and 'The Lake', display a dark imagination of death that triggers a momentary desolate sense, but their tones are not gothic. Evoking horror and terror is also, apparently, not the fundamental objective of those pieces. Poe's first truly Gothic poems, 'The Valley Nis' and 'The Doomed City' (later known, respectively, as 'The Valley of Unrest' and 'The City in the Sea'), were published in his third poetry collection, *Poems,* in April 1831. It was near the time when he started writing his earliest four Gothic fictions of 'Metzengerstein', 'The Duc de L'Omelette', 'A Decided Loss', and 'The Bargain Lost', sometime between June 4 and December 1, 1831 for the writing contest held by *Saturday Courier*, Philadelphia, where those short stories were published anonymously in the following year (Mabbott 13). After his earliest Gothic poems, his later Gothic poems only appeared in 'The Haunted Palace' (1839), and then 'The Conqueror Worm' (1843), 'Dream-Land' (1844), 'The Raven', 'Ulalume', 'The Bells' (1849), 'Eldorado' (1849), and 'Annabel Lee', till his death in 1849. He has written far fewer Gothic poems than Gothic fictions. Moreover, supernatural ambiguity is used less in his Gothic poems; it is only present in 'The Raven', 'Ulalume', and 'Annabel Lee'. Most of his Gothic poems were published in the later phase of his writing career, whereas many of his Gothic fictions were already published between 1832 and 1842, such as 'MS. Found in a Bottle' (1833), 'The Visionary' (1834),[10] 'Shadow – A Parable' (1835),

[10] Later retitled 'The Assignation' in Poe's later edition and republication of the tale.

'Berenice' (1835), 'Morella' (1835), 'King Pest' (1835), 'Siope' (1838),[11] 'Ligeia' (1838), *The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym of Nantucket* (1838), 'The Psyche Zenobia' (1838),[12] 'The Devil in the Belfry' (1839), 'The Fall of the House of Usher' (1839), 'William Wilson' (1839), 'The Man of the Crowd' (1840), 'A Descent into the Maelström' (1841), 'The Island of the Fay' (1841), 'Never Bet Your Head' (1841),[13] 'Eleonora' (1841), 'Life in Death' (1842),[14] 'The Mask of the Red Death' (1842),[15] and 'The Pit and the Pendulum' (1842). It seems that the writing and creation of his Gothic fictions exerted some creative influence his Gothic poems, and thus, after 1843, he turned to produce more Gothic poems. To some extent, it can be said that his writing of Gothic fictions eventually resulted in his writing of Gothic poems. And owing to such slower development of his Gothic poetry, as well as the generic differences he perceived between poetry and fiction, supernatural ambiguity is not used frequently in his Gothic poetry.

As the above analysis shows, among all his Gothic poems, only 'The Raven' and 'Ulalume' exemplify his use of the stylistic devices of antithesis and polysemy to obscure the borderline between the supernatural and natural. Although the device of literalisation, 'shadow', is used in his 'Eldorado', it does not create the effect of ambiguity the way it does in several of his Gothic fictions, such as 'Shadow – A Parable', 'The Fall of the House of Usher', 'The Masque of the Red Death', and 'The Tell-Tale Heart'. It is also worth noting that his Gothic poems and those Gothic poems interpolated in his Gothic fictions can lead to different interpretations of the poems. For example, his Gothic poems, 'The Haunted Palace' and 'The Conqueror Worm', do not evoke a sense of ambiguity about supernaturalism themselves, but when they are inserted in Gothic fictions of 'The Fall of the House of Usher' and 'Ligeia', their import become more

[11] Later retitled 'Silence – A Fable' in Poe's later edition and republication of the tale.
[12] Later retitled 'How to Write a Blackwood Article' in Poe's later edition and republication of the tale.
[13] Later retitled 'Never Bet the Devil Your Head' in Poe's later edition and republication of the tale.
[14] Later retitled 'The Oval Portrait' in Poe's later edition and republication of the tale.
[15] The title was later revised into 'The Masque of the Red Death' in Poe's later edition and republication of the tale.

complicated, triggering supernatural and natural interpretations. Such difference was also observed by James Russell Lowell, another of Poe's contemporaries, in his introduction to Poe in *Graham's Magazine* (1845). Lowell said that if 'The Haunted Palace' stood independently as a poem itself from 'The Fall of the House of Usher', '[i]t loses greatly by being taken out of its rich and appropriate setting' (165). Another anonymous critic in Poe's time also commented about the different writing of Poe's poetry and fiction. An unsigned review in *Boston Post* (1845), after giving its positive opinion on the 'peculiar and eccentric' of 'The Raven' (235), the first piece in Poe's newly published *The Raven and Other Poems* (1845), said, 'On the appearance of this volume of poems, therefore, we looked for something as peculiar, eccentric and self-conceited, it may be, as the prose writings of the same man, and for something as wild, as ingenious and as fanciful', yet '[w]e did not expect to see such a parcel of current trash as is contained in the volume in question' (236). The lack of the strange, peculiar, and the wild, as well as the less rich setting in Poe's poetry demonstrates that Gothic writing is developed more fully in Poe's fictions than his poetry, and supernatural ambiguity is expressed more profoundly in his Gothic fictions than his Gothic poems. To explore Poe's ambiguous Gothic writing and its relation with Schlegel, Blair, and Kames, there is a need to focus on his Gothic fictions. This will be discussed in the following chapters of the thesis on the devices of the literalisation, polysemy and repetition, and antithesis.

Chapter 2: The Horror of (Re)animating the Dead and Inanimate: Personification and Metaphor in 'Shadow – A Parable', 'The Masque of the Red Death', 'The Fall of the House of Usher', and 'The Tell-Tale Heart'

It has been demonstrated in chapter one that terror and supernatural ambiguity are exemplified in Poe's poem 'The Raven'; horror, the other indispensable element of Gothic literature, is also found in his ambiguous Gothic fictions. In the history of the publications of the Gothic, several novelists, such as Walpole and Lewis, have incorporated horror in their works. The shocking opening scene of the body of Prince Conrad smashed by a gigantic helmet, haunting giants, and ancestral ghosts coming out of the pictures in Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto,* and in Lewis's *The Monk*, the conjuring of Lucifer, Monk Ambrosio's borrowed black magic and rape of Antonia, and the chasing ghost of the Bleeding Nun are examples of writing that combines supernature with the horror of corporeality and immediacy. Especially in contrast with Radcliffe's predilection for and prioritisation of terror over horror in Gothic writing, Lewis filled his novel *The Monk* with more horrifying descriptions, which makes the novel a representation of horror in classic Gothic fiction. Poe knew Walpole's and Lewis's works. Poe mentions Walpole in his 1839 review of *The Canons of Good Breeding*, where he speaks about 'the wit, the wisdom, and the erudition, of Horace Walpole' (456). In a review of Simms's collection of short stories *The Wigwam and the Cabin,* in *Broadway Journal*, dated October 1845, Poe compares Simms's 'Castle Dismal' to Walpole's *Otranto*, saying, '"Castle Dismal" is one of the most original fictions ever penned and deserves all that order of commendation which the critics lavished upon Walpole's Castle of Otranto' ('Critical Notices' 190).[1] In marginalia published in the *Democratic Review*, December 1844, Poe mentions Walpole regarding the definition of 'talk' and gossips (1358), and in the *Southern*

[1] Fisher in his *The Gothic's Gothic* attributes this piece of review to Poe (5). Poe was the editor of *Broadway Journal* in 1845; this may be the reason why Fisher considers this review is from Poe. Poe reviewed the same work by Simms for *Godey's Lady's Book* in January 1846. I compared the critique, language, and style in these two reviews. I agree with Fisher that the 1845 review is very likely written by Poe.

Literary Messenger in April and July, 1849, Poe twice quotes Walpole's statement about grace and books. Poe thus shows a certain knowledge of Walpole's publications. As for Lewis, Poe, in his 1849 letter, refers to him as 'Monk Lewis',[2] clearly aware of Lewis's Gothic publication *The Monk* ('Letter 320' 814). He then cites Lewis's explanation of why he adopts black people for banditti characters in his play ('Letter 320' 814).[3]

As a writer who came after those Gothic predecessors, Poe undoubtedly, directly or indirectly, formed his idea of horror and Gothic fictions from them. Yet in terms of contemporary Gothic sources and the inspiration for Poe's use of horror and supernatural ambiguity, *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* was the more obvious influence. *Blackwood's Magazine*, a Scottish periodical that was founded in 1817, was a literary magazine well received in Britain and then circulated in transatlantic America in the early nineteenth century. Poe was familiar with *Blackwood's Magazine*. On several different occasions, Poe mentions this contemporary periodical. For instance, in his 'Letter 42', the manifesto for much of his writing practice quoted in chapter one, Poe refers to William Maginn's 'The Man in the Bell', a story published in 1821 in *Blackwood's*, as a writing paradigm (85). In another letter, Poe recalls a unique review published in *Blackwood's* which used odd laughter to devastating effect ('Letter 52' 114). In his 'How to Write a Blackwood Article', a short story that provides insight into his own reading, several sensational tales published in *Blackwood's* are enumerated, such as John Galt's 'The Buried Alive' (1821), Samuel Ferguson's 'The Involuntary Experimentalist' (1837), and the then serialised *Passages from the Diary of a Late Physician* by Samuel Warren. Poe deduced the writing characteristics and strategies of those publications in *Blackwood's*, and he then turned them into a sub-tale, 'A Predicament' — an

[2] Contemporary criticisms of *The Monk* and its subsequent adaptation in plays made Lewis known as '"Monk" Lewis' (McEvoy xi).

[3] Poe does not provide the name of the play in his letter. He recalls Lewis's defence of his choice of black banditti in his play. Whalen finds overlaps between Poe's recollection and Lewis's announcement 'To the Reader' in *The Castle Spectre* (1797). Whalen suggests that Poe made some mistakes in his recollection; the 'black banditti' is actually 'black servants' from Lewis (*Edgar Allan Poe* 144).

overt parody of *Blackwood's* sensational and burlesque tales. It seems that *Blackwood's Magazine* served at some point as an inspiration for Poe's creations, and this influence has generally been acknowledged by several critics. Kennedy suggests that Poe 'read sensational tales in *Blackwood's Magazine*' when he was studying in England ('America's Europe' 168), while Whalen and Jonathan H. Hartmann propose that Poe had access to *Blackwood's Magazine* through his merchant foster-father, John Allan. Whalen says that the latter 'sold such popular publications as the *Edinburgh Review*, *Blackwood's*, and the *London Ladies' Magazine*' ('Poe and the American Publishing Industry' 66). Supplementing Whalen's suggestion, Hartmann adds that '*Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* (1817-32), one of the most widely read periodicals in the Jacksonian United States, was the name-brand monthly that would provide important models for Poe's prose journalism' (1). In terms of *Blackwood's* influence on Poe's Gothic writings, Fisher states, 'In his own day the brief tale of terror, familiarly known to the Anglo-American readership as the signature for fiction in the popular *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*, served as Poe's, and other Americans', model […]' ('Poe and the gothic' 72). Similarly, Punter comments that the majority of Poe's 'Gothic reading was done in the pages of *Blackwood's*' (172).

Sensational and burlesque tales and essays published in *Blackwood's*, particularly those pieces that contain the literalisation of metaphorical concepts, might have influenced Poe's use of literalised metaphor in his Gothic fictions. Poe's earlier Gothic tale, 'Loss of Breath' (1835), a piece of the projected fiction collection, *Tales of The Folio Club*, for instance, is claimed by Poe himself to be of 'the extravagancies of Blackwood' ('Letter 57, 125'). It was subtitled 'A Tale à la Blackwood', and then changed into 'A Tale Neither In Nor Out of "Blackwood"' (61). The tale, in the imaginary Folio Club, is matched with the club member Mr. Blackwood Blackwood,[4] 'who had written certain articles for foreign Magazines' ('Preface to *Folio*', 205). In this tale, an unnamed, ill-starred protagonist loses his breath, supernaturally, in a fierce argument with his wife,

[4] Mabbott attributes this tale to Mr. Blackwood Blackwood, based on its subtitle, 'A Tale à la Blackwood' (206).

and says: ‘The phrases “I am out of breath,” “I have lost my breath,” &c., are often enough repeated in common conversation; but it had never occurred to me that the terrible accident of which I speak could *bona fide* and actually happen!’ (62). The use of a common-use phrase, ‘out of breath’ and ‘losing one’s breath’, is articulated here by Poe, and is literalised by him in making the protagonist truly lose his breath in the tale, instead of its usual metaphorical signification of being short of breath, as was ‘often enough repeated in common conversation’ at the time. The unexpected literalisation of metaphor, in this case, creates an out-of-nature moment that goes beyond the natural experience and, at the same time, touches upon the sense of the corporal and concreteness. Poe’s use of a literalised metaphor may come from works published in *Blackwood’s*, in view of his reference to it in the title and the nature of his tale. The emphasised literalness or literalisation of metaphor is seen in several of the tales in *Blackwood’s*. Alexander Hammond suggests that those *Blackwood’s* burlesques, such as ‘The Man with the Nose’ (1826), ‘The Man with the Mouth’ (1828), and ‘The Man-Mountain’ (1829) by Robert Macnish, might well have influenced Poe in particular ways (39). In those tales, as their titles express, a sense of physicality is underscored through nose, mouth, and build. Poe’s naming the breath-losing protagonist, ‘Lacko’breath’, and his antagonist, ‘Windenough’, who has an excess of breath, in ‘Loss of Breath’, apart from his literalisation of ‘out of breath’, seems to find correspondences in those burlesque works published in *Blackwood’s* (Hammond 39).

In addition to Macnish’s articles, Samuel Warren’s ‘The Turned Head’ (1831) in his series of *Passages from the Diary of a Late Physician,* a work that was mentioned by Poe in his letter and in ‘How to Write a Blackwood Article’, might no less have served as a burlesque example for Poe. Here, the realisation of the literal sense is manifested in the pivotal event of a head turned to the back by a hurricane wind. The effect of literalness is accentuated by the character stating ‘my head is turned – literally so’ in the tale (108), and in the word-plays on the literal sense such as ‘*dark* side of things’/‘*back*-side of things’, the inability to

'*look forward*', and 'My life will henceforth be spent in wretched *retrospectives!*' (111). The manipulation of not only the literal but also the figural is also executed in the half-burlesque and half-satiric *Blackwood's* piece 'Dialogue between the Marquis of Anglesea and the Ghost of His Leg' (1831) by Christopher North, the pseudonym of the *Blackwood's* writer, John Wilson. Here, the phrase '*lifted up your heel* against me', an expression clearly associated with the idiom, 'to lift up the heel against one', is employed by the Marquis at the outset of the narrative (715), and is achieved figuratively and almost literally, as the Marquis's leg separates itself from him in order to become a living equivalent that contemptuously argues with him. This is assumed to be another Blackwoodian inspiration for Poe's use of metaphorical language.

While *Blackwood's* essays and sensational tales may serve as contemporary examples that influenced Poe's literalisation of metaphor and supernatural ambiguity in his Gothic fictions, Schlegel, Blair, and Kames, those prominent critics and rhetoricians in Poe's time, are also relevant to Poe's ambiguous Gothic writing, albeit in a more theoretical fashion. Unlike the influence from *Blackwood's*, this source has not yet been discussed by scholars. When commenting on Hawthorne's *Twice-Told Tales* (1842) in his review, Poe acclaimed 'those *tales of effect*, many fine examples of which were found in the earlier numbers of Blackwood' as exemplars of unity of effect' (573). Poe clearly had Schlegel's compositional principle of unity in mind, and it could also be that Poe was in favour of works published in *Blackwood's*, due to their fulfilment of Schlegel's conception of the unified effect. Previously to this 1842 review of Hawthorne, the first time that Poe mentioned Schlegel is as early as in the 1835 review of the English collection of Euripides's plays, *The Classical Family Library*. In that review, Poe quoted a passage from Schlegel's *Lectures*, clear evidence that he knew the work, and suggesting that he had a copy of it at hand by that time. Poe started his editorial job in the *Southern Literary Messenger* in 1835, and this is when he began to contribute critical reviews in the *Messenger*. As such,

while this review is the earliest clear evidence of Poe's knowledge of Schlegel's *Lectures,* he may well have read Schlegel before 1835.

In Schlegel's *Lectures,* a treatise that was published earlier than *Blackwood's Magazine* began its publication run, he analyses and discusses the device of literalised metaphor in his elaboration of unity in writing. Those examples of metaphor bear similarities to Poe's use of metaphorical language in his Gothic works. Meanwhile, Blair's and Kames's exemplifications of personification and figures of speech also find some correspondences in Poe's treatment of personification and metaphor. I will take a closer look at those contemporary lectures by Schlegel, Blair, and Kames, and suggest that Poe's style emerges from the literary and rhetorical context that he was situated in.

Schlegel, Blair, Kames and Poesque Horror and Ambiguity

In chapter one, it has been demonstrated that Poe read the passage regarding 'unity of impression' and contrast in Schlegel's *Lectures*. Just a few pages before that passage, in the same discussion of Shakespeare's plays, Schlegel speaks about *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, and points out the use of literalised metaphor in that play:

> The extremes of fanciful and vulgar are united when the enchanted Titania awakes and falls in love with a coarse mechanic with an ass's head, who represents, or rather disfigures, the part of a tragical lover. The droll wonder of the transmutation of Bottom is merely the translation of a metaphor in its literal sense; but in his behaviour during the tender homage of the Fairy Queen, we have a most amusing proof how much the consciousness of such a head-dress heightens the effect of his usual folly. (320)

Here, Schlegel takes the supernatural circumstance of transforming Nick Bottom, a human weaver, into one with a donkey head for the example of literalised metaphor. It is achieved through the literalisation of the metaphor of 'ass'. Ass, in addition to functioning as a clear synonym for 'bottom', has the metaphorical signification of stupidity or a stupid person; it also, in a more literal sense, refers to the equine animal of donkey. Schlegel is aware of the plurality of meaning of the word, and clearly points out the use of literalisation of the metaphorical sense, 'the translation of a metaphor in its literal sense'. Literalising foolishness into a concrete image of a human being with a real donkey head makes for a sudden, abrupt supernatural scene; Schlegel here comments about the extremity of the 'fanciful' and the 'droll wonder of the transmutation of Bottom'. Apart from the supernatural wonder, the literalisation of a metaphorical sense, from stupidity to a donkey, according to Schlegel, also 'heightens the effect of his usual folly'. The metaphorical meaning of clumsiness and foolishness is strengthened through the actual and literal presence of the head of a donkey, an animal that has a strong association with stupidity. It is very likely that Poe read this passage on page 320 in Schlegel's *Lectures*, which is centred around the concept of the unity of effect, before he read the latter passage on 'unity of impression' on page 325, which he quoted in his essays and reviews. Poe came across Schlegel's mention of the device of literalised metaphor, a technique that can create wonder and intensify the effect for the attainment of the unity of effect, and he adopted and adapted this device in his Gothic writing, which not only achieves supernaturalism, horror, and unity of effect, but also characterises his Gothic with a sense of supernatural ambiguity.

Apart from his comments on literalised metaphor in Shakespeare's play, in the *Lectures*, Schlegel also discusses the use of literalised metaphor in *The Clouds* by the ancient Greek playwright Aristophanes:

> The Clouds themselves, as the chorus of the piece (for the poet converts these substances into persons, and dresses them out in a singular enough manner), are an allegory on the metaphysical speculations which do not

> rest on the ground of experience, but float about, without any definite shape or body, in the kingdom of possibilities. We may observe in general that it is one of the peculiarities of the mirth of Aristophanes to adopt a metaphor literally, and to exhibit it in this way before the eyes of the spectators. It is said of a man addicted to unintelligible reveries, that he is up in the clouds, and accordingly Socrates is actually let down in a basket at his first appearance. (122)

The metaphorical signification of clouds is represented, literally, in the chorus. The chorus of clouds are not beings on earth; they float around and are of no clear shape, just like the nature of clouds. Here, Schlegel clearly says that such use by Aristophanes is 'to adopt a metaphor literally', namely a literalised metaphor. Not very different from Shakespeare's translation of 'ass' from the metaphorical, abstract concept of stupidity to the literal, concrete form of a donkey, Aristophanes transforms the metaphor of clouds of floating, shapelessness into the literal image of cloud-like chorus. The fanciful and wonder in the literalised metaphor in Shakespeare is also found 'in a singular enough manner' and 'one of the peculiarities' in Aristophanes. Poe may have read this section as well from Schlegel's *Lectures*. The similarities between Aristophanes's use of literalised metaphor mentioned here and Poe's use in his 'Shadow – A Parable' and 'The Masque of the Red Death', pieces which will be analysed later in this chapter, seem to prove Poe's familiarity of Schlegel's discussion of literalised metaphor in Aristophanes. The literalisation of metaphor, according to Schlegel, 'heightens the effect' of the metaphorical, which is linked to Schlegel's principle of unity. For Schlegel, the sense of unity is of double sense, of the external, more superficial meaning, and of the internal, the in-depth meaning. Each is associated, respectively, with the literal and the metaphorical senses. As mentioned in the introduction, Poe was very familiar with this principle of unity of twofold senses from Schlegel, and he carried it out in his own Gothic writing. While Schlegel discusses the device of literalised metaphor in his *Lectures*, Poe very likely was

drawn by the way the device functioned to heighten effect, and adopted and adapted it into his Gothic writing of supernatural horror and ambiguity.

Similar correspondences are also found in Blair's and Kames's contemporary rhetorical treatises. In the section on figure of speech of the *Elements*, Kames lists different types of more common figures that have been internalised in daily language. Amongst them, the fourth and fifth types are very reminiscent of Poe's treatment of metaphorical language: 'Two things being intimately connected, the proper name of the one employed figuratively to signify the other <308>. *Day* for light, *Night* for darkness; and hence, A sudden night' and 'A word proper to an attribute, employed figuratively to denote the subject. *Youth* and *beauty* for those who are young and beautiful: Youth and beauty shall be laid in dust' (596). The former type reminds one of the thematic notions of the fall in 'The Fall of the House of Usher' and the heart in 'The Tell-Tale Heart'. The action of the 'fall' of something is connected with the abstract concept 'fall' of degeneration and decline, while the organ, 'heart', pertains to the intangible 'heart' of feelings and thoughts. As to the latter type of relevant attributes and subjects, 'Shadow – A Parable' and 'The Masque of the Red Death' are close to such use of figures. In 'Shadow', the biblical 'shadow' of death, namely the darkness and horror of death, is transformed into a 'shadow' ghost with multiple voices of the dead; in the 'Red Death', a plague that has the attribute of blood and death, is taken to refer to the incarnation of the 'Red Death' in a scarlet shroud with a deadly, blood-diffused mask.

In his *Lectures*, Blair describes the uses of personification, which recall Poe's lexical choices for figures in 'Masque' and 'The Tell-Tale Heart'. Blair pays attention to the very object to be personified, recommending that one choose a dignified thing for the effective use of personification (178). Name, for Blair, is one proper choice. For instance, Alexander Pope personifies the name of Abelard in 'Dear fatal name! rest ever unreveal'd' in *Eloisa to Abelard*. Blair approves of this personified object, and he elucidates, 'For, as the name of a person often stands for the person himself, and suggests the same ideas, it can bear this

Personification with sufficient dignity' (179). This is found in Poe's personification of the Red Death: the name of the pestilence of the Red Death is personified as a masquerader. Apart from names, the bodily part of heart is regarded as another sensible choice for personification by Blair: 'As the heart is a dignified part of the human frame, and is often put for the mind, or affections, this also may pass without blame' (179). The selection of heart for a figure of speech is seen in 'The Tell-Tale Heart', in which the murderer's agitated mood works in conjunction with his victim's haunting heartbeat.

From different perspectives, Blair, Kames and Schlegel reflect Poe's adoption and application of certain personifications and metaphors. To have a consistent analysis of Poe's Gothic works, the approach to metaphor of cognitive linguistics serves a useful purpose. In cognitive linguistics, metaphor is perceived as a product of conceptualisation. It proposes that metaphor works on the basis of concepts: 'CONCEPTUAL DOMAIN A IS CONCEPTUAL DOMAIN B' (Kövecses 4). Mostly, conceptual domain A is an abstract concept and conceptual domain B is a more tangible and clearly delineated concept. The former is called the target domain, and the latter the source domain. 'Love is a journey', for example, is an often-seen conceptual metaphor, whereby the journey's (source domain) 'travelers', 'vehicle', 'destination' can be mapped onto love's (target domain) 'lovers', 'relationship', and 'goal(s) of the relationship' (Kövecses 8-9). It is worth noticing that conceptual metaphor is not metaphorical words put into real use. Conceptual metaphor is founded on concepts formed in the mind; the actual usage of metaphor is called 'metaphorical linguistic expressions' (Kövecses 4). Metaphorical linguistic expressions are based upon conceptual metaphor. This difference also can explain why there is a 'copula verb (IS, ARE)' to link a target concept with a source concept, while in the actual use of metaphor, metaphor and the mapping does not always appear with an explicit use of 'is' or 'are' (Gibbons and Whiteley 206). For instance, 'We're *at a crossroads*', a linguistic expression of the conceptual metaphor 'Love is a journey', does not have a copula verb to

express, metaphorically, that a love relationship is facing a decision-making moment of turning good or bad (Gibbons and Whiteley 206).

Similarly, in Poe's Gothic works, he often employs metaphor without pointing out the mapping in his linguistic expressions. 'Shadow – A Parable', for example, is a use of personification, a kind of so-termed 'ontological metaphor' (Kövecses 39). According to Kövecses, ontological metaphor mainly works in a way to 'enable us to see more sharply delineated structure where there is very little or none' (Kövecses 38). In the tale, the target concept of fear (of death) is ontologically illuminated by a spectral opponent. Ontological metaphor also appears in another Poe's plague-related tale 'The Masque of the Red Death', in which disease is conceptualised as an opponent, threatening the living. As for 'The Fall of the House of Usher', it exemplifies a conceptual metaphor of 'family is a building'. The condition of a family reflects that of a house – standing firmly or collapsing. 'The Tell-Tale Heart' can also be comprehended conceptually. 'Guilt is an opponent' underlies the murderer's rapid heartbeat and the victim's haunting and revealing heart.

In the following section, I will analyse Poe's four Gothic tales, 'Shadow – A Parable', 'The Fall of the House of Usher', 'The Masque of the Red Death', and 'The Tell-Tale Heart', those that can best demonstrate his employment of metaphorical language to generate a sense of supernatural ambiguity. I argue that Poe makes use of personification and metaphor using words of double meaning, whose similar pattern can be seen in the above contemporary examples from *Blackwood's*, Schlegel, Kames, and Blair, to serve the purpose of Poesque ambiguity.

Personification in 'Shadow – A Parable' and 'The Masque of the Red Death'

‘Shadow – A Parable’ (1835), one of the earlier pieces from Poe, was planned to be collected in the *Tales of The Folio Club*,[5] along with ‘Loss of Breath’, the work that instantiates Poe’s literalisation of metaphor in writing. The tale, ‘Shadow – A Parable’, tells a story of a group of seven survivors of a ravaging pestilence in the city of Ptolemais, Egypt. They seclude themselves in a desolate hall, with their dead friend’s body within. During their self-reassuring or self-delusional revelry, a supernatural shadow appears. He provides his appellation and underworld abode in the voices of their dead friends. Eventually, all of those seven people die. Poe’s contemporary Whitman, in her *Edgar Poe and His Critics* (1860), seems to take the shadow literally, recalling: ‘What wonder that the phantoms of “Shadow” and “Silence,” once evoked there, could never be exorcised!’ (53). Whitman refers to the marvel of the shadowy phantom in Poe’s ‘Shadow’, and the impossibility of removing the phantom. Other critics in Poe’s time did not comment much on this early work. Modern scholars have different views of it. Fisher, for instance, mentions this piece while articulating, ‘Nearly all of Poe’s protagonists evince paranoias, and some also power mania’ (*Cambridge Introduction* 22). For him, Poe’s settings often function as symbols of ‘the human head/mind/self’, and his protagonists or characters enter their own minds, in which they find themselves disorientated (*Cambridge Introduction* 30). The protagonist-narrator’s paranoia of plague and death calls into question his narration of a spectral shadow that speaks in dead friends’ voices. G. R. Thompson, on the other hand, notices the issue that the narrator and his friends in ‘Shadow’ are inebriated (*Poe’s Fiction* 169). Given that they are ‘dead drunk’, it is difficult to give credence to their supernatural experience, just like other unreliable narrators in Poe’s works (*Poe’s Fiction* 169).

The title of the story, ‘Shadow – A Parable’, seems to suggest a concrete, substantial existence of shadow is probably involved in view of the subtitle, ‘A Parable’. Parable, defined by Webster in *American Dictionary of the English*

[5] Based on the publication history of Poe’s earliest tales and the nature of the known pieces in *The Folio Club*, Mabbott suggests that ‘Shadow’ is the tale that was thought to be included in the collection by Poe (202). The twin piece of ‘Shadow – A Parable’, ‘Silence – A Fable’, was already mentioned on Poe’s story list for *The Folio Club*, hence one of the few unspecified remaining pieces in the collection must be very likely to be ‘Shadow’ (202).

Language, is '[a] fable or allegorical relation or representation of something real in life or nature, from which a moral is drawn for instruction […]'. In this case, it does not contradict the initial appended subtitle in the first publication of the tale, 'A Fable': 'A feigned story or tale, intended to instruct or amuse; a fictitious narration intended to enforce some useful truth or precept' (Webster). Tellingly, it can be seen here that Poe explicitly states his intention to compose a piece of double meaning, one more superficial and literal and the other more figurative and implicit. This plurivalent nature of the tale, along with Poe's crafty lexical choice and characterisation, eventually determines the supernaturally ambiguous outcome of the work.

Following this is an epigraph, 'Yea! though I walk through the valley of the *Shadow: –Psalm of David*' (188), a reference to Psalm 23:4 in the Bible. The original line in King James Version of Bible is 'Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death' (Bible Study Tool). Poe omitted the well-known biblical word 'death' in his epigraph, a theme-related subject that is portrayed in the tale. According to *OED*, the biblical phrase 'shadow of death', used since the Old English period, is commonly 'to denote the gloom and horror of approaching dissolution'. The shadow, or the fear of death, is exactly the theme of this discussed work. The story begins with a first-person narration, involving the idea of shadow of death: 'Ye who read are still among the living; but I who write shall have long since gone my way into the region of shadows' (188). The 'I' is distinguished from 'the living' and has entered 'the region of shadows'. The narrator thus is construed to be dead already. The destination for the postmortem narrator is 'the region of shadows'. The countable, plural form 'shadows' in 'the region of shadows' signifies '[a] spectral form, phantom', an alternative meaning of 'shadow' that has been developed as early as around 1464, long before Poe's time (*OED*). Poe would know this usage and applied to it here. It is also worth noticing here that the more abstract sense of 'valley of the shadow (of death)' has been turned into the more concrete sense, phantoms. This shift of signification will reappear in the subsequent parts of the tale. The more abstract sense

corresponds to the target concept, ‘emotion’ while the physical sense, phantom, is relevant to the source concept of the conceptual metaphor, ‘an opponent’.

The narrator, known as a Greek named Oinos, then seems to direct his narration towards a supernatural reading. He speculates that many ‘strange’ and ‘secret’ things will have occurred when his posthumous words finally reach people (189). However, despite a long passage of time, some will still ‘disbelieve’ or even ‘doubt’ the genuineness of his experience (189). Yet there also will be some who will meditate on those extraordinary events chronicled by himself here (189). He narrates that those things take place ‘in a year of terror’, when ‘prodigies and signs’ have shown, and the sky bears ‘an aspect of ill’ (189). It is the inauspicious time when the planets Jupiter and Saturn meet, and ‘the black wings of the Pestilence [are] spread abroad’ (189). The narrator feels that this planetary movement has aroused human beings’ imagination (189). He himself is certainly one of them, given his near-superstitious angle of perceiving things around him, and associating celestial wonders with the pestilence by fancying, metaphorically, the pestilence to be a sky creature.

The thematic ‘shadow’, the fear of death caused by the pestilence, is then suggested by the narrator. Oinos and his six companions seclude themselves in order to evade the sweeping pestilence. Nonetheless, anxiety over death still follows them into their shelter. It cannot be shut outside the walls:

> There were things around us and about of which I can render no distinct account – things material and spiritual – heaviness in the atmosphere – a sense of suffocation – anxiety – and, above all, that terrible state of existence which the nervous experience when the senses are keenly living and awake, and meanwhile the powers of thought lie dormant. A dead weight hung upon us. It hung upon our limbs – upon the household furniture – upon the goblets from which we drank; and all things were depressed, and borne down thereby – all things save only the flames of the seven iron lamps which illumined our revel (189-90).

A certain heaviness, suffocation, anxiety, and 'dead weight', is sensed by this group of pestilence survivors. That heavy fear of death is felt almost everywhere in the building. The only exception is the light of the seven lamps on the living seven persons; the number of the lamps corresponds to the number of the living. Death's weight and anxiety stand in contrast to the lamplight and seemingly light-hearted revelry of the living persons. They are redolent of the biblical epigraph's 'the valley of the *Shadow*', i.e. the shadow of death. It is also worth noting that a double design for this tale seems to be implied here by Poe, when 'things material and spiritual' are used to depict this suffocating shadow of death. The shadow will not simply be psychological, but will also be materialised. The meaningful depiction of those seven traumatised characters, that their 'senses are keenly living and awake, and meanwhile the powers of thought lie dormant', also provides the imaginative condition for the substantialisation of the shadow.

In the midst of their frenzied revelry and drinking, it is revealed that there is an eighth person here in the sanctuary, although dead, not alive like them. Their deceased companion, Zoilus, has the eyes 'in which Death [has] but half extinguished the fire of the pestilence' (190). The narrator, Oinos, feels that Zoilus's 'unquiet' eyes are looking at them (190). Afraid of seeing directly the latter's eyes, Oinos turns to look at an ebony mirror, an object that reflects the dead man's image (190). Soon, a supernatural shadow shows up. This spectral shadow may be a product of the ebony mirror. In Poe's essay the 'Philosophy of Furniture' (1840), he comments negatively on the nature of mirrors, noting, 'Considered as a reflector, it is potent in producing a monstrous and odious uniformity: and the evil is here aggravated, not in merely direct proportion with the augmentation of its sources, but in a ratio constantly increasing' (500). The monstrosity and evil, in Poe's opinion, of a mirror's reflection is represented here in the sudden and immediate emergence of a shadow, after Oinos looks at dead Zoilus's reflection in the ebony mirror. The same monstrosity is also represented in other supernatural effects in 'The Masque of the Red Death', 'The Fall of the House of Usher', 'William Wilson', and 'The Island of the Fay', Gothic tales that

will be analysed later in this thesis. Soon after Oinos gazes at the mirror, the songs that he sings drift and disappear in black draperies, from which then comes up a shadow-phantom:

> And lo! from among those sable draperies where the sounds of the song departed, there came forth a dark and undefined **shadow** – a **shadow** such as the moon, when low in heaven, might fashion from the figure of a man: but it was the **shadow** neither of man, nor of God, nor of any familiar thing. And, quivering awhile among the draperies of the room, it at length rested in full view upon the surface of the door of brass. But the **shadow** was vague, and formless, and indefinite, and was the **shadow** neither of man nor God – neither God of Greece, nor God of Chaldæa, nor any Egyptian God. And the **shadow** rested upon the brazen doorway, and under the arch of the entablature of the door, and moved not, nor spoke any word, but there became stationary and remained. And the door whereupon the **shadow** rested was, if I remember aright, over against the feet of the young Zoilus enshrouded. [emphasis added] (190-91)

This supernatural entity is intimately connected with death, inasmuch as it only shows up after Oinos looks at dead Zoilus's reflection in the mirror, and is now in close proximity to Zoilus's corpse. It echoes with the epigraph's shadow of death, and the earlier dead weight and anxiety over death; nevertheless, it is not an intangible mental state anymore. Rather, the shadow is a physical, animate spectre, as that in the 'region of shadows', the then ghostly Oinos after his death. It is a personified shadow of fear of death. From a cognitive linguistic perspective, viewing metaphorical language as a result of conceptualisation, this use of personification is facilitated by a conceptual metaphor: fear is an opponent, which is derived from the more general conceptual metaphor, emotion (of which fear is a subset) is an opponent (Kövecses 108). The metaphorical expression of this concept is that the 'shadow' of fear of death is a ghostly 'shadow'. It can be observed here that Poe adopts a single word 'shadow' for different uses; the former is an abstract idea, and the latter an existence of a supernatural entity.

Though the spectral shadow is a fearful independent existence, it nevertheless personifies the intangible fear of death. Due to the word's plurivalent signification, and the complex metaphorical relationship of the ghost-shadow embodying the shadow of fear of dissolution, as well as the narrator's imaginative disposition, it becomes ambiguous here whether the spectral shadow is a supernatural existence or simply an imaginary creature in the narrator's mind.

A sense of supernatural ambiguity continues, when the spectre reacts with Oinos and his companions. The shadow articulates: '"I am SHADOW, and my dwelling is near to the Catacombs of Ptolemais, and hard by those dim plains of Helusion which border upon the foul Charonian canal"' (191). The shadow's appellation and its specific and Egyptian mythology-evoked abode[6] makes it appear to be an actual existent entity, as the narrator has described. Nevertheless, after the shadow speaks, its special voice and the pestilence survivors' reaction suggest the possibility of a contrary reading of the tale. The narrator says,

> And then did we, the seven, start from our seats in horror, and stand trembling, and shuddering, and aghast, for the tones in the voice of the shadow were not the tones of any one being, but of a multitude of beings, and, varying in their cadences from syllable to syllable, fell duskly upon our ears in the well-remembered and familiar accents of many thousand departed friends. (191)

It seems that Oinos and his other six companions are more horrified by the spectre's use of their dead friends' voices than by the shadow's otherworldliness. This is especially highlighted by the word by word, very detailed and gradual revelation in the closing lines of the tale, that those varied tones in the shadow's polyphonic voice are none other than those of their numerous dead friends who, considering the work's context, died of the plague. The spectral shadow's multivocal voice may betoken its supernatural nature, yet the sources of its haunting voice recall what Oinos and his companions really fear of and have

[6] Mabbott notes the potential source of Poe's description here in Jacob Bryant's *New System…of Antient Mythology* (1807) (192).

attempted to escape from – dying of the pestilence. The concrete shadow's reference to the abstract shadow of fear of death obscures the distinction between the two. In particular, the double sense of 'shadow' for the personification and the personified contributes much to the ultimate ambiguity about supernaturalism in this work.

The characterisation also makes possible a naturalistic reading of the tale. As mentioned earlier, the narrator appears to have a tendency to imagine things, especially in a superstitious manner. His traumatic experience of the pestilence and deaths can be food for his fantasies. Fisher has already proposed that almost every one of Poe's protagonist-narrators is a paranoiac. This is applicable to this tale's narrator, who, owing to being traumatised by the pestilence, grows obsessed with the disease and death. Zoilus's dead body in their sanctuary is another unreasonable part that invites queries about the narrator's reliability. Oinos and his friends retreat to a hall to evade the epidemic. Why would they, a group of pestilence survivors, who have secluded themselves in a closed space, put a dead body of someone who died of that pestilence in their retreat? Not only is it contradictory, medically, to their seclusion in practice, but it is also psychologically detrimental to them, who have suffered a lot in the fatal pestilence. This illogical act speaks that either the narrator fantasies the whole story about a supernatural shadow, whose voice is of a legion of departed friends, or he is mentally unsound, making unwise decisions and/or having hallucinations. In addition to this, it is also likely that the spectral shadow is a delusion created by intoxication. In their revelry, prior to encountering the shadow, Oinos and his companions are described as follows: 'we laughed and were merry in our proper way – which was hysterical; and sang the songs of Anacreon – which are madness; and drank deeply' (190). Even the narrator's name, Oinos, 'οἶνος' in Greek, denotes 'wine' or 'one' in English.[7] The narrator's association with wine, and the fact that he and his companions become inebriated, as Thompson has observed, considerably weaken the truthfulness of his narration.

[7] Thompson (*Selected Writings* 134) and Fisher (*Cambridge Introduction* 64) point out the English translation of this word.

This kind of arrangement of unreliable narration is not coincidental in this work; nor is it so in several of Poe's other Gothic tales. Oinos is intoxicated, fanciful, paranoid, or mentally impaired, which creates an opportunity for the text to be read as a naturalistic story. At the same time, the identification of the tale as a parable, as the title indicates, also structures characters and supernatural events to be read figuratively and allegorically, different from what they appear to be on the surface. The same is in Poe's adoption of personification and words of double meaning to evoke a sense of supernatural ambiguity in which the distinction between the supernatural and natural is not clear anymore.

Poe's later work, 'The Masque of the Red Death' (1842), bears several resemblances to 'Shadow'. It includes the elements of a ravaging pestilence, fear of death, seclusion, escapist merriment, materialisation of a deadly supernatural entity, and annihilation of all the revellers. Like 'Shadow', it is also a supernaturally ambiguous piece. 'The Masque of the Red Death' is set in an unspecified time, when a plague called the Red Death is ravaging a country. To evade the fatal disease, Prince Prospero takes a thousand of his courtiers to a castellated abbey, and they seal all the entrances to the building. One day, on an occasion of a masquerade in the abbey, someone is dressed like the Red Death, with a blood-tinted costume and a mask, smudged with scarlet, which is strikingly redolent of the plague. The offended and enraged prince then chases the mysterious masquerader through seven different chambers, intending to take his/her life. Conversely, the prince is finally the one killed by the masquerader – who is found to be a void. No one is in the costume. It is the plague, the Red Death, which, magically, sneaks in the abbey, and slays Prince Prospero and all his followers.

Historically, very few nineteenth-century critics discussed 'Masque'. Some sources, however, compared this piece to other writings. For instance, Augusta Jane Evans's[8] *Beulah: A Novel* (1859) has a scene that brings 'Masque' to the fore:

[8] Later known as Augusta Jane Wilson, after her marriage.

> There was no tread on the pavement, all was solemn as Death, who held such mad revel in the crowded graveyards. Through the shroud of smoke she could see the rippling waters of the bay, as the faint southern breeze swept its surface. It was a desolation realising all the horrors of the 'Masque of the Red Death'…(204)

Here, Evans compares the bleak scenery to the fatalities caused by Poe's Red Death, the personified epidemic in the masquerade. Given the context of visualising her desolate scenery and her usage of the phrase 'the horrors' to allude to Poe's work, as well as her earlier relevant simile, 'all was solemn as Death, who held such mad revel in the crowded graveyards', she clearly adopts Poe's personification of the Red Death, reading it as a supernatural figure rather than a mere plague. In another contemporary source, Poe's 'Masque' is read relatively more ambiguously. A notice on Hiram Ladd Spencer's newly published *Poems* in *The Rutland Herald* on 9 May,1850, also recalls 'Masque': Spencer's 'A Ballad', a piece regarding Lord Ronald's boast and blasphemy to Death and his abrupt demise with all his revellers in his castle, is considered to be inspired by Poe's tale. The anonymous reviewer comments, '[A]ll who have read the tale of the "Mask of the red Death"—(and who has not?) will readily see that the one was suggestive of the other' and '[W]e believe that (living) the lamented Poe would rejoice in the thought that he had stirred the heart even of as humble a follower as the author…'. The setting and characterisation of Spencer's ballad, as the reviewer observes, is apparently reminiscent of that of Poe's 'Masque'. The ballad's closing lines, 'And when the beams of morning thro / Lord Ronald's hall were ahed, / All, all was silent there, for aye, / The revellers were dead' (lines 33-36), in which Death's punishment is hinted but not clarified, also reminds one of the uninhabited costume of the masquerader and the possibility of reading the events of 'Masque' as the delusions of a madman.

Modern scholars, such as Thompson, Sova, and Fisher suggest that the unnamed and unknown 'I' narrator in 'Masque' is none other than Prince Prospero, a mad, unreliable narrator. Thompson deems Poe as a 'master of the

interior monologue of a profoundly disturbed mind', whose short stories, including 'Ligeia', 'Usher', 'William Wilson', 'Eleonora' 'The Oval Portrait', and 'The Tell-Tale Heart', are all narrated by first-person psychologically questionable narrators ('Edgar Allan Poe'). On 'Masque', Thompson notes that in addition to being read as 'a tale of the supernatural visitation of Death himself', it can also be understood as one 'about hysteria engendered by mood and setting' ('Edgar Allan Poe'). Sova adopts Thompson's view, claiming, 'The story may well be the reflection of the prince's imaginative madness…' (111). Fisher proposes that Prospero's abbey is similar to 'the interior of a human head', while his courtiers are inventions of his 'dream world – delusive though that world is' ('Poe and the Gothic' 88).

In its initial publication, Poe's 'The Masque of the Red Death' was originally titled, 'The Mask of the Red Death. A Fantasy'. The countable noun 'fantasy', in Poe's time, denotes '[a] product of imagination, fiction, figment' (*OED*). This suggests that at the beginning, as Sova has pointed out, Poe 'place[d] focus on the mysterious figure who appears at the end of the story', i.e. Red Death, the masquerader (110). He probably defined this work as a supernatural story. His later omission of 'A Fantasy' for its title, therefore, appears to be a gesture of obscuring the borderline between the fantastic and real. This corresponds to Fisher's observation that Poe's revisions to his works are often for heightening their 'psychological plausibility' (*Cambridge Introduction* 31).

Structurally, 'The Masque of the Red Death' can be divided into two sections: the beginning, which introduces the plague of the Red Death, to the point before the Red Death shows up in the masquerade; and the presence of the spectral Red Death towards the conclusion, where the Red Death dominates and kills all. From the outset, the Red Death, a coined phrase alluding to the 'red plague' in William Shakespeare's *The Tempest* (1623), signifies a pestilence in the narrative. It begins with the opening: 'The "Red Death" had long devastated the country', followed by 'No pestilence had ever been so fatal, or so hideous' (670). Apparently, herein the Red Death, as the narrator puts it, denotes a fatal

scarlet plague. The symptoms and consequence of this pestilence are described in detail:

> Blood was its Avatar and its seal – the redness and the horror of blood. There were sharp pains, and sudden dizziness, and then profuse bleeding at the pores, with dissolution. The scarlet stains upon the body and especially upon the face of the victim, were the pest ban which shut him out from the aid and from the sympathy of his fellow-men. And the whole seizure, progress and termination of the disease, were the incidents of half an hour. (670)

It is known here, therefore, that the 'Red' in the 'Red Death' refers to the blood flowing all over the body, one of the major symptoms of the disease, while 'Death', as the name suggests, signals the lethal consequence of contracting the pestilence, namely death. The process from this pestilence's attacks to the death of its victims is very rapid. Here, it is apparent that the Red Death is, in Poe's creation, a natural pestilence. No supernaturalism is involved in the use of the phrase, the 'Red Death'.

In the locale of Prince Prospero's abbey, a masquerade takes place in seven different chambers. Each chamber and its windows are of one distinctive colour. The only exception is the seventh chamber: it is a black chamber and its windows are 'scarlet – a deep blood color' (672), the colour that characterises the disease of the Red Death. More specially, a tripod of fire stands by each scarlet window of this very chamber, which 'project[s] its rays through the tinted glass and so glaringly illumine[s] the room' and 'produce[s] a multitude of gaudy and fantastic appearances' (672). The association of the colour of the Red Death with phantasmagorical images produced by fires and glass windows – fantastic yet not real – seems to echo critics' reading of the later supernatural appearance of the Red Death as a product of mad imagination. In particular, such a kaleidoscopic spectacle of blood colour, reflective glass, and lights is created by Prince Prospero himself, based on his 'love of the *bizarre*' (671). Meanwhile, however, the ghastly

and gruesome effects in this unusual black-scarlet chamber can also be interpreted as a preparation for the subsequent preternatural events in the narrative. The reflection of lights by glass windows, similar to the reflection by mirrors – the medium capable of producing monstrosity and evil mentioned in Poe's 'Philosophy of Furniture' and practised in his 'Shadow' – may be intended to substantialise the ghostly Red Death in the tale.

The signification of 'plague' of the Red Death is maintained until the masked Red Death appears supernaturally in Prospero's sealed abbey. Akin to the phantom-shadow in 'Shadow', Poe again uses the device of personification to facilitate this extraordinary scene. It first says that 'a masked figure' in the masquerade suddenly becomes noticeable to other masqueraders (674), and then the form of the animate Red Death is described in more detail:

> The figure was tall and gaunt, and shrouded from head to foot in the habiliments of the grave. The mask which concealed the visage was made so nearly to resemble the countenance of a stiffened corpse that the closest scrutiny must have had difficulty in detecting the cheat. And yet all this might have been endured, if not approved, by the mad revellers around. But the mummer had gone so far as to assume the type of the **Red Death**. His vesture was dabbled in *blood* – and his broad brow, with all the features of the face, was besprinkled with the scarlet horror. [emphasis added] (675)

In general, this Red Death masker looks like the personified plague of the Red Death. His burial garment and his corpse-like mask recall death; the bloodstains on his clothing and mask are reminiscent of the very symptoms and suffering of the Red Death. The Red Death masker brings up memories of the plague that the prince and his courtiers fear most and have tried hard to eschew in seclusion. The shocking and obnoxious presence of the masker is therefore comprehended as an opponent. It demonstrates the use of conceptual metaphor: disease is an opponent, derived from Kövecses's formulaic structure of ontological metaphor of 'NON PHYSICAL OR ABSTRACT ENTITIES' (target domain) and 'PHYSICAL

OBJECT' (source domain) (39), and from the earlier standardised metaphor 'emotion is an opponent' as seen in 'Shadow'. Meanwhile, this conceptual metaphor's linguistic expression displays again Poe's style of utilising words of double meaning, that is, the plague of Red Death is an apparitional Red Death masker.

As the narrative goes on, the metaphorical sense of the Red Death as a supernatural antagonist is further highlighted in the confrontation between Prince Prospero and the Red Death masker. Astonished and enraged by the latter's 'spectral image' that features the Red Death plague in the masquerade, Prospero howls: '"[W]ho dares insult us with this blasphemous mockery? Seize him and unmask him – that we may know whom we have to hang at sunrise, from the battlements"' (675). Apparently, Prospero does not regard the Red Death masker as one in his revelry camp but a transgressor, or even a threat, that reminds them terribly of the pestilence and their mortality. The 'Red Death' masker serves as an opponent – like its namesake plague – antagonistic to Prince 'Prospero': death always terminates prosperity in any form. Thus, feeling threatened, Prospero gives order to capture and hang the insulting masker. This 'intruder', however, has 'a deadly terror' around itself, so that none dares to arrest it (676). Prospero himself takes action to seize the Red Death masquerader through all the seven chambers. The latter finally halts in the seventh black-scarlet chamber, and faces Prospero, which, somehow, kills Prospero. The metaphorical conceptualisation of the Red Death as an opponent is as clear as it shows here.

Since a plague is never an invisible enemy to one single person, but a large population, the Red Death masker exterminates all the living in the abbey. The courtiers, after Prospero's death, eventually have courage to punish this culprit; it is found that 'the grave cerements and corpse-like mask which they handled with so violent rudeness, untenanted by any tangible form' (676). The supernatural entity of the Red Death 'had come like a thief in the night' (676). All the courtiers die in blood, the signature of the plague. In the end, 'Darkness and Decay and the Red Death held illimitable dominion over all' (677). The hollowness of the Red

Death masquerader's costume and mask may evince its magical power and supernaturalism, yet it also accentuates the Red Death's invisibility and pervasiveness as a **plague.** Prince Prospero and his courtiers confine themselves in a shut abbey to avoid catching the pestilence of the Red Death. Still, the personified Red Death intrudes into the thoroughly-locked construction. The fact that it is not invited to but simply surreptitiously joins the masquerade, as well as its muteness and masked identity, can be matched to a disease's silent, unknown, and unseeable quality that avails itself to spread among human beings. This offers another explanation for the 'untenanted' costume and mask of the Red Death masquerader – a plague is never visible but it is invincible. It 'come[s] like a thief' that steals precious things (in this case, human lives) away from others. The consequence is a massive scale of deaths.

After giving his order but finding that no one dares to arrest the mysterious masquerader, Prospero comes out himself and starts to chase the villain through the seven chambers. Near the seventh black room Prospero, is somehow defeated by the Red Death and falls dead. Other masqueraders then go into action, joining to capture the culprit, but only are, themselves, 'in unutterable horror at finding the grave cerements and corpse-like mask which they handled with so violent rudeness, untenanted by any tangible form' (676). This underscores the metaphorical existence and marvel of the Red Death as a superpowered entity, elusive and able to appear and disappear at will.

Poe's metaphor of the Red Death continues to the ending paragraph of the tale, 'And now was acknowledged the presence of the **Red Death**. He had come like a thief in the night' [emphasis added] (676). The 'presence' and the personal pronoun used here, 'He', verifies the existence of the Red Death as a real supernatural figure in the masquerade, rather than a pestilence in its plain signification at the opening of the tale. His cunning and elusiveness, 'like a thief in the night', portrays exactly the invisibility or unknowability of an actual plague. The tale concludes with the Red Death killing all the masqueraders, '[a]nd Darkness and Decay and the **Red Death** held illimitable dominion over all'

[emphasis added] (677). Replacing, or in a sense, overthrowing the lordship of Prince Prospero, the Red Death becomes the new monarch of the land, plunging it in an age of decay and darkness.

As a writer in the early and mid-nineteenth century, Poe was aware of the conflict between supernaturalism and reason in writing. Therefore, although carrying the metaphor and supernaturalism to the end of his tale, Poe leaves messages in his work, suggesting an alternative, naturalistic reading of it. One possible realistic understanding of the tale is the idea that Prince Prospero and his courtiers, those masqueraders who witness the supernatural Red Death, are simply deranged. Firstly, Prospero's sanity is questioned in the description: 'There are some who would have thought him mad. His followers felt that he was not. It was necessary to hear and see and touch him to be *sure* that he was not' (673). His designs and the decorations of his palace are 'delirious fancies such as the madman fashions' (673). Not only he but also his followers are not sound in mind. As cited earlier in the passage regarding the entrance of the Red Death, his presence is caught 'by the mad revellers around' during the masquerade (675). When Prospero orders his courtiers to arrest the Red Death, Poe says, 'But from a certain nameless awe with which the mad assumptions of the mummer had inspired the whole party, there were found none who put forth hand to seize him' (676). The assumption that the masked figure is the Red Death, and the witnessing of the supernatural figure of the Red Death, therefore, may not be reliable. Also, those masqueraders, Prospero's courtiers, are closely associated with dreams, so their observation of the masked Red Death may be their illusory dreams. After they dress themselves for a masquerade, following Prospero's guidance, dreams, which are expressed in a metaphorical way, are described floating through the seven chambers of Prospero's abbey. Poe notes,

> To and fro in the seven chambers there stalked, in fact, a multitude of dreams. And these – the dreams – writhed in and about, taking hue from the rooms, and causing the wild music of the orchestra to seem as the echo of their steps. And, anon, there strikes the ebony clock which stands in the

> hall of the velvet. And then, for a moment, all is still, and all is silent save the voice of the clock. The dreams are stiff-frozen as they stand. But the echoes of the chime die away – they have endured but an instant – and a light, half-subdued laughter floats after them as they depart. And now again the music swells, and the dreams live, and writhe to and fro more merrily than ever, taking hue from the many tinted windows through which stream the rays from the tripods. But to the chamber which lies most westwardly of the seven, there are now none of the maskers who venture… (673-74)

The movement of this 'multitude of' dreams, which 'writhed in and about, taking hue from the rooms, and causing the wild music of the orchestra to seem as the echo of their steps', is like the one thousand courtiers and masqueraders moving and dancing with the orchestral music. When the ominous ebony clock strikes, those dreams are frozen and immobile, exactly as Prospero's followers react when they hear the chimes of the clock. The musicians 'were constrained to pause' (672), the dancing folks 'ceased their evolutions' (672), the dizziest 'grew pale' (672), and the older and calm 'passed their hands over their brows as if in confused revery or meditation' (672-73). As the chimes of the clock end, laughter and smile return to these merry people in revelry (673), like the dreams, here, having laughter again, and resuming their movement and cheerfulness. It is also noticeable here that those dreams are enkindled by the light from the tripod that 'produced a multitude of gaudy and fantastic [but not real] appearances' in the black chamber with scarlet windows. The connection between dreams, illusory light effects, and the masqueraders suggests that the existence of the Red Death as an actual entity may be a figure in the collective or projected dreams of those escapist people, who have already been driven insane by the threat of the plague of the Red Death and their fear of death – reminiscent of 'Shadow – A Parable'. The final discovery of the masked Red Death with no intangible form at the end of the masquerade also implies the possible reading of supernaturalism as an illusion in the tale. It can also be interpreted in another way: as Poe attempts to

render the narrative ambiguous, those illusions, masqueraders, and the supernatural being of the Red Death may be a fantasised dream from mad Prince Prospero.

Metaphor in 'The Fall of the House of Usher' and 'The Tell-Tale Heart'

Poe's 'The Fall of the House of Usher' (1839) is another Gothic story that makes use of metaphor to bring about a sense of supernatural ambiguity. This work has an intimate connection with his earlier poem 'The Haunted Palace',[9] which was published five months before 'The Fall of the House of Usher'[10] and was then inserted into the tale as a part of the work. According to Poe himself, in an 1841 May 29 letter to Rufus W. Griswold, the 'allegorical conduct' of this poem is to 'imply a mind haunted by phantoms – a disordered brain' ('Letter 112' 272). The allegorical implication of a disordered mind and the metaphorical manifestation of a haunted palace in this poem then triggered the composition of 'The Fall of the House of Usher': a tale about the dysfunctional mind of Roderick Usher and the Usher house affected by supernatural powers, followed by the demise of the line of Usher and the collapse of the Usher house. Besides the fact that the poem's publication history is linked to the tale, it is also worth noting that this tale was published only one month after 'The Man That Was Used Up' (1839),[11] a Gothic burlesque and satire wherein the protagonist Brevet Brigadier General John A. B. C. Smith is 'used up', metaphorically and supernaturally, crumbling into pieces. Poe may, therefore, have extended his use of metaphor in the former story to the following piece, 'The Fall of the House of Usher', in order to enable the architecture of Usher house to 'fall' in an equally supernatural yet equivocal manner.

[9] Mabbott expresses a similar opinion about this: 'The poem had something to do with the genesis of the story; the converse is impossible' (313).
[10] The poem was published in *American Museum of Science, Literature and the Arts* in April 1839 (Mabbott 315), and the tale in *Burton's Gentleman's Magazine* in September 1839 (Mabbott 396).
[11] This piece appeared in *Burton's Gentleman's Magazine* in August 1839 (Mabbott 377).

Poe's contemporary, Martin Farquhar Tupper, reviewed 'The Fall of the House of Usher' in the *Literary Gazette* in 1846. He reads the poem 'The Haunted Palace' interpolated in the tale, as 'a madman's rhapsody on his own mind' (205). That madman refers to the protagonist, Roderick Usher. Given that he is considered insane, his strange experiences and supernatural accounts of phenomena and events in the story would all be explained away, and therefore, supernaturalism could be said to not exist at all. Correspondingly, Griswold in 'Memoir of the Author' (1850), a piece published after Poe's death, also interprets the story as a text concerning 'the growth of madness in one' (119), apparently seeing Roderick as a delusional character and finding his account not true to reality. In contrast, an 1859 article published in *Wheeling Daily Intelligencer*, titled 'Edgar A. Poe's Influence', marks 'the sluggish, lurid tarn of Usher', which seems to give credit to the tarn's power over the Usher house. Similarly, in *Cedar Falls Gazette*, dated April 27, 1860, a critic reads fear and horror in this tale. S/He attributes the fall of Usher's abode to the pernicious tarn, recalling the tale's closure as literally as that 'the house is suddenly swallowed up [by the tarn]'. In the 1854 literary notice in *Sheffield Independent*, where Poe's 'The Raven' and 'Ulalume' are noted in the discussion of dreamlike effects in writing, 'Usher' is considered to be, like the above poems, an exemplar of dream writing, namely mystic, indistinct, and replete with uncertainty.

Another nineteenth-century critic, George Gilfillan (pseudonym Apollodorus), in 'Authors and Books. Edgar Poe' (1854), contributed a lengthier comment regarding the work and Poe's style of writing supernaturalism ambiguously in his creations:

> Once only does Poe approach the brink of the purely preternatural—it is in that dreary tale, the "Fall of the House of Usher;" and yet nothing so discovers the mastery of the writer as the manner in which he avoids, while nearing the gulf. There is really nothing after all in the strange incidents of that story, but what natural principles can explain. But Poe so arranges and adjusts the singular circumstances to each other, and weaves

> around them such an artful mist, that they produce a most unearthly effect. He separates the feeling of supernatural fear from the consciousness of supernatural agency, and gives you it entire, "lifting the skin from the scalp to the ancles". (183)

Gilfillan considers 'The Fall of the House of Usher', the only time Poe approaches supernaturalism closely. Despite this, Poe still does not really write a veritable supernatural story in 'Usher'. He is merely on 'the brink of the purely preternatural', 'nearing the gulf', but not stepping into the realm of the supernatural. Poe 'avoids' true supernaturalism in this story, as well as his other works. In 'Usher', all unusual and seemingly-marvellous occurrences can be explained naturally. Poe divides 'the feeling of supernatural fear' from 'the consciousness of supernatural agency', so even though there are no real supernatural creatures or happenings in his stories, supernaturalism is still sensed, and often, through the writer's skillful arrangement of preternatural events, 'an artful mist', a sense of ambiguity, is created. Gilfillan's view elucidates Poe's generation of supernatural effects, and shows how in the process of avoiding truly creating supernaturalism and providing potential rational explanations, Poe produces supernaturally ambiguous works.

Before the tale begins, there is an epigraph: 'Son coeur est un luth suspendu; / Sitôt qu'on le touche il résonne' (397). In English, it means, 'His heart is a hanging lute; as soon as it is touched, it responds' (Mabbott 417). Though those French lines are borrowed from Pierre-Jean de Béranger, Poe's earlier poem 'Israfel' (1831) bears a similar yet clearer idea in its opening lines: 'In Heaven a spirit doth dwell / Whose heart-strings are a lute –' (lines 1-2). In the tale, the one associated with the lute is Roderick, whose 'The Haunted Palace', sung by himself, has the lines, 'Spirits moving musically / To a lute's well-tunéd law / Round about a throne, where sitting / Porphyrogene!' (lines 19-22). The responsive lute or heart in the epigraph not only implies Roderick's hypersensitive neurosis, but also suggests that his mind, as the lute's cacophonous music in the ending stanza of the poem, is deranged. Therefore, his account of the incredible

link between the family house and his family – key to the conceptual metaphor in this tale that will be discussed later in my analysis – and the destructive tarn that eventually devours the Usher abode is put in question. So is his childhood pal, the narrator's, account of the tragedy of the Usher house, since his mental state has been deeply affected by the former.

The tale of 'Usher' is narrated by an unspecified first-person narrator, a childhood friend of Roderick Usher's, the current master of the house of Usher. His narration begins with the gloomy and desolate scenery of the Usher house, especially 'the bleak walls', 'the vacant eye-like windows', vegetation nearby (397), and 'a black and lurid tarn that lay in unruffled lustre by the dwelling', whose doubling but inverted reflection of the dismal house and the landscape gives him a chilling shudder (398). He then describes that he is invited to visit the house for some days by Roderick, who has been suffering an 'acute bodily illness – of a mental disorder' (398), and this disease seems to be able to be traced to his ancestors with 'a peculiar sensibility of temperament' (398). Following this, the narrator introduces the peculiar history of the Usher family:

> I had learned, too, the very remarkable fact, that the stem of the Usher race, all time-honored as it was, had put forth, at no period, any enduring branch; in other words, that the entire family lay in the direct line of descent, and had always, with very trifling and very temporary variation, so lain. It was this deficiency, I considered, while running over in thought the perfect keeping of the character of the premises with the accredited character of the people, and while speculating upon the possible influence which the one, in the long lapse of centuries, might have exercised upon the other – it was this deficiency, perhaps, of collateral issue, and the consequent undeviating transmission, from sire to son, of the patrimony with the name, which had, at length, so identified the two as to merge the original title of the estate in the quaint and equivocal appellation of the "House of Usher" – an appellation which seemed to include, in the minds of the peasantry who used it, both the family and the family mansion. (399)

The rarely varied bloodline of the long-lasting Usher family, a ‘deficiency’ in the narrator’s opinion, is later confirmed by Roderick to be ‘a constitutional and a family evil’ (402), and the natural cause of his disease. Likewise, his twin sister and the last living relative in the world, Madeline Usher, has a ‘severe and long-continued illness’, which later develops into a fatal malady (403). The ‘fall’ of the house of usher, as the tale is entitled, appears to refer to the decline and downfall of the line of Usher. Yet, the double sense of ‘fall’ and ‘house’ is suggested by Poe in this passage as well. The appellation in the direct passing of family bloodline and property of Usher, ‘the two’ referents, are linked to each other insofar as the ‘House of Usher’ eventually means ‘both the family and the family mansion’. The double signification of ‘house’ here, at the outset of the tale, generates two distinct meanings of Usher family and Usher abode; it also, at the same time, doubles the sense of the fall of the House of Usher and the reading of the tale: is it the fall of the family, and therefore, a more abstract understanding of the text, or it is a metaphorical expression of the fall of the building of Usher? The two strands of the development of the tale — the decline of a family and the destruction of a building — as well as the ambiguity of meanings, are suggested here, and will be reinforced as the narrative moves on.

After hinting at the decline of the Usher family, the abstract and intangible ‘fall’ of the house, the narrator returns to describing the tarn in front of the edifice of Usher, and highlights its influence on the house and the Ushers, which will subsequently lead to the doomful ending of the metaphorical and supernatural fall of the mansion. The narrator, while still on the horseback overlooking the Usher house, describes again the tarn, and says that by looking at the latter and its reflection of the building, there is a ‘rapid increase of my superstition’ (399). The reflective function of the tarn recalls the essay in which Poe expresses his antipathy to the monstrous replicating effect of mirrors and, in ‘Masque’ and ‘Shadow’, the ghostly Red Death and shadow that show up soon after the description of a mirror-like or a mirror’s reflection. The supernatural effect of the

pernicious tarn, and its impact on the tenant of the house, are underscored in Roderick's account, which is reported by the narrator:

> He was enchained by certain superstitious impressions in regard to the dwelling which he tenanted, and whence, for many years, he had never ventured forth – in regard to an influence…an influence which some peculiarities in the mere form and substance of his family mansion, had, by dint of long sufferance, he said, obtained over his spirit – an effect which the *physique* of the gray walls and turrets, and of the dim tarn into which they all looked down, had, at length, brought about upon the *morale* of his existence. (403)

> The belief, however, was connected (as I have previously hinted) with the gray stones of the home of his forefathers. The conditions of the sentience had been here, he imagined, fulfilled in the method of collocation of these stones – in the order of their arrangement, as well as in that of the many *fungi* which overspread them, and of the decayed trees which stood around – above all, in the long undisturbed endurance of this arrangement, and in its reduplication in the still waters of the tarn. Its evidence – the evidence of the sentience – was to be seen, he said, (and I here started as he spoke,) in the gradual yet certain condensation of an atmosphere of their own about the waters and the walls. The result was discoverable, he added, in that silent, yet importunate and terrible influence which for centuries had moulded the destinies of his family, and which made *him* what I now saw him – what he was. (408)

According to Roderick, the dark tarn that reflects the façade of the house of Usher shapes him into the person he now looks like. His words about the influence of 'the *physique* of the gray walls and turrets, and of the dim tarn into which they all looked down' as well as the 'reduplication [of the image of the house] in the still waters of the tarn', supports the narrator's superstition about the tarn. The tarn's

monstrous reproduction of the Usher mansion, as Roderick himself says here, is indeed mirrored in the physical appearance of Roderick. The Usher house's previously mentioned 'bleak walls' and 'the vacant eye-like windows', as well as the 'fungi overspread the whole exterior, hanging in a fine tangled web-work from the eaves' (400) find their replication in Roderick's 'cadaverousness of complexion', 'eye large, liquid, and luminous beyond comparison' (401), and 'hair of a more than web-like softness and tenuity' (402). This seems to correspond with the narrator and Roderick's superstitious feelings about the tarn; the tarn's detrimental and supernatural influence on Roderick's ill body and mind, through its reflection, is verified here as well. Later, similar matching of an edifice to a person's face feature is again seen in Roderick's impromptu verse piece, 'The Haunted Palace'. 'Radiant palace – reared its head' (line 4), 'Banners yellow, glorious, golden, / On its roof did float and flow' (lines 9-10), and 'two luminous windows' (line 18) is reminiscent of Roderick's floating hair and aqueous eye. Even the haunting spirits in the verse, 'Vast forms that move fantastically / To a discordant melody; / […] like a rapid ghastly river, / Through the pale door' (lines 43-46), recall the sinister tarn in the tale, which greatly impacts Roderick's physique and spirit.

In addition to the poem 'The Haunted Palace', Roderick's painting also suggests and foretells the ultimate destruction the tarn will bring to the house, in the metaphorical and supernatural reading of the tale. His painting shows a tunnel deep below ground: 'a flood of intense rays rolled throughout, and bathed the whole in a ghastly and inappropriate splendor' (406). The liquid light that bathes the space foreshadows the fate of the mansion of Usher – being terminated and immersed in the water of the tarn. After this, on that critical and last night of the house, the tarn's supernatural power over the house is described as follows: 'But the under surfaces of the huge masses of agitated vapor, as well as all terrestrial objects immediately around us, were glowing in the unnatural light of a faintly luminous and distinctly visible gaseous exhalation which hung about and enshrouded the mansion' (412) and 'it may be that they have their ghastly origin

in the rank miasma of the tarn' (413). The supernatural atmosphere engendered by the tarn is further intensified by the following peculiar events: the story *Mad Trist* read by the narrator while sounds occurring instantaneously in reality, heard by both the narrator and Roderick, mimic the acoustic effects written into the story; Madeline's reappearance from her premature burial; and the fall and deaths of the twin siblings that fulfil Roderick's earlier prophecy of his own destruction. All these strange and fantastic occurrences end with the dramatic fall of the Usher mansion: 'there was a long tumultuous shouting sound like the voice of a thousand waters – and the deep and dank tarn at my feet closed sullenly and silently over the fragments of the *"House of Usher"*' (417). The animated sentience of the tarn that actively 'closed' the architecture, enabling the latter to be rent into pieces and destroyed, is the culmination of the metaphorical and supernatural sense of its destructive force directed at the Usher edifice and its tenants. It is the animated tarn that, with its evil intent, long-term undermines and, ultimately, causes the fall of the Usher building. Here, the distinctive, physical, and immediate elements of horror are also embodied in this vivid description.

While alluding to the supernatural element of a malicious tarn to suggest a supernatural reading of the tale, Poe also employs the device of metaphor to enable his work to be read both supernaturally and naturalistically. The mapping between the Usher family and their house is facilitated by the conceptual metaphor 'family is a building', which is derived from the conceptually more generalised 'SOCIAL GROUPS ARE BUILDINGS' (Kövecses 137). In this way, the family's prosperity or decline is in proportion to the steadiness or collapse of the house building. Madeline and Roderick Usher, the last two Usher family's sickly descendants, as well as their final deaths demonstrate there is a connection between family and house, as do the earlier comparisons between Roderick's facial features and the house's façade. Of course, in Poe's linguistic expressions of this conceptual metaphor, he also uses words of double meaning, 'fall' and 'house', to refer to both the more abstract 'degeneration' and 'an important family' or the tangible sense of 'falling down' and 'a building'. The metaphorical

relationship and the same words with different significations create a complicated work that can be read ambiguously either as a supernaturally abrupt collapse of a house, or a naturalistic degradation of an old aristocratic family.

The characterisation also supports an ambiguous reading of the tale. The marvelous effect in 'Usher' can be taken alternatively as an imaginary product projected by Roderick and the narrator, who are immersed in the downfall – the abstract fall – of the Usher family. At the opening of the tale, the narrator, when describes the landscapes of the Usher abode and the tarn, he compares it to 'no earthly sensation more properly than to the after-dream of the reveler upon opium' (397), and at the same time wonders, 'What was it – I paused to think – what was it that so unnerved me in the contemplation of the House of Usher? It was a mystery all insoluble; nor could I grapple with the shadowy fancies that crowded upon me as I pondered' (397-98). Subsequent to his narration of the history of the Usher family and its decline, he again speaks about his fantasised, and probably not truthful, view of the building: 'And it might have been for this reason only, that, when I again uplifted my eyes to the house itself, from its image in the pool, there grew in my mind a strange fancy – a fancy so ridiculous, indeed, that I but mention it to show the vivid force of the sensations which oppressed me' (399). Owing to his reverie, he declares that 'I had so worked upon my imagination as really to believe that about the whole mansion and domain there hung an atmosphere peculiar to themselves…which had reeked up from the decayed trees, and the gray wall and the silent tarn – a pestilent and mystic vapor…' (399). It appears that the narrator's account of the lustreless Usher mansion is amalgamated with his own imagination and the deficiency in the bloodline of Ushers and his friend, Roderick Usher's mental illness. In other words, he may be affected by the degeneration of the family, and then provides his fantasy of the metaphorical fall of the Usher construction. This possibility of biased and projected image of the Usher house is even more increased by his sojourn in the Usher abode himself with Roderick. At some point, the narrator mentions, 'It was no wonder that his condition terrified – that it infected me. I felt creeping upon me,

by slow yet certain degrees, the wild influences of his own fantastic yet impressive superstitions' (411), and on that last supernatural night, he again emphasises that he 'experienced the full power of such feelings [passed from Roderick]' (411) and 'struggled to reason off the nervousness which had dominion over me' (411). This makes one question whether, on that eventful and horrifying night, Madeline indeed bloodily gets out of the coffin and totters and falls on Roderick, both last Usher family members dying in the same second, and whether the house of Usher actually crumbles asunder and is devoured by the supernatural tarn. Could this all be a projection of the narrator's rooted idea of the diseased and fallen Usher family? Poe leaves those hints in 'The Fall of the House of Usher', making its end supernaturally ambiguous.

'The Tell-Tale Heart' (1843) is another Gothic tale that contains ambiguity and challenges the reader's reading of it as either a supernatural work or a story in the sphere of nature. Evert Augustus Duyckinck, in his 1847 review, recalls the key episodes of the 'visible vulture eye, and audible heart-beat [of the old man]' in this piece (273), which seems to somewhat recognise those supernatural events narrated in the tale. In Horace Greeley's sketchy criticism, a piece published in 'Poets and Poetry of Philadelphia…' (1843), however, the narrator's murder in 'The Tell-Tale Heart' is considered as an 'insane homicide' (33). The 1843 and 1844 reprints of the text, with the edited or renamed titles, 'The Tell-Tale Heart. Or the Unconscious Madman' in *Cleave's Penny Gazette*, and 'Confession of a Maniac' in *Literary Garland*, also suggest the insanity of the narrator, thereby nullifying his supernatural account of the dead old man's haunting heartbeat.

The story is an unnamed autodiegetic narrator's account of the entire process of his murdering an old man who lives with him in an apartment, including his motive, plot, execution, and confession of the crime to the policemen. Seeming to converse with the police or any law enforcement officers who are inspecting his case, the narrator says, in an analeptic manner, that the old man's vulture-like eye triggers his killing impulse. Besides this, there is no other particular motive for his crime. Nonetheless, exactly owing to this, he has to lift a

lantern and wait every night outside his room for the right moment when the old man opens his eye, in order to feel harassed enough to kill him. The abnormality of the narrator and his nervous state of mind is depicted at the opening of the narrative:

> TRUE! – nervous – very, very dreadfully nervous I had been and am; but why *will* you say that I am mad? The disease had sharpened my senses – not destroyed – not dulled them. Above all was the sense of hearing acute. I heard all things in the heaven and in the earth. I heard many things in hell. How, then, am I mad? Hearken! And observe how healthily – how calmly I can tell you the whole story. (792)

The narrator claims that he has hyper-acute hearing and he can hear things inside and outside human world. He is considered mad, but he claims he is sane, saying that his mind has not degenerated due to madness and he simply has special, superior hearing. His ability to narrate the story in a calm manner is another refutation of the idea that he is losing his mind. Despite this, his narration opens with 'TRUE! – nervous – very, very dreadfully nervous I had been and am', which indicates that for a certain period of time (and probably frequently) he has been in a high-strung state. Following this, the narrator begins to speak about his relationship with the old man and his plan to get rid of him. The nervousness, therefore, can be interpreted as his anxious mood of hiding, yet working on the brutality of murder. This also corresponds to the title of the tale, 'The Tell-Tale Heart': the criminal-narrator's psychological workings which reveal his nervousness before and after his violent deed – 'had been' and 'am' – as he narrates in flashback – that is, after his murder of the old man – his nerves at present and a period of time in the past, accord with the timings of the crime. The abstract expression of 'the tell-tale heart' of the culprit is thus suggested by Poe from the outset.

The narrator then describes how cautiously he has been attempting to direct the light ray from a lantern to the detested old man's eye, so that he can be

enraged and be motivated to kill the old man. Nervousness is thought to be involved in his carefully planned act. He says, 'I moved it slowly – very, very slowly, so that I might not disturb the old man's sleep', 'It took me an hour to place my whole head within the opening so far that I could see him as he lay upon his bed', 'And then, when my head was well in the room, I undid the lantern cautiously – oh, so cautiously – cautiously (for the hinges creaked) – I undid it just so much that a single thin ray fell upon the vulture eye' (793). The culprit attempts this same criminal act for seven consecutive days. On the eighth day, he finally fulfils his plan – killing the old man. Just before the point of taking the old man's life, the narrator claims that due to his extremely acute hearing, he hears the old man's heart beating as fast as drums, assuming that the old man became aware of an intruder into his room. He says, 'I knew *that* sound well, too. It was the beating of the old man's **heart**. It increased my fury, as the beating of a drum stimulates the soldier into courage' [emphasis added] (795), 'Meantime the hellish tattoo of the **heart** increased. It grew quicker and quicker, and louder and louder every instant. The old man's terror *must* have been extreme! It grew louder, I say, louder every moment! – do you mark me well! I have told you that I am nervous: so I am' [emphasis added] (795), and 'But the beating grew louder, louder! I thought the **heart** must burst. And now a new anxiety seized me – the sound would be heard by a neighbour!' [emphasis added] (795). The intangible 'heart', the nervousness and guilt of the crime-executor, so far, from the beginning of the narration to now, has become metaphorical. It turns into a real 'heart', the racing heartbeat of the old man.

Conceptually, this again involves the general metaphor 'emotion is an opponent'; in this context, guilt is the emotion specified as the opponent and metaphorically represented as a thunderous heartbeat. The murderer surreptitiously breaks into the old man's room at nighttime. He naturally will feel nervous, aware that he himself is doing something that is morally unacceptable. He attributes his nervousness to the old man's audible racing heartbeat. It beats so loudly that he is scared that their neighbours might hear it (and he will get caught

by the neighbour or policemen). It is interesting to see that here, the murderer-narrator depicts the old man's heartbeat as a kind of hellish sound and asks 'do you mark me well! I have told you that I am nervous: so I am'. It refers to the narrator's own nervous and guilty feelings of doing something he should not do, thereby having this fear that the old man's heartbeat can be heard by neighbours and he himself will be arrested. The old man's heart sound is antagonistic to him, just as is his conscience against his criminal act.

The heart and heartbeat of the old man are consistently referenced, from the first time the murderer hears it when carrying out his murderous act to the consummation of the crime. This metaphorical and supernatural effect of super-hearing and pulse of a heart is developed and carried out all the way to the ending of the tale. As the police come to search his apartment because his neighbour heard a suspicious shriek, the culprit describes that he feels something 'ringing' in the ears (797). He then says, 'Yet the sound increased – and what could I do? it was *a low, dull, quick sound – much such a sound as a watch makes when enveloped in cotton*' (797). The description of the sound similar to a watch wrapped in cotton is remindful of his earlier narration, comparing the old man's heartbeat to a watch. 'I knew *that* sound well, too. It was the beating of the old man's heart' (795). It is therefore the old man's heartbeat now, after his death, that troubles the narrator. This ghostly heart-beating sound haunts the narrator so much that he eventually confesses his murder to the police: '"I admit the deed! – tear up the planks! – here, here! – it is the beating of his hideous **heart**!"' [emphasis added] (797). The metaphor, the old man's heart, becomes the 'tell-tale heart', the title of the tale, supernaturally tortures the murderer. The culprit-narrator's plea to tear open the floor and his pointing out the exact position of the dead old man's beating heart indicate that the word, 'heart', has been immediately turned into a supernatural opponent, making sound to disclose the narrator's crime to the police. It creates a sense of supernatural horror that the old man's heart is beating fast and loudly to haunt the murderer, making him confess his crime and sending him into the hands of the police as retribution for the murder.

Akin to other Gothic tales' questionable narrators in Poe's works, however, the narrator's account of the supernatural nature of the old man's heart raises doubts. The heartbeat of the old man heard by him may be a concomitant of his nervous emotions during and after committing the crime. From the beginning of the tale, he already mentions his nervousness in 'TRUE! – nervous – very, very dreadfully nervous I had been and am'. While describing his hearing of the old man's heartbeat in his murder, he also says, as mentioned earlier, 'I have told you that I am nervous: so I am'. This means that the criminal-narrator is in an agitated state when he hears the old man's fast heartbeat. The heartbeat can be an effect, real or illusional, created or mistaken by his nerves. It can be his own quickened heart pulse (owing to his nervousness), the sound from the deathwatch beetles in the walls in the apartment,[12] or a sheer hallucination generated by his nervous psychological state and madness,[13] rather than the old man's heartbeat. After he ushers the policemen into the apartment, he puts his seat on the exact spot in the floor beyond the hidden corpse of the old man (796). He then starts to feel uneasy, saying 'I felt myself getting pale and wished them [the police] gone' (796-97) and 'My head ached, and I fancied a ringing in my ears: but still they sat and still chatted' (797). His guilt and anxiety continue to grow, as he recounts: 'I gasped for breath – and yet the officers heard it not' (797), 'I talked more quickly – more vehemently; but the noise steadily increased' (797), 'I arose and argued about trifles, in a high key and with violent gesticulations; but the noise steadily increased. Why *would* they not be gone?' (797), and 'I paced the floor to and fro with heavy strides, as if excited to fury by the observations of the men – but the noise steadily increased' (797). Apparently, the visit of the policemen, soon after

[12] The narrator mentions that while he is making attempts to enter the old man's room, he hears 'death-watches in the wall' (794). When he turns to describe the old man's heartbeat, he compares it to 'a low, dull, quick sound, such as a watch makes when enveloped in cotton' (795), 'the heart beat on with a muffled sound' (795), and '*a low, dull, quick sound – much such a sound as a watch makes when enveloped in cotton*' (797). The similarities of words ('watch' and 'death-watches') and the sound effects ('in the wall' and 'enveloped in cotton') suggest that the narrator might have mistaken the sound made by the deathwatch beetles for the sound of the old man's heartbeat.

[13] The narrator, from the outset of the tale, denies his insanity when accused by a third person. Nevertheless, the fact that he claims to be able to hear sounds from heaven and hell only seems to prove his madness. His claim to hear the old man's heartbeat, before and after his death, an ability which exceeds normal people's senses, also heightens the suggestion of madness.

the completion of his murder, makes him apprehensive. Due to this, he begins to hear the heartbeat sound. The narrator then suspects that the policemen know already his crime (because like himself, they may have heard the supernatural heartbeat of the dead old man) and he hears the heartbeat growing more and more loudly, and eventually, he admits his crime to the police (797). The sound of the heart mirrors his psychological state, his nervousness. It arises and roars with the presence of the policemen. It may be his own nervous heart, his own 'tell-tale heart', not the old man's supernatural 'tell-tale heart', as he claims in his narration, which finally causes himself to reveal his crime to the police.

Herein it can be seen that a sense of ambiguity of supernaturalism in Poe's Gothic writings is often achieved by his selection of one word of double signification for his personification and metaphor, and the conceptual connection between the source and target domains. The same word of different but relevant significations obscures the differentiation of meanings, the distinction between the source and target, and the barrier between the supernatural and natural. Apart from words of double meaning and the intricate metaphorical language, Poe also exploits his characters' disordered mental states to achieve supernatural ambiguity. This kind of ambiguity is present more in Poe's Gothic fictions than his Gothic poems, as argued in my previous chapter. At the same time, his use of personification and metaphor echoes the works from his contemporaries, such as *Blackwood's* tales, Schlegel, Blair, and Kames. This demonstrates that Poe's Gothic writing participates in his contemporary culture.

Chapter 3: The Uncanny (Un)familiarity and Return of the Nightmarish Phenomenon: The Doubles of Repetition and Polysemy in 'Ligeia', 'William Wilson', 'The Black Cat', and 'A Tale of the Ragged Mountains'

The notion of the uncanny is first used as a psychological term by Ernst Jentsch in the essay 'On the Psychology of the Uncanny' (1906). In that article, Jentsch defines the uncanny as a kind of uncertainty and unease aroused by one's '*lack of orientation*' to something new and unfamiliar (8). Not completely agreeing with Jentsch, Freud in his essay 'The Uncanny' (1919) argues that 'intellectual uncertainty' is not the major factor in the generation of the uncanny (221). Rather, it is when something that is already known and familiar suddenly turns unfamiliar or, in contrast, when something that is unfamiliar temporarily becomes familiar, that a sense of the uncanny is evoked. In elaborating his new conception of the uncanny, Freud draws instances from the short stories 'The Sandman' (1816) and *The Devil's Elixirs* (1815) by E. T. A. Hoffmann, a writer contemporary to Poe and whose potential influence on Poe has been articulated by Val Scullion, Neil Cornwell, Whitney Shylee May, Sonya Isaak, and Patrick Labriola. Scullion suggests that Hoffmann's Gothic influence extends to such writers as Polevoy, Gogol, Dostoevsky, Odoevsky, Baudelaire, and Poe (325). Cornwell, in his essay 'European Gothic', comments on Hoffmann's impactful *The Devil's Elixirs*, a novel of doubles, noting that 'Many subsequent works in the Gothic mode (by Nerval or Gogol, Poe or Dostoevsky, and indeed many others) would seem inconceivable without Hoffmann' (33). May, in her article 'The Influence of Place on Identity in Poe's "Morella" and "William Wilson"', mentions that Poe's 'William Wilson' is a work that 'aligns […] closely with preceding nineteenth-century literary iterations of doppelgänger conflicts' (224), and Hoffmann's *The Devil's Elixirs* and 'The Sandman' are among those earlier sources listed by May (232n16). Isaak, in her essay 'Poe's German Soulscape: Influenced by Angst or Anxiety of Influence?', argues that 'Poe's use of the Doppelgänger motif constitutes another example of Germanic (and specifically of Hoffmanian [sic])

influence', proposing that 'William Wilson' is 'clearly inspired' by Hoffman's *The Devil's Elixirs* (1815) (222). Likewise, in his article 'Edgar Allan Poe and E. T. A. Hoffmann: The Double in "William Wilson" and *The Devil's Elixirs*' Labriola affirms Poe's inheritance of the motif of the double from German Romanticism (par. 2) and his possible access to Hoffmann's works (par. 1). Labriola also compares Poe's 'William Wilson' with Hoffmann's *The Devil's Elixirs*, and finds similarities in the development of characterisation and plots, as well as symbolism in them.

In 'The Sandman', the doubles of German Coppelius and Italian Giuseppe Coppola share several similarities and eventually turn out to be the same person, though they, at the outset, appear to be two different individuals. Coppelius, imagined to be the folkloric Sandman in real life by the narrator Nathaniel since his childhood, has 'a pair of piercing, greenish, cat-like eyes sparkling from under bushy grey eyebrows' and a 'malicious smile' (88). While cooperating with Nathaniel's father to conduct alchemical experiments, he threatens to use Nathaniel's eyes, exclaiming '"Bring the eyes! Bring the eyes!"' and '"Now we've got eyes—eyes—a fine pair of children's eyes"' (90). This fact overlaps with the imagery of the Sandman of the fairy-tale, who uses sand to make '[non-sleeping children's] eyes fill with blood' and takes those eyes away (87). Similarly, the glasses-seller Coppola, is presented as one 'giving a piercing look from under his long grey lashes', and he says 'I 'ave beautiful eyes-a to sell you, beautiful eyes-a!' when he peddles glasses to Nathaniel (105). Those eye-glasses give off 'blood-red rays' (105), and after successfully concluding business with Nathaniel, Coppola has one moment of 'smiling maliciously' (106). The use of repeated words ('piercing', 'grey', and 'eyes') and repetitions of root words in different inflections, i.e. polyptotons ('smile' as noun and the inflected verb 'smiling', and 'malicious'/'maliciously'), associate Coppelius with Coppola. Additionally, the names of these two characters resemble each other. Theodore Ziolkowski points out that both are derived from 'the stems coppo or coppa, meaning "cup" or "jar"' (99). The Italian 'coppellare' denotes 'the alchemical process of purifying silver from a mixture, and 'coppella' is 'the alchemist's melting pot' (99). Freud in his

essay ‘The Uncanny’ provides, alongside his awareness that ‘*coppella* = crucible’, another suggestion that ‘*coppo* = eye-socket’ (230n1),[1] thus correlating eye-snatching alchemist Coppelius with glasses-salesman Coppola. Such repetition in the names is perhaps the reason why in the story, when Nathanael initially comes across Coppola, he claims that ‘Coppelius has not even changed his name’ (93).

Hoffmann’s novel *The Devil’s Elixirs* is another work about the doubles singled out in Freud’s essay as featuring many uncanny elements. Freud writes that ‘Hoffmann is the unrivalled master of the uncanny in literature’, and that ‘His novel, *Die Elixire des Teufels* [*The Devil’s Elixir*], contains a whole mass of themes to which one is tempted to ascribe the uncanny effect of the narrative…’ (233). It is through the device of repetition that Hoffman brings out the doubling in the text. The monk protagonist Medardus drinks an ancient relic, ‘Devil’s Elixirs’, that he is in charge of. Owing to the evil effect from the liquid that arouses his repressed desires, he flees from the cloister. He encounters a count dressed up as a friar and somehow ends up plunging him off a ‘devil’s perch’. This count, however, is his half-brother, and from then on proceeds to haunt him as his murderous double – either a supernatural ghostly entity or an illusion caused by madness. The half-brother shares the name ‘Medardus’ (167, 169, 170, 192, 193, 194, 202, 257), the friar’s robe (167, 169, 170, 173, 193, 194, 202), and the Capuchin order (161, 167, 170, 192, 202). Medardus’s traits of being ‘mad’ (169, 173), the idea of ‘madness’ (192), or being a ‘madman’ (161), as well as being a ‘murderer’ (170) or committing ‘murders’ (161) are also repeated with regard to his double. At the critical scene of Medardus and Aurelia’s wedding, his double’s threat ‘“Up there we will fight with each other, and the one who pushes the other over will become king, and be able to drink blood!”’ (193) also repeats in Medardus’s frenzied remark, ‘“I am king and shall drink your blood!”’ Repetitions of words between Medardus and his double are pointed out by the barber Peter Schönfeld, who says to Medardus, ‘Your speech, too, was most pitiful; you became confoundedly monosyllabic and said, in your more

[1] Freud’s idea of the etymologies of the words, as he himself says in the footnote, is from Frau Dr. Rank. Ritchie Robertson also notes, in his annotated edition of ‘The Sandman’, that the name Coppelius may bear some relation with ‘Italian *coppo* “eye-socket”’(403).

enlightened moments: "Hoo, hoo!" and "Me-me-" …' (203) – the exact feature of his double's language. Apart from Medardus and his counterpart, Peter Schönfeld and his imagined second self, Pietro Belcampo, another pair of doppelgängers in the novel, also see doubling through the device of repetition. They share the same name (Italian 'Pietro' is 'Peter' in German,[2] and the Italian surname Belcampo and the German Schönfeld both signify 'beautiful field').[3] Although Hoffmann's other works, such as 'A New Year's Eve Adventure' (1815), 'The Stone Heart' (1817), and 'The Choosing of the Bride' (1819), also use, or mention, the uncanny trope of doppelgängers,[4] there is no use of the device of repetition in them as there in 'The Sandman' and *The Devil's Elixirs*.

In addition to Hoffmann, Washington Irving may also have influenced Poe's writing of doubles. Poe, in his October 12, 1839 letter to Irving, says that his 'William Wilson' is based on the latter's article 'An Unwritten Drama of Lord Byron' (1835) ('Letter 83a' 199) which provides a sketch of a dramatic poem that Irving copied from Captain Thomas Medwin's notes of Byron's aborted drama ('An Unwritten Drama' 169).[5] In Irving's sketch, the hero Alfonso encounters his haunting double, who knows his thoughts and disrupts his debaucheries and evil plots. This masked double also has 'a voice, like the voice of his own soul' (168). Enraged by many of his double's interventions, Alfonso confronts him and 'demands *satisfaction*' (169). In his dying moment, after their duel, the double articulates, 'Are you satisfied!' (169). Here, Irving uses repetitions and repetitional polyptotons to portray the uncanny double in his writing. In Irving's later short story 'Don Juan' (1841), the licentious hero 'Don Manuel de Manara' encounters – and murders – a man who later turns out to have had the same name;

[2] 'Peter, n. and int.' *OED Online*, Oxford University Press, December 2022, www.oed.com/view/Entry/141822. Accessed 26 December 2022.
[3] Unable to find discussions of these two names in scholarly publications in English, I consulted Dr Sonja Ross, a German historian and multilinguist. She states that 'Belcampo' (Bel·campo) and 'Schönfeld' (Schön·feld) have the same meaning of 'beautiful field'. In the *Dictionary of Pseudonyms*, Adrian Room similarly introduces: '**Belcampo**: Herman P. Schönfeld Wichers (1902-1990), Du. Writer. The writer, by profession a doctor, took for his pen name an Italian-style translation of his middle name [Schönfeld], literally "beautiful field."' (54).
[4] Otto Rank in his psychoanalytical study *The Double* mentions that Hoffmann writes about 'the second self' in those works (14).
[5] Irving mentions that Byron was inspired by Percy Bysshe Shelley's account of Spanish playwright Pedro Calderon's *El Purgatorio de San Patricio* ('An Unwritten Drama' 169).

the double's name is repeated several times after the murder, until he is finally identified as the hero's exact counterpart (251).

In his theory of the uncanny, Freud stresses the characteristic of repetitions in his examples on doubles. Not only discussing the re-occurrences of 'eyes' and the Coppelius/Coppola link in Hoffmann's 'The Sandman', he also analyses other cases of repetitions from his own or observed experience. For instance, whether by fate, supernatural influence or coincidence, the number 62 is repeated in different forms as an address, a room number, and compartments in a train, each of which can be seen as an individual event with its own natural cause and meaning, or as a collective sign of some mysterious significance (238). In another example, when receiving 'two letters from two different countries' that bear the same name, the repetition of the name, again, engenders an inexplicable and disturbing impression of uncanniness (238). Regarding the specific condition of generating uncanny doubles, Freud asserts that it is necessary that two similar occurrences 'each in itself indifferent [to the other], happen close together' (237-38). Repetitions therefore, for Freud, are not simply identical duplications of objects or conditions. Instead, they often manifest a certain range of difference in the sameness so that an uncertainty is felt towards the half-familiar and half-unfamiliar repetitions. This rationale also applies to Freud's lexical reflection of the two keywords 'canny' (*heimlich*) and 'uncanny' (*unheimlich*) from the outset of his article. He bases his notion of the uncanny on the alternative meanings of the words *heimlich* ('canny' but also 'uncanny') and *unheimlich* ('uncanny' but also 'canny'),[6] and affirms that the sense of uncanniness derives from the ambiguity of canny/uncanny and familiar/unfamiliar. The uncertainty and equivocation of these two words 'canny' and 'uncanny' originates in their polysemic nature. One word has more than one signification; the use of the same word but in different senses, i.e. polysemy, can arouse an uncanny ambiguity of difference in sameness, and unfamiliarity in familiarity.

Hoffmann and Irving's doubling through the rhetorical device of repetition

[6] The English word 'canny', like its German equivalent, also has 'conflicting or even antithetical meanings'. It contains meanings of its opposite word 'uncanny' (Royle 11).

in different characters apparently fit Freud's definition of the uncanny. Poe never mentioned Hoffmann, as Hansen and Pollin have pointed out, in any form of his writings (99), yet he might, according to Labriola, have read Hoffmann through 'Gillies's [English] translation of *The Devil's Elixirs*, through Carlyle's publication of the *German Romance*, through Sir Walter Scott's essay ['On the Supernatural in Fictitious Composition; and particularly on the works of Ernest Theodore William Hoffmann'[7]] on Hoffmann's use of the supernatural, or through readings of his own in English translation' (par. 1). He might also have come across John Lockhart's review of Hoffmann's *The Devil's Elixirs* published in *Blackwood's Magazine*, and thus got to know Hoffmann (Hutchisson 93). On the other hand, Irving's 'An Unwritten Drama of Lord Byron', a piece influential to Poe, may also likely derive from German literature, as Irving borrowed considerable materials from the latter for many of his creations; '[i]n American literature, there is virtually no tradition of the double, and the motif has been taken from German philosophical, literary, and scientific theory' (Labriola par. 4) – more specifically, the theory of German Romanticism in which '[t]he historical background of the double is rooted' (Labriola par. 2). This accords with Peeples's statement that the double tradition is something that 'Poe probably knew mainly through the work of E. T. A. Hoffmann and Germanic folklore' (*Edgar Allan Poe* 78).

While the unique Germanic convention of the double as well as Hoffmann and Irving's connection with Poe's creations of doppelgängers have been observed and discussed by scholars, the correspondences between the theoretical guidance on composition provided by Schlegel, Blair, and Kames and Poe's writing of uncanny doubles is a subject matter that has not yet been investigated. The following section will delve into those three contemporary critics and rhetoricians' relation to Poe's rhetoric of doubles, the devices of repetition and polysemy that engender double sense and bring about the effect of the uncanny and ambiguity in Poe's doppelgänger tales.

[7] E. T. A. Hoffmann is the pseudonym of Ernest Theodore William Hoffmann.

Rhetorical Inspirations from Schlegel, Kames, and Blair

As shown in the introductory chapter, Poe was influenced by Schlegel's conception of unity in writing, which Poe terms the unity of effect. Poe's uncanny writing in his Gothic tales is very much related to Schlegel's idea of unity, a notion of double sense. When elucidating the '*unity of interest*' (his substitution for Aristotle's 'unity of action'), Schlegel says:

> The external sense perceives only in objects an indefinite plurality of distinguishable parts; the judgment, by which we comprehend these parts in one entire and perfect unity, is always founded on the reference to a higher sphere of ideas. Thus, for example, the mechanical unity of a watch consists in the aim of measuring time; this aim however is only obvious to the understanding, and can neither be seen by the eyes, nor laid hold of by the hands: the organical unity of a plant and an animal consists in the idea of life; and the inward contemplation of life, which is itself uncorporeal, although it appears through the medium of the corporeal world, is brought by us to the individual living object, otherwise we could not obtain it through that object.
>
> The separate parts of a work of art, and consequently, returning immediately to the question before us, the separate parts of a tragedy, must not be received by the eye and ear alone, but be taken in by the understanding. They are all subservient to one common aim, namely, to produce a joint impression on the mind. The unity consists therefore as in the above examples, but in a higher sphere, in the feeling or in the reference to ideas. (189)

Schlegel distinguishes between two levels of sense: the external, more superficial and outward signification, and the internal, deeper and more complex meaning. For Schlegel, the latter is felt and understood via the medium of the outer concrete sense. It is on this level of the inward, superior sphere, that the unity of 'one common aim' and 'a joint impression' is perceived. Schlegel's distinction of the

exterior and interior meanings not only influenced the forming of Poe's concept of the unity of effect of double sense, but also triggered Poe's creation of the uncanny through the plurivalent device of the polysemy. Poe's reading of Schlegel's unity as a unity of double effect is reflected in poem 'The Raven' and in his 'Philosophy of Composition'. Poe, similar to Schlegel, distinguishes the obvious meaning of the 'upper current' from the 'under current' of the adaptative and suggestive ('Philosophy' 24). Poe facilitates the metaphorical sense of the literal expression in order to attain the unity inculcated by Schlegel, as in 'Philosophy', Poe states that the 'suggestiveness' of his two concluding stanzas of 'The Raven' is 'made to pervade all the narrative which has preceded them' ('Philosophy' 24) and to provide 'a moral in all that has been previously narrated' ('Philosophy' 25). In what follows, I will show that, informed by Schlegel's principle of unity, Poe also employs polysemies which, with their double edge of signification, generate the upper and under currents of meanings and, at the same time, evoke an ambiguous sense of the uncanny.

It is almost certain that Poe read this key section regarding the unity of writing in Lecture IX, a lecture particularly devoted to the topic of unity, in Schlegel's *Lectures*. The terminology of 'unity of interest' adopted by Schlegel here appears in Poe's 1836 review of poetry collections by Sigourney, Gould, and Ellet respectively. In that article, Poe introduces Schlegel's concept of unity, saying '[…] the understanding is employed, without difficulty, in the contemplation of the picture *as a whole*—and thus its effect will depend, in a very great degree, upon the perfection of its finish, upon the nice adaptation of its constituent parts, and especially upon what is rightly termed by Schlegel, the *unity or totality of interest*' (877). The nearly exact words are repeated, later, in Poe's 1842 review of Longfellow's *Ballads and Other Poems*. Poe's doublespeak, especially the double meaning of the literal and metaphorical senses, is arguably derived from Schlegel's discussion of unity. Poe writes, '[…] the understanding is employed, without difficulty, in the contemplation of the picture as a whole; and thus its effect will depend, in great measure, upon the perfection of its finish, upon the nice adaptation of its constituent parts, and especially, upon what is rightly

termed by Schlegel the unity or totality of interest' (691). Poe also very likely read on to learn Schlegel's further views on the concept of unity. Schlegel asserts:

> Do not let us suppose that the order of sequence in a tragedy resembles a slender thread, which we are every moment in anxious dread of snapping (on account of the admitted inevitable plurality of subordinate actions and interests, this simile is by no means correctly applicable;) but rather let us suppose it a mighty stream, which overcomes many obstacles in its raging course, and at last loses itself in the repose of the ocean. It springs perhaps from different fountains, and it certainly receives other rivers, which hasten towards it from opposite points of the compass. Why should not the poet be allowed to conduct various independent streams of human passions and endeavours, separately from each other, for a time, till the moment of their raging junction, if he can place the spectator on an eminence from whence he may overlook the whole of their course? And if this great collection of waters should again divide into several branches, and pour itself into the sea by several mouths, is it not still the same stream? (190)

Schlegel advocates a 'plurality of subordinate actions and interests' in a play, each separate and independent from each other, finally merges into one, achieving the unity of interest. His example of several streams becoming one very much elucidates it. This thought finds its correspondence in Poe's 1841 review of Dickens's *Barnaby Rudge*, where Poe comments on the design of the plot of the then serialised novel: 'Each is distinct. Each differs remarkably from the other. Yet between them there is a strong analogical resemblance; and, although each may exist apart, they form together a whole which would be imperfect, wanting either' (222). He reiterates the same idea in his 1842 review of the same novel. Poe states, 'Each might have been distinct. Each might have differed remarkably from the other. Yet between them there might have been wrought an analogical resemblance, and, although each might have existed apart, they might have formed together a whole which would have been imperfect in the absence of either' (243). Schlegel's unity of plural interests might give Poe the idea of

difference in the sameness, regarding his statement of a wholeness from distinctness. While composing his Gothic stories, Poe exercises this difference in the sameness, a practice that shares similarities with the core concept of difference in the sameness of the uncanny. This is especially achieved, as I will demonstrate in this chapter, through Poe's use of repetitions in different contexts and polysemies.

In *Elements,* Kames in Chapter XIII on wit, speaks especially about verbal wit, 'wit in the words or expression', which he distinguishes from 'wit in the thought' in his taxonomy (264). He calls it '*a play of words*' (273). Kames elaborates, 'This sort of wit depends, for the most part, upon chusing a word that hath different significations: by that artifice hocus-pocus tricks are play'd in language, and thoughts plain and simple take on a very different appearance' (273). He goes on, saying 'expressions that, by the double meaning of some words, give a familiar thought the appearance of being new; and the penetration of the reader or hearer is gratified in detecting the true sense disguised under the double meaning' (273). It is not difficult to find that here, Kames points out some key characteristics of words of double meaning: different significations, a different appearance or a new unfamiliar appearance of a familiar thought, and the disguise of meanings. These traits capture the essence of Freudian uncanny – unfamiliarity in familiarity; familiarity in unfamiliarity – and the ambiguity existing in the guise of double form and meaning.

Unlike Kames, Blair does not say much about witty use of words or words of double meaning in his *Lectures*. He acknowledges wit and novelty as sources of pleasures of taste, stating, 'Wit, Humour, and Ridicule likewise open a variety of pleasures to Taste, quite distinct from any that we have yet considered' (51). On novelty, he expounds: '[…] being uncommon or new, by means of this quality alone, produces in the mind a vivid and an agreeable emotion' (50) and 'Objects and ideas which have been long familiar, make too faint an impression to give an agreeable exercise to our faculties. New and strange objects rouse the mind from its dormant state, by giving it a quick and pleasing impulse. Hence, in a great measure, the entertainment afforded us by fiction and romance' (50-51).

Regarding the style of writing, Blair acclaims precision, but he does not urge to apply it to the entirety of a written piece. He declares that a writer 'uses proper words, and proper arrangement; he gives you the idea as clear as he conceives it himself; and so far this is perspicuous: but the ideas are not very clear in his own mind; they are loose and general; and, therefore, cannot be expressed with Precision', adding '[a]ll subjects do not equally require Precision' (103). He encourages to 'have, at least, some measure of Precision, in distinction from that loose profusion of words which imprints no clear Idea on the reader's mind', for thorough precision in writing renders a work dull and sterile, as well as curtailing richness and adornment in writing, qualities that are also requisite for composition (108).

In the rest of this chapter, the consistency of Poe's writing with the ideas of Schlegel, Kames, and Blair will be specifically analysed and illustrated through reference to 'Ligeia', 'William Wilson', 'The Black Cat', and 'A Tale of the Ragged Mountains'. Those texts about uncanny doubles exemplify Poe's usages of the devices of repetition and polysemy. These usages resonate with the theories developed by contemporary critics and rhetoricians Schlegel, Kames, and Blair concerning double effect, words of double signification, and opulence. Poe's exploitation of these devices generates a sense of ambiguity about the supernaturalism of uncanny doubles.

The Poesque Rhetoric of Uncanny Doubles

The eponymous 'Ligeia' is probably derived from Poe's 1829 long poem 'Al Aaraaf', where a beautiful spirit associated with lustre is named Ligeia. However, in that poem, as I have argued earlier in this thesis regarding the distinction between Poe's poetry and fiction, there is no such ambiguity concerning supernature and nature in 'Al Aaraaf' as there is in 'Ligeia'. In fact, in terms of plot, Poe's 'Ligeia' more resembles his earlier tale 'Morella'. In his 1839

letter to Phillip Cooke, Poe said, ‘It was necessary, since Morella was written, to modify Ligeia’ (‘Letter 82’ 193) and ‘But since Morella is upon record, I will suffer Ligeia to remain as it is’ (‘Letter 82’ 194). The two stories share the parallels of an erudite and witch-like heroine, her premature death, and (the possibility of) her return to life. To be original and to make a distinction between his two stories, however, Poe changed from the ‘ghostly property’ regarding the shift of soul into the transformation of the corporeal, something with which Cooke disagreed and found fault. Although Poe, in his letter, admitted, ‘One point I have not fully carried out — I should have intimated that the *will* did not perfect its intention — there should have been a relapse — a final one — and Ligeia (who had only succeeded in so much as to convey an idea of the truth to the narrator) should be at length entombed as Rowena — the bodily alterations having gradually faded away’, which seems to direct the tale towards a supernatural aspect, the trancing state of ‘half-consciousness’ of the narrator, the only person who witnesses the marvel, which was deliberately stressed by Poe in order to create an unresolved ambiguous piece (‘Letter 82’ 193). Poe’s choice of composing a supernaturally ambiguous tale rather than a supernatural-explained work is probably due to Schlegel’s influence. Two years before the publication of ‘Ligeia’, Poe reviewed Bird’s *Sheppard Lee*. In that important critical piece, cited in the introduction of this thesis, Poe advocates a denouement of unresolved ambiguity in fiction, instead of explaining away supernaturalism, which would erase the effect already developed in a work. Poe’s insight may suggest that he put into practice Schlegel’s idea of unity in his own concept of the unity of effect, to create an ambiguously supernatural narrative with an aura of the uncanny.

Ever since ‘Ligeia’ was published, critics have produced contradictory readings of the work. Cooke, for instance, seems to take it as a preternatural story revolving around Ligeia’s return from the grave, and writes to Poe in the same epistle, ‘your intent is to tell a tale of the “mighty will” contending with & finally vanquishing Death’ (112). On another occasion, in his 1848 memoir, entitled ‘Edgar A. Poe’, Cooke again observes, ‘Take this passage from “Ligeia”, a

wonderful story, written to show the triumph of the human will even over *death*' (272), and '[This quoted passage] prove[s] as in "Ligeia" the final conquest of the will over death' (273). Henry B. Hirst also tends to read 'Ligeia' as a supernatural tale. He mentions in 'Edgar Allan Poe' (1849) his memory of Poe and his work: 'During the day, frequently for weeks together, he passed his hours in studies which were only pursued in chambers litten with sepulchral lamps, of various-colored chemical fires, which he afterward described in that spirit-haunted apartment of the Lady Rowna [*sic*] of Tremaine, in his terribly imaginative tale of "Ligeia"' (155). Likewise, Rufus Wilmot Griswold in 'Memoir of the Author' (1850) notes 'the thrilling revelations of the existence of a first wife [Ligeia] in the person of a second [Rowena]' (119), and that Poe's craftsmanship 'makes us forget the improbabilities of their general design' (120).

Charles Eames, however, offers an interpretation of 'Ligeia', completely different from that of others. In his commentary on the revised and reprinted version of 'Ligeia' in The *New World* in 1845, Eames says: 'Mark the exquisite art, which keeps constantly before the reader the ruined and spectre-haunted mind of the narrator, and so suggests a *possible explanation* of the marvels of the story, without in the least weakening its vigor as an exposition of the mystical *thesis* which the tale is designed to illustrate and enforce' (502-03). Eames's reading of 'Ligeia' as a supernatural-explained piece and Cooke's, Hirst's, and Griswold's as a ghost story, are echoed by modern critics' conflicting views about the ambiguous text 'Ligeia'. Sova queries if the narrative is merely a production of the narrator's hallucinations caused by his intake of opium, or if it is a fulfilment of Ligeia's mighty will and her return to life, or, if perhaps Ligeia is a quasi-vampiric figure, absorbing Rowena's spirit and occupying her body in order to revive (96). More recently, Fisher suggests the naturalistic possibility of the husband-narrator being 'a serial killer (in eliminating his wives)' (*Cambridge Introduction* 77), while Barbara Cantalupo argues that the story is 'a confession of the narrator's obsession with Ligeia's influence and its result: Rowena's murder' (121). The equivocalness of the tale triggers contrasting supernatural and nature-based readings.

‘Ligeia’ tells a story about a devoted autodiegetic narrator who cannot recover from the loss of his first wife Ligeia, and who later, in his second marriage with Rowena, degenerates into an opium-eater. Owing to the use of drugs, he is often found in a trance-like state, seeming unable to distinguish dreams from reality. At some point, it is even implied that he is insane. Describing his change of personality and aberrant taste for the decoration of his new mansion, after Ligeia’s demise, the narrator mentions: ‘Alas, I feel how much even of incipient madness might have been discovered in the gorgeous and fantastic draperies, in the solemn carvings of Egypt, in the wild cornices and furniture…’ (320). Later, in the event of Ligeia’s resurrection in Rowena, he again says, ‘There was a mad disorder in my thoughts’, and ‘What inexpressible madness seized me with that thought?’ (330). Apart from the factors of opium and mental disorder, the spatiotemporal changes and the narrator’s own vagueness about the development of (the revived or hallucinated revivification of) Ligeia, at the outset of the tale, also contribute to the ambiguity of supernaturalism. It opens with a first-person narration written in the present tense, reflecting on past events. The narrator recalls, ‘I cannot, for my soul, remember how, when, or even precisely where, I first became acquainted with the lady Ligeia. Long years have since elapsed, and my memory is feeble through much suffering’ (310). Marita Nadal and Katherine J. Kim have already pointed out the narrator’s questionable memory and the unreliability of his subsequent telling of Ligeia’s story. Nadal, in her article ‘Trauma and the Uncanny in Edgar Allan Poe’s “Ligeia” and “The Fall of the House of Usher”’, analyses Poe’s tales with trauma and uncanny theories, claiming that the protagonist-narrator’s traumatic loss of Ligeia results in his disorder of time and memory, and that the truth of the past can never be restored or reconstructed. Li concurs in proposing that ‘[…] the narrator’s memory has simply been enfeebled by long years of grief as he himself claims, or […] it has been affected by certain peculiar—and possibly supernatural—qualities of Ligeia that he enumerates’ (Global Ambiguity 85). A similar insight is advanced by Kim who, focussing on the narrator’s obsession in ‘Horrifying Obsession: Reading Incest in Edgar Allan Poe’s “Ligeia”’, suggests that the memory void and

selective memory of the narrator reduces his narration's reliability. I would like to take a closer look at this quoted passage regarding the central issue of Ligeia's revivification. The narrator's reminiscence indicates that some time has passed, and there has been some gap in time between the present, when the narrator writes down his experience, and the actual experience itself: that being the preternatural resurrection of his first deceased wife, Ligeia. As the narrator recollects his memories of Ligeia, he makes it known that his lady 'is no more' (311). Since he says this as he is giving his incredible account of the revived Ligeia, the reader is left to wonder whether Ligeia did come back to life yet die again, or whether she was never revived and the narrator is under the influence of a lovesick trance and grief, or simply the effects of opium. As the narrator never clarifies this, it cannot be certain whether all he says is true, or where truth begins and ends in his narration, and therefore we are left to wonder whether it is partly true and partly faulty, or whether his account is a complete delusion. All these possibilities impose ambiguity about a supernatural vs naturalistic reading of the text, and show Poe's intention to deliberately pen an obscure story, just as he has stated in his letter to Cooke.

From the very beginning, Poe repeats significations and words in the description of Ligeia's unusualness, suggesting that she was a witch and practiced witchcraft. He recollects that 'the thrilling and enthralling eloquence of her **low musical** language, **made [its] way into** my heart by **paces** so steadily and stealthily progressive that [it has] been unnoticed and **unknown**' [emphasis added] (310). Soon, on another occasion, he says, 'I would in vain attempt to portray the majesty, the quiet ease, of her demeanor, or the incomprehensible lightness and elasticity of her **footfall**. She came and departed as a shadow. I was **never** made **aware of** her **entrance into** my closed study save by the dear **music** of her **low** sweet voice, as she placed her marble hand upon my shoulder' [emphasis added] (311). The first example accounts only Ligeia's 'low musical' voice, with the metaphorical expression of 'paces' entering his heart without his notice and awareness. In the second, it is both Ligeia's uncommonly light 'footfall' that he is 'never made aware of' and the 'music of her low sweet voice' that impress the

narrator. It can be observed that Poe uses repetitional devices, such as repetition ('low'), polyptoton ('musical'/'music'), and synonym ('made their way into'/'entrance into', 'paces'/'footfall', and 'unknown'/'never aware of'), to connect Ligeia's extraordinary traits with later phenomena, creating a sense of supernaturalism around the heroine and her strange potential resurrection from death. Such repetition, an exemplification of Schlegel's 'plurality' of subsidiary and distinctive events that contribute to achieve the ultimate unity of interest, will be extended by Poe into the subsequent scenes of Ligeia to achieve a sensation of the uncanny and of ambiguous supernaturalism.

Alongside Ligeia's unusual speaking tone and footsteps, the text underscores her irregular countenance. By making Ligeia's facial features sound similar to the later architectural features of Rowena's bridal chamber, the key spot where the former returns to life, Poe represents Ligeia's familiar image in the new unfamiliar locale and generates a seemingly ghostly Ligeia that haunts and preys on Rowena. Ligeia's face is described as such:

> Yet her features were not of that regular mould which we have been falsely taught to worship in the classical labors of the heathen. "There is no exquisite beauty," says Bacon, Lord Verulam, speaking truly of all the forms and *genera* of beauty, "without some ***strangeness*** in the **proportion**." Yet, although I saw that the features of Ligeia were not of a classic regularity – although I perceived that her loveliness was indeed "exquisite," and felt that there was much of "strangeness" pervading it, yet I have tried in vain to detect the **irregularity** and to trace home my own perception of "the strange." I examined the contour of the **lofty** and pale forehead – it was faultless – how cold indeed that word when applied to a majesty so divine!....
>
> For eyes we have no models in the **remotely antique**… The hue of the orbs was the most brilliant of **black**, and, far over them, hung **jetty** lashes of great length. The brows, slightly **irregular** in outline, had the same tint. [emphasis added] (311-12)

Some of the features of Ligeia's visage find their uncanny reverberations in the

bridal chamber of the narrator's new 'home' in his second marriage with Rowena:

> The **lofty** walls, gigantic in height – even **unproportionably** so – were hung from summit to foot, in vast folds, with a heavy and massive-looking tapestry – tapestry of a material which was found alike as a carpet on the floor, as a covering for the ottomans and the ebony bed, as a canopy for the bed, and as the gorgeous volutes of the curtains which partially shaded the window. The material was the richest cloth of gold. It was spotted all over, at **irregular** intervals, with arabesque figures, about a foot in diameter, and wrought upon the cloth in patterns of the most **jetty black**. But these figures partook of the true character of the arabesque only when regarded from a single point of view. By a contrivance now common, and indeed traceable to a very **remote** period of **antiquity**, they were made changeable in aspect. To one entering the room, they bore the appearance of simple monstrosities; but upon a farther advance, this appearance gradually departed; and step by step, as the visiter moved his station in the chamber, he saw himself surrounded by an endless succession of the ghastly forms which belong to the superstition of the Norman, or arise in the guilty slumbers of the monk. The phantasmagoric effect was vastly heightened by the artificial introduction of a strong continual current of wind behind the draperies – giving a hideous and uneasy animation to the whole. [emphasis added] (321-22)

In the juxtaposition of the above two passages on the appearance of Ligeia and of Rowena's bridal room respectively, it is observed that several repeated words and concepts are used to bring about a sense of familiarity on a different occasion, which results in empirical uncertainty about the uncanny experience: whether it is simply a chamber with ornate and gruesome decorations or whether instead it is a space haunted by the phantom of Ligeia that her traces are sensed within. The 'lofty' walls of 'unproportionably' great height correspond to Ligeia's 'lofty' forehead and her beauty of 'some *strangeness* in the proportion'; the 'jetty black' patterns of the curtains are reminiscent of Ligeia's 'black' orbs and 'jetty' eye-lashes; the 'irregular' distribution of patterns on the curtains recall the narrator's

perception of ‘irregularity’ in the structure of Ligeia’s face and her ‘irregular’ eye-brows; and the design of the curtains that can be traced to ‘a very remote period of antiquity’ matches Ligeia’s eyes of no similar paradigms in the ‘remotely antique’. As if a remark intentionally provided by the narrator here, at the end of his depiction of the bridal chamber, the room is said to have ‘the appearance of simple monstrosities’, which can be comprehended as a reference to Ligeia’s facial feature marvellously reappearing in the room. This statement, however, is followed by a rationalisation of the supernatural, accounting for the ghastly atmosphere of the chamber in terms of superstitious fantasies, dreams, and animations by winds. The uncanny repetitions and the juxtaposition of supernatural and naturalistic suggestions render the bridal chamber enigmatic, and make it impossible to decide whether it is Ligeia’s ghost or perhaps other, human factors that cause(s) Rowena’s death and enable(s) (the delusion of) Ligeia’s return to life.

Towards the ambiguous closure of the tale, Poe again employs the device of repetition to perplex the reader with the uncanny doubles of Ligeia and Rowena. According to the narrator, during the process of Ligeia’s resurrection, her feature gradually emerges on Rowena’s corpse. The latter’s blonde hair turns into ‘huge masses of long and dishevelled hair; *it was **blacker** than the wings of the midnight!*’ [emphasis added] (330), which corresponds to Ligeia’s ‘raven-**black**’ hair (312). Rowena’s blue eyes become ‘the full, and the **black**, and the wild eyes—of my lost love—of the lady—of the **LADY** LIGEIA’ [emphasis added] (330). The black eyes here of course map with Ligeia’s ‘black’ orbs. It is also noteworthy that the repeated and capitalised ‘LADY’ extends such familiar-unfamiliar and difference-in-the-sameness uncanniness. Kim notices the narrator’s different reference to his first and second wives. Ligeia is addressed as ‘lady Ligeia’ (311), whereas Rowena, owing to her aristocratic background, is called ‘Lady Rowena’ (321, 325, 328). The ‘LADY LIGEIA’ in capitalisation at the ending therefore is confusing. It may be, as Kim declares, a revealing mistake made by the narrator in his addressing to Lady Rowena, and this, in turn, sheds light on his problematic narration of Ligeia’s reanimation (977). It can also be

read simply as the narrator's amazement at the wonder of the revival of Ligeia. Poe's application of repetitions in writing, a technique that is derived from Schlegel's guidance concerning difference of plurality yet unity of identicality in composition, construct Poe's uncanny ambiguity.

Poe's 'William Wilson', a notable piece featuring doubling, is another uncannily ambiguous work. Cooke in his letter to Poe, dated 19 December 1839, expresses his uncertainty about the reading of the tale. He admits, 'Of "William Wilson" I am not sure that I perceive the true idea', for the whisper from Wilson 2, the second William Wilson, can be understood as 'an embodying of the *conscience* of the first [Wilson]' (114). Cooke, however, assumes that Poe has chosen to present Wilson 2 as a literal double existence, 'the wilder idea that every mortal of us is attended with a shadow of himself – a duplicate of his own peculiar organization – differing from himself only in a certain angelic taint of the compound, derived from heaven…' (114). Starting from an angle contrary to Cooke's, John L. Carey comments in *Baltimore American* that 'William Wilson' 'embodies a profounder meaning than will be gathered from regarding it as a purely fanciful invention' (32). The tale, for Carey, conveys a different and deeper sense than a literal and supernatural reading of it. Irving, on the other hand, observant of the ambiguity presented by the tale, offers his critique that 'the singular and mysterious interest is ably sustained throughout' ('Personal Opinions' 117), which signals the indeterminate character of the work.

'William Wilson' (1839) serves as another representative example of the uncanny in Poe. The presence of a second William Wilson as a doppelgänger in the supernatural sense or as the reflection of the hero's conscience in the natural sense is admixed coherently in the tale, thereby doubling the story and giving two potential readings of the work. David Lodge specifically points out Poe's intention of constructing two storylines by use of a word-play on 'story' in 'William Wilson': 'It was difficult, at any given time, to say with certainty upon which of its two stories [of the school house] one happened to be' (213). In fact, besides these word doubles, Poe adopts several repetitions and polysemies throughout the tale to confound the supernatural with the natural and make the identity of the

second Wilson a puzzle. For instance, describing his race and his own disposition, the autodiegetic narrator introduces:

> Weak-minded, and beset with **constitutional infirmities** akin to my own, my parents could do but little to check the evil propensities which distinguished me. Some feeble and ill-directed efforts resulted in complete failure on their part, and, of course, in total triumph on mine.
>
> Thenceforward my **voice** was a household law; and at an age when few children have abandoned their leading-strings, I was left to the guidance of my own will, and became, in all but name, the master of my own actions. [emphasis added] (427)

Herein, the hereditary 'constitutional infirmities', without doubt, refers to the weaknesses in personality. Due to his parents' feeble minds, his 'voice', his opinion, taking the polysemic signification of the word, become(s) the principles of the household. Those keywords are repeatedly and crucially extended to the vocal defect of Wilson's double in facilitating an uncanny sense of mixed familiarity and unfamiliarity and a perplexing and fantastic circumstance of the double as an actual entity or a product of Wilson's imagination and guilt. The protagonist-narrator says:

> I could find, indeed, but one vulnerable point, and that, lying in a personal peculiarity, arising, perhaps, from **constitutional disease**, would have been spared by any antagonist less at his wit's end than myself; – my rival had a weakness in the faucial or guttural organs, which **precluded him from raising his voice** at any time *above a very low whisper*. Of this defect I did not fail to take what poor advantage lay in my power. [emphasis added] (433)

The 'constitutional disease' here indicates the malfunction of the Wilson double's throat which results in his only being able to whisper instead of speaking in a normal voice. However, in addition to illness, 'disease', as a polysemic word, also has the alternative meaning of a detrimental quality or disposition, which recalls the narrator, the first William Wilson's 'constitutional infirmities' and the 'voice' in the household mentioned above. His imperfect sense of morality and dominant

voice in the ‘house’ of himself cause his conscience to be defective and less sound, preventing it from raising its voice. Thus, as the tale progresses, this ‘constitutional disease’ is linked to his own voice in the description: ‘in spite of his **constitutional defect**, even **my voice** did not escape him...*and his singular whisper, it grew the very* ***echo*** *of my own*’ [emphasis added] (435).

Although the second Wilson appears to embody the first’s conscience, and the epigraph of the tale regarding a spectre-like conscience in one’s path (426) seems to strengthen such realistic reading of the double, Poe nonetheless infuses the possibility of the existence of a spectral doppelgänger into his tale. For example, when reflecting on the circumstances of being dogged and haunted by William Wilson, the protagonist-narrator frequently mentions horror or juxtaposes judgment with horror. He says: ‘This has been already too much an object for the scorn – for the horror – for the detestation of my race’ (426), ‘an objectless yet intolerable horror’ (437), ‘Must I say that I felt all the horrors of the damned?’ (443), and ‘in a perfect agony of horror and of shame’ (444). He also further ascribes the presence of William Wilson to some mysterious powers of uncontrollable destiny (444-45), and solicits belief in his being ‘the slave of circumstances beyond human control’ (427). As he begins to narrate his encounter with Wilson, some evidence of the actual existence of Wilson appears. Those senior to him in Dr. Bransby’s academy believe that the second Wilson is his brother (432); this Wilson follows him everywhere, from the boarding school to Eton, Oxford, Paris, Rome, Vienna, Berlin, Moscow, and Naples. In Oxford, especially, a group of people hear his double’s exposure of the fact that the real Wilson cheated at cards. Even more significantly, as he stabs Wilson to death in Rome’s masquerade, he himself is dying too. At the ending, the Wilson double, in his dying hour, reveals that Wilson’s life depends upon him, and his own death will lead to Wilson’s death (448). Wilson is, as the double claims, found dying as he begins to flashback the whole incredible event about his double in the present time at the outset of his narrative. He states: ‘Death approaches; and the shadow which foreruns him has thrown a softening influence over my spirit’ (427). The life and death of Wilson and the Wilson double, like the one between an

individual and their doppelgänger, are intimately tied to each other, transcending the simple relationship between a person and their conscience.

As a writer cherishing imagination, yet restrained by the widespread value placed on reason and rationalism in post-Enlightenment society, Poe seems to intend to create two stories in 'William Wilson' through granting the double two identities – as the supernatural being of a doppelgänger and as a non-existent imagined counterpart of conscience. To achieve this perplexing duality, Poe again makes use of the techniques of homonym and polysemy to engender uncanny word doubles and fantastic senses, just as he plays with the polysemic sense of 'constitutional disease' noted above. At the debauched and intoxicated scene in Eton, the servant, as the key witness to the second Wilson, is heard 'from without' (438). It could mean that the servant is outside the apartment and he greets the double, or it could suggest that the servant does not exist at all and this has no actual existence 'without', beyond or outside of the protagonist-narrator's alcoholic hallucinations, as the homonymic meanings of 'without' are applied here. Apart from this, at another scene in the card game in Oxford, the Wilson double presents himself 'muffled' in a cloak (442), beneath which is a morning 'wrapper' (443). Both 'muffled' and 'wrapper' can characterise the habiliments of the double, and thus intensify his individuality and substantiality; on the other hand, they can be associated with sound, as if the voice of the conscience – an echo of the earlier 'constitutional disease' and 'precluded him from raising his voice' – is more deeply muffled by or wrapped in vices. Yet, after his double departs, the narrator, who is then dressed in the exact attire that his double wears, is mistakenly offered by a fellow-commoner the cloak left behind by his double. He emphasises that 'it was with an astonishment nearly bordering upon terror, that I perceived my own already hanging on my arm...' (444). This extraordinary detail works with all the ambiguous word doubles engaged by Poe to mix the familiar with the unfamiliar and the natural with the supernatural that leads to a puzzling and indefinite sense.

Similar to 'William Wilson', Poe's 'The Black Cat', a story that involves preternatural events and psychological turmoil, challenges the reader's interpretation of it. Historically, an 1845 anonymous review published in the

Literary Annual Register notifies that 'the "Black Cat" is a striking but improbable story of a murderer haunted by a cat with the mark of a gallows on her breast, and finally, by her agency brought to justice' (199). The extraordinary and implausible depiction of the cat, along with the culpability of the narrator himself, puts into question the creature's supernaturalism or even, her existence in reality. In his essay 'Studies in English and American Fiction: the *Tales* of Edgar A. Poe' (1846), E. D. Forgues, doubtful about the narrator's sanity and sobriety, refers to him as an 'unfortunate maniac, in whose brain burned by strong liquors, lodged a monstrous hatred for his poor cat' (217). In summary, 'The Black Cat' is concerned with a man's killing of his pet, a black cat named Pluto, his encounter with a second black cat, and his degeneracy of murdering his wife to finally being sentenced to death, all of which, he attributes to Pluto's revenge on him.

The title, 'The Black Cat', implying only one black cat throughout the text (if excluding Pluto's reincarnation as the second black cat), and the very first words of the tale 'the most wild, yet most homely' about those extraordinary circumstances happening in a household suggest the author's and the autodiegetic narrator's tendency to attribute them to supernaturalism: the second black cat is the transmigration of the first. Pluto, the first black cat, is depicted as a considerably 'sagacious' animal, whose human-like level of thinking triggers the ancient superstition that 'regarded all black cats as witches in disguise' (850). Apart from the supernatural figure of witch, the cat's name, Pluto, the ruler and judge of the Underworld in Greek myth, also associates the cat with the preternatural. Nevertheless, instead of developing it into a supernatural story in which a black cat returns as another cat to avenge itself on its abusive master, Poe creates a sense of ambiguity in the tale by making the narrator a guilt-ridden alcoholic. When the narrator is about to torture his first black cat Pluto and is bitten by it, for instance, it is said that 'he inflicted a slight wound upon my hand with his teeth' (851). The physical 'teeth' heightened here will be repeated in a different passage about human perverseness, when the narrator attempts to rationalise his atrocity of cutting one of Pluto's eyes: 'Have we not a perpetual inclination, in the **teeth** of our best judgment, to violate that which is *Law*, merely

because we understand it to be such?' [emphasis added] (852). The 'teeth' then endowed with the polysemic meaning of compelling power of laws is inverted to 'our best judgement', and refers much to his injurious act. It functions as a link to the narrator's guilty conscience that is developed in the latter part of the tale, and somewhat reduces the reliability of his account of subsequent supernatural events. On the other hand, however, the repetition of 'teeth' is reminiscent of the teeth of the cat Pluto, whose name recalls the underworld God of judgement. Such connection seems to echo the narrator's explanation of the whole story as the first black cat's retribution for its unnatural death.

Word doubles also create fantastic effects in the event of the conflagration that takes place in the same day the narrator hangs Pluto. It says: 'On the night of the day on which this cruel deed was done, I was aroused from sleep by the cry of fire...My entire worldly wealth was swallowed up, and I resigned myself thenceforward to despair' (852). In a figurative sense, the 'cry of fire' can simply be taken as the noise of fire, and the fire can be regarded as a mere accident. Yet, considering the sequence that soon after his brutal deed, a fire breaks out, it does not seem inappropriate to take literally the personification, a device that is frequently employed by writers to create uncanny animism, as the feelings of the fire related to Pluto's pain and anger of being hanged. The succeeding 'swallowed up', which is not incoherent to the literal meaning of the fire's cry, also seems to heighten the likelihood of a supernatural force exerted to punish the hangman. And this sense of the fantastic is also extended to the last scene: the exposure of the narrator's crime, the killing of his wife:

> But may God shield and deliver me from the **fangs** of the Arch-Fiend! No sooner had the reverberation of my blows sunk into silence, than I was answered by a voice **from within the tomb**! – by a **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, conjointly from the **throats** of the damned in their agony and of the demons that exult in the damnation….

> The corpse, already greatly decayed and clotted with gore, stood erect before the eyes of the spectators. Upon its **head**, with red extended mouth and solitary eye of **fire**, sat the hideous beast whose craft had seduced me into murder, and whose informing voice had consigned me to the **hangman**. I had walled the monster up within the tomb! [emphasis added] (858-59)

Herein, the wife's body hidden inside the walls of the house is discovered through the voice of the second black cat, which the narrator had unwittingly walled up with the corpse. Its alarming 'cry' – compared to a child's sobbing – and its 'solitary eye of fire' both recall the personified 'cry of the fire'. They correspond to the literal sense of the animism of the fire, and strengthen the supernatural belief that the fire, the sudden appearance of the second cat, the narrator's homicide of his wife, and the disclosure of his crime are all caused by the first black cat Pluto. The phrases 'half of horror', 'half of triumph', and 'such as might have arisen only out of hell' that modify the cat's crying sound, also suggest the possibility that the second cat is a reincarnation of Pluto. Besides this, the 'fangs of the Arch-Fiend' and the voice responded 'from within the tomb' also remind us of Pluto's teeth and the fact that Pluto is sent to the tomb by the narrator. Even the comparison of the cat's voice to those from 'the throats of the damned in their agony and of the demons that exult in the damnation' echoes Pluto's 'throat' grabbed by the narrator when he commits that 'damnable' deed of cutting its eye (851). Due to his past cruelty, the cat now delivers him to the hangman's noose, the exact method he uses to destroy Pluto.

However, the same paragraph can be read differently as the revelation of the narrator's conscience. He, a criminal-narrator, imposes his own uneasy and guilty emotions on this incident. For instance, the cat's cry, which is metaphorically rendered as 'the sobbing of a child', can be traced back to his 'infancy', when the good human qualities of kindness and sympathy are still living in his heart (850). Though having been 'muffled and broken', like the conscience of William Wilson, his conscience, as he is surrounded by investigative policemen, awakens again. This is especially corresponded by his

insinuating his past ‘damnable atrocity’ of grasping Pluto’s ‘throat’ and removing the cat’s eye in the current description of the second black cat’s informing voice, which is likened to voices ‘from the throats of the damned in their agony and of the demons that exult in the damnation’. Here, then, his supernatural reading of the circumstance may be only his overinterpretation resulting from his sense of guilt.

But this kind of natural explanation does not solve the mystery of those repetitive patterns and elements found in the two black cats. In this last scene, the second cat is discovered sitting on the ‘head’ of the corpse of the narrator’s wife. It reiterates how, subsequent to the hanging of Pluto and the first fire, a cat-like shape is observed on the wall perpendicular to the ‘head’ of the narrator’s bed (853), and also how when the second cat first appears, it rests on ‘the head of one of the immense hogsheads of Gin, or of Rum’ (854). In a similar manner, the fire and wall uncannily reoccur in the narrator’s scheme to hide his wife’s body. Amongst all other possible options, he chooses, coincidentally or fatefully, to ‘wall’ up the corpse in the spot where there is a projection, presumably ‘a false chimney, or fireplace’ in the cellar walls which were plastered recently (857), just like the singular wall in the fire ruins ‘having been recently spread [by the plastering]’ (853). Wall and fire also reappear in the ending scene, when his wife’s carcass is exposed in the wall and the second black cat presents itself with an eye of ‘fire’. To effectively generate a sense of the fantastic, Poe, as I have demonstrated, applies repetitive and polysemic word doubles to the tale, alongside the arrangement of narratologically alternating the literal and supernatural explanation with the figurative and allegorical. Supernaturalism and conscience are tied together; where each begins is utterly undistinguishable and undecidable.

Poe’s later piece, ‘A Tale of the Ragged Mountains’, is another ambiguous tale that challenges the reader’s interpretation with the issues of uncanny doubles and reincarnation. Contemporary critics did not say much about this work. *Godey’s Magazine and Lady’s Book*, the *Broadway Journal*, and the newspaper *The Brooklyn Daily Eagle and Kings County Democrat* (with Walt Whitman as its editor) only printed or reprinted Poe’s tale without commenting on it. Modern

scholars, such as Williams, however, finds 'The Ragged Mountains' a story which 'invite[s] explanation by metempsychosis, mesmerism, animal magnetism, or opium addiction in various combinations and degrees of credibility', and '[b]y the end of the tale, the categories of dream and reality, self and other, even life and death are impossible to tease apart…' ('Poe's Ugly American' 52). In a similar way, Peeples notes that 'like some of Poe's most celebrated stories, "Ragged Mountains" is designed to raise interpretive questions that put the reader in the detective role, and the clues Poe provides hardly lead to definitive solutions' (*Edgar Allan Poe* 120).

Told by an anonymous homodiegetic narrator, 'The Ragged Mountains' is centred on Augustus Bedloe's dreamlike adventure in the locality of the Ragged Mountains, Charlottesville, Virginia, and the subsequent strange correspondences found between his experience and the real life. One misty autumn day in 1827, after taking a high dose of morphine to alleviate chronical neuralgia, Bedloe, a young gentleman of imaginative disposition, goes on a habitual stroll in the Ragged Mountains. There, he seems, whether a dream or not, to be involved in a war in a faraway oriental city. During the attacks and defences against his enemies, he is hit at the right temple by a serpent-like poisonous black arrow and dies. His unreal experience is then confirmed by Doctor Templeton – a physician who has been practising mesmerism to treat his neuralgic problem – who tells a true story of his friend Oldeb in India: he lost his life in a combat related to the insurrection of Cheyte Sing in Benares in 1780. Templeton shows that Oldeb's appearance is identical to Bedloe's through an old portrait of Oldeb. Also, Templeton says that while Bedloe has had his incredible wanderings in the hills, he himself was chronicling the exact Indian event that Bedloe was taking part in. The tale ends with the newspaper publication of Bedloe's recent death, that he died in a medical accident caused by Templeton's misplacing a poisonous *sangsue* on his right temple.

The entire tale sounds like an uncanny repetition of history, a recurrence of Oldeb's death in relation to Bedloe after 47 years. The doubling of Oldeb and

Bedloe triggers the issue if Bedloe is, supernaturally, the reincarnation of Oldeb, or all is a combination of naturalistic causes and effects of drug-induced hallucinations, Bedloe's imagination, the transfer of thoughts from Dr Templeton to Bedloe via mesmerism, coincidences, or a murder plotted and committed, as Peeples suggests, by Templeton (*Edgar Allan Poe* 120). In his work, Poe again makes use of repetitions and polysemies to weave a narrative indeterminate to supernaturalism or naturalism in ways that resonate with the theories of Schlegel, Blair, and Kames.

Bedloe's marvellous adventure in the Ragged Mountains begins with the following sentence: 'Upon a dim, warm, misty day, towards the close of November, and during the strange ***interregnum*** of the seasons which in America is termed the **Indian** Summer, Mr. Bedloe departed, as usual, for the hills' [emphasis added] (942). The setting wherein Bedloe is situated parallels the historical and political Indian context in which Oldeb lived. In the tale, Dr Templeton tellingly reveals:

> "In your [i.e. Bedloe's] detail of the vision which presented itself to you amid the hills, you have described, with the minutest accuracy, the **Indian** city of Benares, upon the Holy River. The riots, the combats, the massacre, were the actual events of the **insurrection** of Cheyte Sing, which took place in 1780, when Hastings was put in imminent peril of his life." [emphasis added] (949)

It can be seen here that Poe selects words of double meaning to mimic the Indian setting where Bedloe's counterpart, Oldeb, existed. Daniel J. Philippon points out that 'Poe's choice of seasons' is partly to 'foreshadow the events that take place in the "Indian" city of Benares' (94). Likewise, Williams observes that '[t]he name is native to the American setting but also foreshadows Bedloe's translation from the Ragged Mountains to Benares' ('Poe's Ugly American' 54), and that 'Poe's setting in the "Indian summer"' has the function to 'foreshadow subsequent events' ('Poe's Ugly American' 58). Poe clearly plays on the polysemy of the word 'Indian', which signifies both the Eastern country and indigenous Americans, in his construction of the uncanny doubles of Oldeb and Bedloe.

According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, the use of 'Indian summer', etymologically, 'may echo the use of INDIAN *adj.* in compounds such as INDIAN CORN *n.*, INDIAN BREAD *n.*, etc. which denote something other than that normally denoted by the simplex, sometimes with derogatory connotations of being substitute or ersatz', or it 'may have arisen from the fact that the region in which the meteorological conditions in question were originally noticed was still occupied by the Indians'. The Indians refer to Native Americans. J. Freeman, in 1812, notes that 'the Indian Summer, a name which is derived from the natives, who believe that it is caused by a wind, which comes immediately from the court of their great and benevolent God Cautantowwit, or the south-western God' (*OED*). Even closer to Poe in time and place, J. Doddridge records in *Notes, on the Settlement and Indian Wars, of the Western Parts of Virginia and Pennsylvania* (1824): 'This was the Indian summer, because it afforded the Indians another opportunity of visiting the settlements with their destructive warfare' (*OED*). Different from yet suggestive of the denotation of 'Indian' from India, the phrase of Indian summer is exploited here in order to tie Bedloe the American with oriental Oldeb from India.

Apart from the polysemic word 'Indian', in the above quoted passage, Poe also makes use of the double meaning of 'interregnum' to evoke an uncanny sense between the two characters. Bedloe's hill ramble takes place 'during the strange *interregnum* of the seasons which in America is termed the Indian Summer', while Oldeb is foregrounded by 'the insurrection of Cheyte Sing' against Warren Hastings's British colonial administration in India. Though, apparently, Poe's use of 'interregnum' here signifies '[a] breach of continuity; an interval, pause, vacant space' (*OED*) in the periods of weather, the word itself has a primary meaning of '[t]he time in which a throne is vacant, between the death or abdication of a king and the accession of his successor…[and] in strictness, can happen only in governments where the king is elective' (*Webster's Dictionary*) and '[t]he interval between the close of a king's reign and the accession of his successor; any period during which a state is left without a ruler or with a merely provisional government' (*OED*). It delineates, therefore, the disordered political state in India,

the world where Oldeb, Bedloe's double, was. The polysemy of both 'Indian' and 'interregnum' is adopted to link different space and time, creating the uncanniness of sameness in difference and mystifying the distinction between Bedloe and Oldeb.

The enigma is sustained all the way to the finality of the tale. Perplexing and unsettling repetitions appear in the newspaper narration of Bedloe's death, which seems, to some degree, to reproduce Oldeb's demise, and thus makes the connection between the doubling of Bedloe and Oldeb an unsolvable mystery. Poe writes:

> In an excursion to the Ragged Mountains, a few days since, a slight cold and fever were contracted, attended with great determination of blood to the head [of Bedloe]. To relieve this, Dr. **Templeton** resorted to topical bleeding. **Leeches** were applied to the **temples**. In a fearfully brief period the patient died, when it appeared that, in the jar containing the leeches, had been introduced, by accident, one of the venomous vermicular **sangsues** which are now and then found in the neighboring ponds. This creature fastened itself upon a small artery in the **right temple**. Its close resemblance to the medicinal leech caused the mistake to be overlooked until too late.
>
> N.B. The **poisonous** sangsue of Charlottesville may always be distinguished from the medicinal leech by its **blackness**, and especially by its **writhing** or vermicular motions, which very nearly resemble those of a snake. [emphasis added] (949-50)

The feature of Bedloe's death, concerning the 'temples', the 'right temple', the 'poisonous' sangsue of 'blackness', and the sangsue's 'writhing' movement, corresponds to Oldeb's fatal wound 'upon the right temple' (947) made by 'a poisoned barb' of an arrow, which looks like 'in some respects the writhing creese of the Malay' (947), and those arrows are 'made to imitate the body of a creeping serpent, and were long and black, with a poisoned barb' (947). In addition to this, it is noticeable that the physician's name, 'Templeton', is also imitative of the 'temple'. The wordplay of 'sangsue', the French word for 'leech', and the

anagrammatic pair of Bedlo(e)/Oldeb. The exact reversed form of 'Oldeb' is 'Bedlo', without an 'e'. To engender the identical anagram, Poe invents an incidental mistake in the typography of the news of Bedloe's death. The newspaper misspells Bedloe's name without an 'e', and this typo makes the narrator meditate, confusingly: '"one truth is stranger than any fiction – for Bedlo, without the *e*, what is it but Oldeb conversed? And this man tells me it is a typographical error"' (950).

In his work, Poe carefully selects and employs words that function to intensify the uncanny sensation and ambiguity. As Peeples rightly says about 'The Ragged Mountains', that 'Poe's most important clues are linguistic' (*Edgar Allan Poe* 120). The past events re-emerge in different forms at present, blurring the boundaries of time, space, and individuality. Devices of repetitions, polysemies, and other word games generate doublings in words, which, in turn, arouse a sense of uncanniness between character doubles and indeterminacy of supernaturalism and naturalism. Yet, as this chapter has demonstrated, not only in the present work, but also in Poe's earlier pieces, 'Ligeia', 'William Wilson', and 'The Black Cat', similar uses of repetitions and polysemies are in conjunction with the writing of uncanny doubles. Poe's adoptions and practices of these devices are reminiscent of the teachings from Schlegel, Blair, and Kames on plurality of interests, wit and words of double meaning, and copiousness in composition. His style, in reflecting some of the principles advocated by those contemporary critics and rhetoricians, whose publications he had read, evinces key correspondences between Poe's writing and the latter's theories.

Chapter 4: Prophecies, Riddles, and the Terror of Life and Death: Antithesis in 'Metzengerstein', 'Morella', 'The Island of the Fay', and 'The Oval Portrait'

Prior to Poe, in the course of the publications of Gothic fictions, there are British and American writers such as Walpole, Radcliffe, Lewis, and Brockden Brown, who were known to Poe and whose works instantiate the language of terror in the form of prophecies and riddle-like phraseology. Those mysterious expressions, with their vague and perplexing purports which obstruct and delay interpretations embody the obscure and suspenseful effect of terror. Regarding Walpole's influence on Poe, Fisher asserts, 'A descent from such British milestones in literary Gothicism as Horace Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto* (1764) […] is evident in Poe's writings' ('Poe and the Gothic' 72). Stuart Levine and Susan F. Levine note that Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto* may be a source of '*gothic wonders*' for Poe's first published tale, 'Metzengerstein' (1). The prophecy and the animate ancestor picture in *Otranto* find their resonance in Poe's work (1). Correspondingly, Sova observes that Poe's tale 'contains many of the standard devices found in such 18th-century GOTHIC thrillers as Horace Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto*…' (115). Arthur Hobson Quinn, in *Edgar Allan Poe: A Critical Biography*, also comments: 'The best way to appreciate them [different versions of Poe's 'Metzengerstein'] is to compare Poe's use of the Gothic material with Walpole's absurd treatment in the *Castle of Otranto,* which has been suggested as its source' (193). Mabbott suggests that Poe's 'Metzengerstein' has been indebted to Walpole's *Otranto* (16). Of the latter, the 'mysterious prophecy', the 'ancestral picture' that comes to life and its enormous stature, as well as the hero's name 'Frederic' have their counterparts in Poe's tale (16-17).

In Walpole's *Otranto,* the first Gothic fiction and a work mentioned in chapter one, for example, an inheritance-related prophecy veils the identity of the righteous lord of the castle of Otranto. It says, '*That the castle and lordship of*

Otranto should pass from the present family, whenever the real owner should be grown too large to inhabit it' (17). Superficially and literally, those prophetic words seem to indicate that the genuine sovereign of Otranto will be made to grow bigger than the castle, and will prompt the shift of lordship to himself. Supernaturalism, and the illegitimacy of the present ruler as suggested by the prophecy, direct the subsequent plot of the novel, yet the true meaning of the prophecy is not revealed until the denouement. Walpole clearly makes use of the obscurity and ambiguity of prophetic language and the delay in semantics to create his intended 'Terror', his chief machinery that 'prevents the story from ever languishing' as claimed in his preface to the initial publication of *Otranto*. Although the adverbial phrase of 'too large to inhabit' in Walpole's prophecy sounds rather negative, it nevertheless does not constitute the antithesis of contrasting concepts that is exemplified in Poe's works. While antithesis can be found in the prophetic lines, 'Where'er a casque that suits this [large] sword is found, / With **perils** is thy daughter compass'd round: / Alfonso's blood alone can **save** the maid, / And **quiet** a long-**restless** prince's shade' [emphasis added] (82), it does not construct the same riddling effect as Poe's use of antithesis does in his Gothic works. Likewise, the castle servants' dilatory discourse, mentioned by Walpole as elements contributing to the heightening of terror in both earlier and later prefaces to Otranto, demonstrates the author's penchant for employing digression, instead of antithesis, to suspend marvellous spectacles in his work.

Lewis's *The Monk*, another earlier Gothic romance, likewise uses antithesis without creating a riddling effect. Poe knew Lewis's work, as shown in chapter 2. However, Poe did not seem to be inspired by Lewis's rendering of prophecies and terror in *The Monk*. In the novel, a Gypsy prophetess foretells, significantly, Antonia's destiny, saying '[…] That destruction o'er you hovers; / Lustful Man and crafty Devil / Will combine to work your evil; / And from **earth** by sorrows driven, / Soon your Soul must speed to **heaven'** [emphasis added] (38). The meaning here is very straightforward – antithesis does not contribute to riddles or ambiguity. This prophecy pertains to the title and subject of the novel,

Monk Ambrosio and his blasphemous degeneracy resulting in the ultimate rape and murder of Antonia, his sister. Here, unspecified warnings and the presumably satanic metaphor,[1] 'Lustful Man and crafty Devil', and misfortunes modified by modals, 'will' and 'must', in the prophetic wording unnerve the readers, but no structure of antithesis is found in Lewis's prophecy.

Similarly, word pairs do not frequently characterize the writings of Radcliffe, the proponent of terror, in *The Mysteries of Udolpho*. Poe refers to Radcliffe in his tale 'The Oval Portrait', where the setting, a desolate chateau in the Apennines, is compared to 'not less in fact than in the fancy of Mrs. Radcliffe' (662). Kennedy thus assumes Poe's 'familiarity with Ann Radcliffe's *Mysteries of Udolpho*' ('America's Europe' 168), while Peter G. Beidler and Hayes also recall Radcliffe's romance, owing to its setting of Apennine-based Udolpho castle.[2] Apart from this, other similarities in Poe's work and Radcliffe's *Udolpho*, such as a picture shrouded in secrecy within the castle, and an imprisoned female character who is left emaciated in the castle's turret[3], also suggest that Poe borrowed some ideas from Radcliffe's Gothic romance. In *Udolpho*, the dramatic scene wherein Emily has a chance to unravel the mystery of a veiled picture in the castle of Udolpho, is described like this: 'She paused again, and then, with a timid hand, **lifted** the veil; but instantly let it **fall** – perceiving that what it had concealed was no picture, and, before she could leave the chamber, she dropped senseless on

[1] The combination of 'Lustful Man and crafty Devil', in the first place, appears to refer, metaphorically, the devil to the lustful man's scheme for satisfying his desires. In the latter part of the novel, Lucifer is conjured up by Matilda to assist in Ambrosio's rape of Antonia. Towards the closure of the novel, the Devil reveals that he has long targeted Ambrosio as his prey. He sent a 'crafty spirit' to be Matilda in the human form, luring Ambrosio to give himself up to lust, and eventually committing more serious crimes of incest and murders (440). The 'crafty Devil' in the prophecy, therefore, can be taken literally, if we consider the Devil's words to be true. Hogle's article in 'Afterword' in *Gothic Shakespeares* discusses the literal fulfilment of this prophecy (212), and Andrew McInnes in '"Better Known as Rosa Matilda": Charlotte Dacre's Authorial Doppelganger' in *Women and Gothic* reads Matilda as a bona fide demon (97).

[2] Beidler states that Poe 'clearly alludes to the dark castle of Udolpho, that crumbling edifice hidden in the mountain range in northern Italy where Emily St. Aubert is kept prisoner by the evil Montoni' (24). Hayes singles out Radcliffe's *The Mysteries of Udolpho* among her publications as the one that sets in a castle in Apennine Mountains (*The Annotated Poe* 229-30n1).

[3] Here I refer to Madame Montoni in chapter three of the third volume of *Udolpho*. She is punished and imprisoned by her husband in the east turret. Correspondingly, in Poe's 'The Oval Portrait', a piece that will be analysed later in this chapter, the nameless heroine shares Madame Montoni's fate of being trapped in a turret of a chateau, suffering, and wasting away.

the floor' [emphasis added] (248-49). The antithesis of 'lift/fall' is purely chronological and adds no mystery. The deciding negation, 'no picture', obscures the object seen by Emily; it only says what the thing is not (i.e. a picture) rather than affirming what the thing actually is. The mystery created by the riddling negation is sustained throughout the most of the novel, which corresponds to the author's self-conscious exploitation of terror in her work.[4] However, like Walpole and Lewis, Radcliffe's discourse of terror is not characterized by antithesis. The lack of antithesis in writing terror and riddles in her novel means that Poe found the inspiration for antithesis somewhere else in his time.

Brockden Brown's Gothic style of terror and ambiguity, along with the fact that he was the earliest representative Gothic prose writer in America, leads to him often being regarded as a model for Poe. Poe was familiar with Brown. In his 1843 review of James Fenimore Cooper, he thinks highly of 'Mr. Brockden Brown', for his artistical composition (480); in the marginalia published in the *Democratic Review*, December 1844, he again declares that 'Brockden Brown and Hawthorne ([…] are each a *genus*)' (1342). At the same time, several nineteenth-century critics associate Poe's writing with Brown's. Griswold, for instance, says, 'Mr Poe resembles BROCKDEN BROWN in his intimacy with mental pathology but surpasses that author in delineation' (183). E. D. Forgues observes: 'So if one wanted to designate an American predecessor of Mr Edgar Poe, one could, without too much forcing of analogies, compare him to Charles Brockden Brown, who also sought sincerely, even in his most frivolous fictions, the solution of some intellectual problem' (217). More specifically, Gilfillan recalls Brown in his review of Poe, due to their similar treatment of the supernatural, i.e. supernatural ambiguity. He states, 'In one point, Poe bears a striking resemblance to his own

[4] Before Radcliffe enters the crucial paragraph regarding Emily and the veiled picture, she, meaningfully, writes about the element of terror. She briefly introduces, 'But a terror of this nature, as it occupies and expands the mind, and elevates it to high expectation, is purely sublime, and leads us, by a kind of fascination, to seek even the object, from which we appear to shrink' (248). Her illumination on terror accords with her definition of terror in her later essay 'On the Supernatural in Poetry', saying that terror 'expands the soul, and awakens the faculties to a high degree of life' (47). Radcliffe's awareness of terror, her insight into terror, and then her practice of it in the veiled picture show her careful selection of event and language that embodies terror.

illustrious countryman, Brockden Brown—neither resort to agency absolutely supernatural, in order to produce their terrific effects' (183). Bryan W. Proctor perceives both authors' similarities in 'the same love of the morbid and improbable; the same frequent straining of the interest; the same tracing, step by step, logically as it were and elaborately, through all its complicated relations, a terrible mystery to its source' (202).

Recent critics also acknowledge Brown's contribution to American Gothic and align Poe with him. Gretchen J. Woertendyke states that Brown's engagement with romance laid the cornerstone for several American Renaissance authors, including Poe (155). She claims, 'Both Poe and Irving were heavily influenced by the fiction and theories of Brown'; the difference is that Brown composes novels of a lengthier form, whereas Irving and Poe write tales (168n2). Carol Margaret Davison regards Brown as the 'Godfather' of the American Gothic' (110), whose exploration, with dark imagination, of native issues in the nascent country of America, as well as whose 'successful experiments with the expression of character interiority' prepare his later countrymen's Gothic, in which Poe is involved (112). Similar to Davison, Jeffrey Andrew Weinstock and Elizabeth Jane Wall Hinds observe Brown's legacy of psychological writing and human irrationality, and its influence on Poe. Both connect the 'irrationally self-harming actions' (Hinds 135) or the conflict between the id and rationality in Brown (Weinstock, 'Introduction' 4) with Poe's concept of the perverse in his creations. Weinstock classifies Brown's and Poe's Gothic as 'Psychological Gothic' ('Introduction' 4). When discussing Brown's influence on Poe in his monograph *Charles Brockden Brown*, Weinstock further asserts that Brown 'synthesized' supernatural Gothic ('X-Files' in Weinstock's terminology) and supernatural-explained Gothic (termed 'Scooby Doo' by Weinstock) and launches a third type: undecided Gothic (92). His ambiguous Gothic writings, characterized by a haunted psyche that often exaggerates the natural world, pave the way for Poe's Psychological Gothic (*Charles Brockden Brown* 93). Likewise, Lloyd-Smith comments, 'Some of Edgar Allan Poe's work seems to follow in the patterns set

by Brown: the indeterminate urban situations, the nightmare intensities, and above all, the confusions of consciousness as the protagonist's madness destabilizes narrative and setting' (*American Gothic* 30). Lloyd-Smith acknowledges Brown's significance as the chief founder of 'the Gothic tradition in American fiction' (*American Gothic* 29), and suggests his influence on Poe's Gothic writings.

Unlike in previously mentioned authors' works, in Brown's notable piece *Wieland*, the enigma surrounding a misleading human or supernatural voice is present in the riddling language of antithesis. From the outset, the eponymous hero, Theodore Wieland, is involved in such mystery of voice. Having gone to the hills, he hears his wife, Catharine's voice while she is not with him, warning him of misfortune. He later asks her where she was, but she denies leaving the house and going into the hills. Puzzled by the inexplicable incident, he says '"either I **heard** my wife's voice at the bottom of the hill, or I **do not hear** your voice at present"' [emphasis added] (30). The paralleled opposition of 'heard [my wife's voice outdoors]' and 'do not hear [now your voice of denying her going out]' forms an empirical and logical riddle. Thus, Pleyel responds that it is '"a sad dilemma"' that he has encountered (30). Pleyel subsequently, however, will be confronted with a similar sight and sound dilemma configured by antithesis. In the key suspenseful scene, when Pleyel hears Catharine's voice but cannot find her nearby, he questions: '"It **was** my sister's voice; but it **could not be** uttered by her [since she was not there]; and yet, if **not** by her, by whom **was** it uttered?"' [emphasis added] (42). The positive 'was [her voice]' is aligned with the negation of 'could not be [her]'. This paradoxical inquiry leads to another contradictory quandary: if this 'was not' a voice uttered by Catharine, who then 'was' the person that uttered Catharine's voice. These antithetical yet coexistent statements deepen Wieland's inclination to assume a supernatural event, make Pleyel and Catharine suggest that it is purely 'a deception of the senses' (31) or 'an auricular deception' (32), and fill Clara, Wieland's sister, with uncertainty in that rationally she dislikes the idea of a supernatural solution but is unable to deny that something 'miraculous' has happened. (32) The use of antithesis by Brown not

only keeps the characters and readers in suspense, delaying the disclosure of Francis Carwin's ventriloquistic tricks, but also creates an ambiguity about who the voice belongs to – a human being or a preternatural entity – the kind of terror and supernatural ambiguity that is recurrent in Poe's Gothic works.

Apart from Brown's exemplification of antithesis in his Gothic imaginings, Schlegel, Blair, and Kames's compositional advice regarding the device of antithesis, as chapter one has introduced, also serves as contemporary source of Poe's adoption and application of antithesis. In his edited *The Selected Writings of Edgar Allan Poe*, Thompson particularly, in the section of Backgrounds and Contexts, selects Schlegel's passage on antithesis and unity of impression from *Lectures on Dramatic Art and Literature*.[5] This suggests that Thompson may also have noticed the peculiar overlap in Schlegel's and Poe's usage of the same terminology, 'unity of impression', in *Lectures* and Poe's review of Hawthorne and 'The Philosophy of Composition', a relation that I have discussed in chapter one. He may, as well, have speculated that Poe read through this part in Schlegel's treatise, as this is the only place in the text that such a term is used. Poe might have acquired knowledge of antithesis in juxtaposition from Schlegel's lectures. However, in the literary context of Poe's time, Blair and Kames, those influential rhetoricians known to Poe, likewise instruct that antithetical concepts and words should be put near each other to achieve the intended effect of strong contrast.

Poe's direct relation to the use of riddles can be found in his editorial article 'Enigmatical and Conundrum-ical' published in the Philadelphia newspaper *Alexander's Weekly Messenger* on December 18, 1839. Discussing puzzle-writing, Poe offers a pithy and riddle-like opinion: '"Why is a bad wife better than a good one? — Because bad is the best."' (4). While Poe explains to his readers the point of composing seemingly absurd riddles, which are paid off with the merit of wit as those riddles are solved, he utilizes the antithesis of 'bad' and 'good' to make a perplexing riddle. His application of antithetical language to riddles is also seen in several of his literary creations. For instance, in *Politian*

[5] This selection appears on page 736-37 in Thompson's collection.

(1835), his only play, Jacinta, a servant maid, creates such a riddle. After Lady Lalage gives jewels to Jacinta as her marriage present, she puts them on herself. Confused by her luxurious new look, the male servant Ugo enquires, 'Jacinta! Is it you?', with her mysterious response: 'Why, yes it **is** / And yet it **isn't**, Ugo, there's a riddle! / I was Jacinta **yesternight**, but **now** / Madam Jacinta if you please, Sir Ugo!' [emphasis added] (1.1.73-77). The juxtaposed antithetical 'is' and 'isn't', as well as 'yesternight' in the past and 'now' in the present time, makes Jacinta's conflicting and ambiguous double-talk. In Poe's Gothic tales, the element of terror is infused into his antithetical riddles. For example, in 'Ligeia', the heroine on her deathbed prophesies a mystic message: '"O God! O Divine Father! – shall these things be undeviatingly so? – shall this **Conqueror be** not once **conquered**?"' [emphasis added] (319). The antithesis of conqueror, the champion, and the loser, the one being conquered, is put in an interrogative. It leaves open the question whether Ligeia was able to conquer the natural law of death or not — an enigma that remains unresolved at the end of the story. In 'MS. Found in a Bottle' (1833), the sea captain's unusualness is depicted in the following way: 'His gray hairs are records of the **past**, and his grayer eyes are sybils of the **future**' and '[A]lthough the speaker was **close** at my elbow, his voice seemed to reach my ears from the **distance of a mile**' [emphasis added] (144). The oppositions in time and space that are both present in the captain render him a mysterious being, and lead to a delay in revealing his true identity as a ghost on a phantom ship (if we give credit to the narrator's account). In the 'Ragged Mountains', a piece that has just been analysed in chapter three, the suspense around the mystery – whether Bedloe is the reincarnation of Oldeb or whether all is a sheer coincidence – is also built partly through antitheses: 'He [Bedloe] certainly *seemed* **young** – and he made a point of speaking about his **youth** – yet there were moments when I should have had little trouble in imagining him **a hundred years of age**' [emphasis added] (940). The impenetrable contradiction in Bedloe at the outset of the story incepts the uncanny ambiguity that revolves around him.

Apart from these above works, antithesis is also employed in other tales of Poe's in order to evoke a sense of terror and ambiguity. In the remainder of this chapter, I will discuss 'Metzengerstein' (1832), 'Morella' (1835), 'The Island of the Fay' (1841), and 'The Oval Portrait' (1842) in relation to Poe's development of suspense, and creation of uncertainty about the existence of the supernatural. I will argue that Poe's antithetical language, emerging from its context in which Brown, Schlegel, Blair, and Kames are especially considered, serves as prophecies and riddles around the topic of life and death, that trigger unease and eventually lead to unresolved ambiguities between the supernatural and natural.

Antithetical Prophecies and Riddles in Poe

'Metzengerstein', Poe's first published tale that was written as a piece for the proposed collection of the *Tales of the Folio Club* and whose aim it was to tell 'erudite and witty' stories,[6] demonstrates Poe's exploitation of the device of antithesis in generating the perplexing and ambiguous Poesque riddle. The tale itself, as briefly mentioned in the last chapter, revolves around the unresolved hereditary feud between two Hungarian aristocratic families: Berlifitzing and Metzengerstein. The deadly rivalry and animosity impels Baron Frederick Metzengerstein to destroy Count Wilhelm Von Berlifitzing in a fire, and this villainy, in turn, drives the victim to avenge his unnatural death by transmigrating himself into a demoniac horse that carries and buries Metzengerstein in the conflagration of Metzengerstein Palace. To accentuate this intense conflict, antithesis such as past/present, age/youth, victory/fall, and life/death are especially wrought into the dichotomous yet interdependent relationship between Berlifitzing and Metzengerstein. But Poe does not simply resort to the external

[6] Mentioned in Poe's introduction to the *Tales of the Folio Club*: 'A clause in the Constitution [of the Folio Club] then adopted forbade the members to be otherwise than erudite and witty: and the avowed objects of the Confederation were "the instruction of society, and the amusement of themselves"' (204).

values of these opposing units. Rather, he internalises them to compose an equivocal prophecy that is perplexing but essentially meaningful to the overall development of the Berlifitzing-Metzengerstein counteraction. The prophecy is introduced as follows:

> Never before were two houses so illustrious, mutually embittered by hostility so deadly. The origin of this enmity seems to be found in the words of an ancient prophecy – "A **lofty** name shall have a fearful **fall** when, as the rider over his horse, the **mortality** of Metzengerstein shall triumph over the **immortality** of Berlifitzing". [emphasis added] (19)

Though the ellipsis of a verb in the phrase 'as the rider over his horse' obscures the interrelationship between the rider and the horse (e.g. 'control over', 'master over', or 'fall over'), and though in logical reasoning mortality is by no means superior to immortality, the prophecy nevertheless seems forebodingly to foretell the downfall of the House of Berlifitzing, particularly in view of the definite tone in the claim that 'the mortality of Metzengerstein shall triumph over the immortality of Berlifitzing'. The elaboration of the prophecy supplied elsewhere in the tale also echoes such interpretation: 'The prophecy seemed to imply – if it implied anything – a final triumph on the part of the already more powerful house [of Metzengerstein]; and was of course remembered with the more bitter animosity by the weaker and less influential [of Berlifitzing]' (19-20).

This understanding of the prophetic riddle is strengthened by certain suggestive clues, and is fulfilled literally through Poe's enforcement of the unity of effect. The defeated 'lofty' name referred in the prophecy, for example, exclusively finds its correspondences in the descriptions: 'the inhabitants of the Castle Berlifitzing might look, from their **lofty** buttresses, into the very windows of the Palace Metzengerstein' [emphasis added] (19), and 'Wilhelm, Count Berlifitzing, although **loftily** descended...' [emphasis added] (20). And the family tapestry, functioning like an epic portrayal of the prophecy, illustrates the duel scene between a Berlifitzing and Metzengerstein ancestor. The Saracen Berlifitzing falls 'over his horse', and is annihilated by the Metzengerstein: 'The **horse** itself, in the fore-ground of the design, stood motionless and statue-like –

while, farther back, its discomfited **rider** perished by the dagger of a Metzengerstein' [emphasis added] (22).

What happened in the past is prophetically intermingled with the present, leading towards one version of interpretation of the prophecy. Whilst Frederick Metzengerstein is gazing at the tapestry laden with the family history, a fire occurs at Berlifitzing's castle. The fiery light casts his shadow at the figure of the '**triumphant** [ancestral Metzengerstein] murderer of the Saracen Berlifitzing' in the tapestry [emphasis added] (23). Frederick Metzengerstein is thus supposedly to be the perpetrator who sets fire to the castle of Wilhelm Von Berlifitzing, just like what is displayed in the tapestry and what the prophecy foretells about Metzengerstein's triumph over Berlifitzing and the fall of a lofty name.

Yet the function of a prophecy is more to shed light on the future than to reiterate what has already happened in history. In this sense, Poe's riddle is supposed to be extended to have certain implications for, and interactions with, the unknown future, and it is mainly through the device of antithesis of mortality and immortality that the prophecy holds a second interpretation and effectuates a totally reversed outcome in 'Metzengerstein'. From the outset of the tale, it is mentioned that metempsychosis is a fixed belief in Hungary (18), and that there runs a saying: '*The soul...ne demeure qu'un seule fois dans un corps sensible: au reste – un cheval, un chien, un homme même, n'est que la ressemblance peu tangible de ces animaux*' (19) (English: 'the soul "dwells but once in a material body – for the rest – a horse, a dog, even a human being – it is only an intangible phantom of those creatures"'[7]). The association of the supernaturalism of metempsychosis with a horse is especially noticeable here, for both are included in the prophecy that 'as the rider over his horse, the mortality of Metzengerstein shall triumph over the immortality of Berlifitzing'. Frederick Metzengerstein apparently, like his literary precursors Oedipus and Macbeth, oversimplifies and underestimates the prophecy, without considering any potential twists or going deep into the antithetical pair of mortality/immortality. He takes only its outward sense and reads the prophecy simply as something like 'as the rider masters over

[7] Mabbott's translation, mentioned in Footnote 4 (30).

his horse, the mortal Metzengerstein shall triumph over the immortal Berlifitzing'. Hence, when a mysterious horse with the abbreviation of W. V. B. on its forehead shows up immediately after the death of Wilhelm Von Berlifitzing, and after the Berlifitzing horse woven in the tapestry supernaturally turns to have a resentful look, Frederick Metzengerstein, without much dread, thinks 'perhaps a **rider** like Frederick of Metzengerstein, may tame even the devil from the stables of Berlifitzing' [emphasis added] (24). And from then on, every time that Frederick Metzengerstein rides on this horse transmigrated from the immortal Wilhelm Von Berlifitzing, 'an expression of **triumphant** malignity distorted every muscle in his countenance' [emphasis added] (28).

But antithesis function only when the opposite counterpart exists, so as the immortality of Berlifitzing in the prophecy is literally fulfilled, the mortality of Metzengerstein shall likewise be effected. As Wilhelm Von Berlifitzing immortalises himself, Frederick Metzengerstein's death is nearing. The signification of mortality and immortality is opposed distinctly to each other; immortality, as mortality's opposition, has utter supremacy over mortality. In the denouement of 'Metzengerstein', Wilhelm Von Berlifitzing's horse takes Frederick Metzengerstein into the fire at Metzengerstein Palace, collapsing the House of Metzengerstein. The first part of the prophecy concerning 'A lofty name shall have a fearful fall', therefore, also gets fulfilled.

The prophecy in 'Metzengerstein', in Poe's witty rendering, is thus fulfilled in twofold ways. Firstly, Frederick Metzengerstein triumphs over Wilhelm Von Berlifitzing, and causes the fall of the lofty name of Berlifitzing. Secondly, based on the distinct yet inseparable oppositional pair of mortality and immortality, the immortal Wilhelm Von Berlifitzing mortalises Frederick Metzengerstein, and brings the downfall of the lofty name of Metzengerstein. Poe indeed intentionally obscures the meaning of the prophecy and then literally fulfils the prophecy in an equivocal manner.

Although Poe's review of Stephens was published five years after 'Metzengerstein', Poe's understanding of prophecies demonstrated in this review significantly sees its parallels in 'Metzengerstein'. The transition from

unintelligibility to intelligibility is evidenced by the function of the oppositional pair of mortality/immortality in the prophecy that is not intelligible until it is literally fulfilled in Frederick Metzengerstein's death in the denouement. Poe's claims in the review that prophetic obscurity is 'like the apparently irrelevant detail', that prophecies 'become intelligible only when viewed from the proper point of observation', and that 'the most strictly literal interpretation will apply' are also manifested in his use of mortality and immortality here in the prophecy: its alternative signification lurks in the context emphasising triumph and defeat ('A lofty name shall have a fearful fall when, as the rider over his horse, the mortality of Metzengerstein shall triumph over the immortality of Berlifitzing') but is still strictly fulfilled in a literal sense. Poe's statement concerning the literal fulfilment of prophecies, in addition to the review of Stephens, is also seen in his review of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's *Poems on Slavery,* when he comments 'if this prophecy be *not* [literally] fulfilled, it will be through no lack of incendiary doggrel [sic] on the part of Professor LONGFELLOW and his friends' (764). Poe's invariable emphasis on the literal fulfilment of prophecies shows that the literal realisation of mortality and immortality in the Metzengerstein prophecy is probably not a sudden whim or an afterthought but a technique intentionally generated and executed in structuring the tale as a whole.

This demonstrates that the second version of interpretation of the prophecy based on the wordplay of mortality/immortality is probably the 'effect' that Poe truly aims at in 'Metzengerstein'. The first interpretation as a simpler and straightforward reading of Berlifitzing's downfall is also fulfilled in the tale, but it apparently lacks the sense of obscurity essential for Poe's prophecy. Besides, it is brought to realisation in the midway of the tale, a premature location for the ultimate implementation of Poe's unity of effect. It functions more like a reversion to the second interpretation.

Like 'Metzengerstein', 'Morella' (1835), another tale published in the early stage of Poe's writing career, touches upon the theme of metempsychosis, and demonstrates the Poesque ambiguity of mortality and immortality in the antithesis of a prophetic riddle. Yet unlike 'Metzengerstein', whose sense of

ambiguity mainly comes from the obscure and underlying ingenuity of the mortal and the immortal of Frederick Metzengerstein and Wilhelm Von Berlifitzing, 'Morella' foregrounds the juxtaposed oppositions in one individual: the eponymous Morella herself. To build up the ambiguity of the natural and the supernatural in Morella in the tale, the heroine is characterised as no less than a mystic being whose education is linked with Pres(s)burg (known as Bratislava in English), the cradle of black magic,[8] and who has a great fascination with the knowledge of the forbidden. She approaches in her reading 'the ashes of a dead philosophy' (230) and brings back to life its old force. Antagonised by her spouse, who finds 'the mystery of my wife's manner oppressed me as a spell' (231), Morella languishes, and on her premature deathbed, she prophesies a curse or spell to her indifferent beloved:

> "It is a day of days," she said, as I approached; "a day of all days either to **live** or **die**. It is a fair day for the **sons** of **earth** and **life** – ah, more fair for the **daughters** of **heaven** and **death**!"
>
> I kissed her forehead, and she continued:
>
> "I am **dying**, yet shall I **live**."
>
> "Morella!"
>
> "The days have never been when thou couldst love me – but her whom in **life** thou didst **abhor**, in **death** thou shalt **adore**."
>
> "Morella!"
>
> "I repeat that I am **dying**. But within me is a pledge of that affection – ah, how little! – which thou didst feel for me, Morella. And when my spirit **departs** shall the child **live** – thy child and mine, Morella's." [emphasis added] (232-33)

Morella's prophetic words, as Poe claims about prophecies in his review of Stephens, are indeed filled with obscurity and ambiguous potential. Conflicting and opposing terms such as die/live, death/life, and abhor/adore are congested in the prophecy to construct as a riddle the true meaning of Morella's prediction. Especially the opening declaration 'I am dying, yet shall I live', wherein death

[8] Mentioned by Mabbott ('Note 1' 236).

and life, the two exclusive and antithetical notions, impossibly and paradoxically coexist in a mortal, strikes commonsense reasoning, and mystifies the mortality or immortality of Morella. With some attempts, it nevertheless seems that Morella's foreknowledge can be interpreted to mean that she, an individual steeped in mysticism, foretells that she will live after her own death; as the prophecy proceeds, however, Morella reverses the order of life and death, cursing her spouse to adore her in death, and turns to state that 'when my spirit departs shall the child live'. It thus appears rather ambiguous whether here, Morella predicts her own resurrection in the flesh or soul of her soon-to-be-born child, if 'I am dying, yet shall I live' is taken literally, or simply speaks about the extension of her life in a figurative manner, regarding her child as a form of her revivification in appearance and spirit. And equally obscure, in the remainder of the prophecy, is the incoherent shift from adoration and want of affection to timeless sorrow as the everlasting cypress and to bear a shroud towards the coming child – the *revived* Morella.

The ambiguity of Morella's prophecy and her reliving evidence in her child gets more intense as the prophecy in the tale is gradually and literally fulfilled. Firstly, the puzzling opposition between life and death is enacted in the indivisible tie between the mother and daughter: 'Yet, as she [Morella] had foretold, her child – to which in **dying** she had given **birth**, and which breathed not until the mother breathed no more – her child, a daughter, **lived**' [emphasis added] (233). Death and birth, the two opposing forces, are seamlessly and unusually joined in the two individuals; it inevitably reminds one of Morella's prophecy of 'I am dying, yet shall I live' and impels one to cast doubt on the identity of the daughter as Morella's metempsychosis or a separate independent being. Following this, as the daughter grows up, the mystery of identity is deepened even more with strange characteristics observed in her that are opposite to her actual age. For instance, the narrator queries, 'Could it be otherwise, when I daily discovered in the conceptions of the **child** the **adult** powers and faculties of the woman? – when the lessons of **experience** fell from the lips of **infancy**?' [emphasis added] (234). These mismatching oppositions render the daughter an

uncommon being and help to extend the riddle of the ambiguous potentiality of the dead Morella (with)in the living daughter.

Resemblances to Morella uncannily found in the separate individual of Morella's daughter greatly confound the father-narrator and the reader, and confound the solving and explanation of the life-and-death puzzle in the midst of the progression of the tale. The narrator captures 'phrases and expressions of the **dead** on the lips of the loved and the **living**' but cannot account for the cause of this [emphasis added] (234-35). And neither can the reader. Though Schellingian and Lockean philosophy and the issue of 'the *principium individuationis* that identity *which at death is or is not lost forever*' (231) is brought to the surface by Morella and the narrator, and although the tale's epigraph 'Itself, by itself solely, ONE everlastingly, and single' (229) is suggestive of the overall development of the plot, none of them discloses the answer to Morella's prophetic riddle. Neither that identity is obliterated with death nor the 'ONE everlastingly, and single' self touch upon the revelation that the daughter is Morella's transmigration with Morella's body and soul, or that the daughter simply bears resemblances to Morella. The revelation of the prophecy – a literal or a figurative reading of Morella's ambiguous prophecy – is not disclosed at those moments of the narrative that precede the denouement, the only proper point for the revelation of a secret in Poe.

Seemingly, the ambiguity of the interpretation of Morella's riddle, which is generated by the opposition of life and death, is a kind of secret intended and carefully maintained by Poe throughout the tale. In the early versions of A, B, C, D, and E of 'Morella', Morella's prophecy is rendered much more revealing. It says: '"I am dying, yet shall I live. Therefore for me, Morella, thy wife, hath the charnel-house no terrors – mark me! – not even the terrors of the worm."' (232). The claim to having no fears of the charnel-house or the worm, ostensibly implying Morella's invulnerability to physical damage and decomposition after death, suggests more about Morella's return to life through the body of her daughter. Poe clearly found that this exposed too much of his riddle, reducing considerably the sense of obscurity intrinsic to a prophecy, as well as the twist of

ambiguity and misleading suggestions during the process of guessing, and the unexpected effect of its fulfilment in the denouement. Hence later Poe omitted these more decisive suggestions and kept only the conflictive and confounding prediction of 'I am dying, yet shall I live' in the prophecy, making Morella's riddle unresolved till the end of the tale.

The enigma of the life and death of Morella is only solved as her prophecy is thoroughly and eventually fulfilled in a literal way in the very last paragraph of the tale. After the narrator names his daughter Morella and she dies right away, he reflects:

> Years – years may pass away, but the memory of that epoch – never! Nor was I indeed ignorant of the flowers and the vine – but the hemlock and the cypress overshadowed me night and day. And I kept no reckoning of time or place, and the stars of my fate faded from heaven, and therefore the earth grew dark, and its figures passed by me, like flitting shadows, and among them all I beheld only – Morella. The winds of the firmament breathed but one sound within my ears, and the ripples upon the sea murmured evermore –Morella. But she died; and with my own hands I bore her to the tomb; and I laughed with a long and bitter laugh as I found no traces of the first, in the charnel where I laid the second – Morella. (236)

The absence of the body of the mother Morella in the charnel-house reveals that Morella, just as she foretells in the curse, dies and resurrects in her daughter. From the beginning to the end, there is only one Morella: the body, soul, and identity are all solely single. Morella's prophecy 'I am dying, yet shall I live', in Poe's rendering, is not figuratively fulfilled but literalised in effect, for prophecies, as Poe emphasises in his reviews of Stephens and Longfellow, are supposed to be fulfilled literally. Therefore, in 'Morella', as death is carried out, life, its opposite, should likewise at some point be effectuated, in the same way that the antithesis of immortality and mortality is literally implemented in the prophecy in 'Metzengerstein' despite its seeming triviality and meaninglessness.

In fact, not only the life-and-death riddle, but also the majority of the rest

of the objects foretold in Morella's prophecy are correspondingly literalised in the denouement. Those quasi-figurative and not-altogether-obscure curses such as 'But thy days shall be days of sorrow – that sorrow which is the most lasting of impressions, as the cypress is the most enduring of trees' and 'Thou shalt no longer, then, play the Teian with time, but, being ignorant of the myrtle and the vine, thou shalt bear about with thee thy shroud on earth' are specifically and literally fulfilled here when the cursed narrator observes, 'Nor was I indeed ignorant of the flowers and the vine – but the hemlock and the cypress overshadowed me night and day. And I kept no reckoning of time or place…' and 'But she [his daughter] died; and with my own hands I bore her to the tomb…'. Even the omitted prophecy of Morella's lack of terrors of the 'charnel-house' is literalised at the ending as the narrator finds no traces of the body of Morella in the charnel.

Like 'Morella', 'The Island of the Fay' (1841) is a tale surrounding the mystery of a beautiful young woman's death. Originally a plate article that accompanies John Sartain's engraving with the same title printed in *Graham's Magazine*, the story is characteristic of Poe's imagination of antithetical tension of life and death and supernatural ambiguity. Sartain's work, with its title concerning fay and its history of being a work inspired by John Martin's Greek-myth-themed painting 'Landscape with Pan and Syrinx', is a fantasy piece. Poe's 'The Island of the Fay', a companion creation to Sartain's, nevertheless, is restrained in the expression of supernaturalism: whether the fay exists in reality or in the homodiegetic narrator's fancy, and whether she dies, if she does, naturally or supernaturally are not cleared up. Poe's insertion of his poem 'Sonnet – To Science' (1829) to the initial publication of this tale as its epigraph, seems to shed light on his alteration of Sartain's fantastic tone. The sonnet moans about the loss of imagination, especially that of the supernatural, in the progression of science. Science is addressed as the 'daughter of old Time' (line 1), who 'alterest all things' (line 2), and 'whose wings are dull realities' (line 4). The poem then concludes with a series of rhetorical questions, complaining about science's wiping out mythical or magical figures: 'Hast thou not dragged Diana from her car? / And

driven the Hamadryad from the wood? / Has thou not spoilt a story in each star? / Hast thou not torn the Naiad from her flood? / The elfin from the grass? – the dainty *fay*, / The witch, the sprite, the goblin – where are they?' (lines 9-14). The tension between science and supernatural fantasy in this poem – the consequence of scientific advancement during the Enlightenment, of which Walpole, Brown, Irving, Hawthorne, Schlegel, Blair, and Kames alike were aware – bespeaks Poe's dilemma of incorporating supernaturalism in his work as well as his intention of eluding the excess of supernaturalism shown in his modification of Sartain's mythological realm into a supernaturally indeterminate scenery in his narrative.

The text opens with an anonymous narrator's monologue on solitude and nature. He deems natural scenery the only pleasure to be derived from being in solitude, and thereafter he turns to muse on natural objects' *lives*. For him, valleys, rocks, waters, and green landscapes are not lifeless existences but 'the colossal members of one vast animate and sentient whole' (600). The smaller organic unit of animalcules to the grand human beings is analogous to the latter with the infinite universe (600). One may consider the other inanimate yet all of them are animate beings (600-01). Each of them has its movement cycle; since all are within the animate whole, '[…] we find cycle within cycle without end', and we may suppose 'in the same manner, life within life, the less within the greater, and all within the Spirit Divine' (601). From the narrator's perspective, it is false to regard 'man, in either his temporal or future destinies, to be of more moment in the universe than that vast "clod of the valley" which he tills and contemns, and to which he denies a soul for no more profound reason than that he does not behold it in operation' (601). Though he believes in lives and souls in nature, he later withdraws from his statement that he believes in animism, calling it simply 'fancies' or 'the fantastic' (601), just before he enters the next paragraph on his wandering around the fay island, i.e. his story of the fay. This subdues the following account of the marvellous creature, the fay, as well as the animate shadowy water by the fay island. Ambiguity arises, therefore, in the conflict between his fantasies and the reality. It recalls Poe's awareness of the science/supernaturalism tension in his sonnet interpolated into this work, and

sheds light on the vagueness about supernaturalism expressed here, an arrangement that will be continued through the remainder of the fiction.

As the narrator commences his adventure into the fay island, he says, ambiguously, that he might 'doze' in looking at it, the only way he ought to, for 'such was the character of phantasm which it wore' (602). Such quasi-dormant condition of the narrator frequents and seems to be underscored throughout his narrative. He adds, 'About midway in the short vista which my dreamy vision took in' (602), 'This idea, having once seized upon my fancy, greatly excited it, and I lost myself forthwith in revery' (603), 'As I thus mused, with half-shut eyes', and '[…] a quick imagination might have converted into any thing it pleased – while I thus mused' (604). It is not clear, as Poe intends, if the fay island genuinely exists or not; the narrator's half-dreaming and half-awake mental state makes its existence even more dubious. Michael von Cannon thus comments that 'the story could only have been recounted by this narrator, not only because he was the sole traveler but because it might all have been his dream or nightmare vision' (43-44). C. T. Walters suggests that the fay island, a poeticised place like the Garden of Eden, exists 'within the mind' of the narrator (66).

Subsequent to this, the radical opposition of the islet's eastern and western banks also blurs the distinction between the supernatural and naturalistic. He describes:

> The little river which turned sharply in its course, and was thus immediately lost to sight, seemed to have no exit from its prison, but to be absorbed by the deep green foliage of the trees to the east – while in the opposite quarter…there poured down noiselessly and continuously into the valley, a rich golden and crimson water-fall from the sunset fountains of the sky. (602)

The initial depiction of the heterogeneity in the same little river around the islet already appears unusual. On the eastern end, the waters seem to be incarcerated and absorbed by the dark tree leaves, whereas at the western end, a celestial water-fall brightens the stream. The multiple divisions and juxtapositions of east and west, sombreness and cheerfulness, lurking danger and comfort, of one single

islet and rivulet are suspicious: is it the narrator's reverie that creates those otherworldly oppositions, or is it the magical region itself that encompasses assorted materials? Those 'diverse, even opposing, components into a coherent landscape', as John Carlos Rowe notes, 'clearly does not exist in the natural world' (98-99). The water-fall, focalised through the point of view of the narrator, comes from 'the sunset fountains of the sky'. It can signify that celestial fountains stream down the water-fall in this fairyland. Poetically, it can also evoke a picturesque image of a water-fall reflecting the crimsoned sunset sky. Double sense is infused into the landscape, intertwining dreams with reality and challenging readers to distinguish a fae island from natural scenery.

As his narration goes on, the antithetical structure of the two islet ends becomes more remarkable. The tension and ambiguity of the supernatural and naturalistic is heightened in the lively western and gloomy eastern banks. On the former, light, vibrancy, and mirth are perceived around the plants and creatures. 'It **glowed** and blushed beneath the eye of the slant **sunlight**, and fairly **laughed** with flowers', 'The trees were lithe, **mirthful**, erect – **bright**, slender and graceful […]', 'There seemed a deep sense of **life** and **joy** about all […]' [emphasis added] (603). On the latter, darkness and death are filled in the air. 'The trees were **dark** in color and **mournful** in form and attitude – wreathing themselves into **sad**, solemn, and **spectral** shapes, that conveyed ideas of **mortal sorrow** and **untimely death**', the hillocks among the grass 'had the aspect of **graves**', and 'The **shade** of the trees fell heavily upon the water, and seemed to **bury** itself therein, impregnating the depths of the element with **darkness**' [emphasis added] (603). The striking and dramatic distinction of life and death in the western and eastern ends is like imaginary space divided vertically in the narrator's dreamy mind, especially in view of the strange contrast of vegetation, sunlight distribution (sunset on the western bank yet bright and sunrise on the eastern extremity but dark),[9] and the narrator's earlier monologue about cycle and life. His transcendental meditations on animism, the cyclical and recurring nature of life,

[9] Earlier, the narrator informs that 'a rich golden and crimson water-fall from the sunset fountains of the sky' joins the river on the western end. It is then inferred that the sun rises on the eastern end of the islet.

and the unity of everything may be projected here onto the canvas of landscapes right in front of him.

The antithesis of light/darkness and life/death in the opposite ends of the isle can be his transforming concepts into forms in his fantasies, which will subsequently be extended to the mystery of the life cycle of a fay in his narration. Nevertheless, to not only create the terror of threats and death, but also suggest a sense of supernatural ambiguity, the narrator affirms, '"If ever island were enchanted, […] this is it"' (603-04), adding '"This is the haunt of the few gentle Fays who remain from the wreck of the race"' (604), to retain, through the device of antithesis, the possibility of the magical existence of the fay island. In so doing, the effect of supernaturalism, albeit indefinite, is not spoiled; this accords with the tale's marvellous title and Poe's compositional insistence on the unity of effect derived from Schlegel.

Following his account of the island of tension, suspense, and ambiguity, the narrator carries on his antithetical language in the observation of the folkloric creature, a fay. He says,

> …[I]t appeared to me that the **form** of one of those very Fays about whom I had been pondering, made its way slowly into the **darkness** from out the **light** at the western end of the island…While within the influence of the lingering **sunbeams**, her attitude seemed indicative of **joy** – but **sorrow deformed** it as she passed within the **shade.** Slowly she glided along, and at length rounded the islet and re-entered the region of **light**. 'The revolution which has just been made by the Fay,' continued I, musingly, 'is the cycle of the brief year of her **life**. She has floated through her **winter** and through her **summer**. She is a year nearer unto **Death**: for I did not fail to see that as she came into the **shade**, her **shadow** fell from her, and was swallowed up in the **dark** water, making its blackness more black.' [emphasis added] (604)

The conflicting western and eastern ends of the isle represent and dominate the fay's life and death. The sunlit, blithesome, vigorous western part brings joy to the fay, while the opposite part, which is imbued with murkiness, sadness, and death,

afflicts her. Several pairs of antitheses, light/darkness, sunbeams/shade, joy/sorrow, form/deform, summer/winter, and life/death, are used to reinforce the discordance in the two banks and the abrupt change in the fay. Akin to the western and eastern banks' incomprehensible contrariety, the oppositions in the fay resulted from the former are rather enigmatic. Joyousness and sorrow alternate in her when she, with her canoe, glides from the west to the east of the islet. The contrasting nature of the western and eastern ends is obscure and equivocal, out of supernature or nature, and so is the two ends' distinct impact on the fay. The joyfulness and sorrow she derives from them, whose attributes of luminosity/liveliness and darkness/death are already questionable, also appear nebulous. Can the fay's antithetical tendencies be, as the two islet ends, a mere projection of the narrator's insights into animism and life cycles in nature? The fay's 'revolution' from life to death, passing 'through her winter and through her summer', from the narrator, 'is the cycle of the brief year of her life', which fulfils his earlier statements regarding the animate whole and cycle of life. The fay and her experience of life and death may be part of his 'fancies' about nature.

On the other hand, however, the clashing effects on the fay can be read as the dynamics of an enchanted locus. The unnatural antithetical light and vegetation in the islet and their contrary effects on the fay can be comprehended as the constitution of the magical fay island. The aglow western side endows her with joy and vitality; in contrast, the dark eastern end consumes those positive qualities in her, replacing them with sorrow and death. The 'form' of the fay is 'deformed' in the easterly side. Her shadow is 'swallowed up' on the waters there, which darkens the water even more. The eastern waters are emblematic of an animate predator that nourishes itself with other creatures, so that when the fay 'floated again from out the **light**, and into the **gloom** (which deepened momently) and again her **shadow** fell from her into the ebony water, and became absorbed into its blackness' [emphasis added] (604-05). The antithesis of the opposite banks and their contradictory momentum function like external forces superior to the fay and dominating her life and death. Back and forth between the two banks and forces, the fay is depleted much by the dusky eastern end: she is transformed into

‘the mere ghost of her former self, [who] went disconsolately with her boat into the region of the ebony flood – and that she issued thence at all I cannot say, – for darkness fell over all things, and I beheld her magical figure no more’ (605).

If the island is truly a marvellous antithetical realm, where life and death are distinct from yet also close with each other, the fay may or may not die, since vitality is in proximity to death, and the narrator does not conclude with the finality of her death. Yet conflicting antitheses can also be interpreted as the narrator’s projected view of animism and life cycle during his reverie, and therefore, a naturalistic reading of the text. Antitheses function to enrich suspense and supernatural ambiguity. Poe’s writing reflects this device’s use in his time, especially when Brown’s Gothic and Blair, Kames, and Schlegel’s rhetoric are considered.

Following the publication of ‘The Island of the Fay’, ‘The Oval Portrait’ is another tale that demonstrates Poe’s use of ambiguity and riddles coupled with the device of antithesis. The story relates a complex antithetical, intertwined relation between art and human, life and death. An anonymous narrator, seemingly an aristocrat with a valet, is wounded and escapes to an ancient chateau in the Apennines. Noticing an oval painting of a beautiful young woman, and being intrigued, he pores over a volume found in his resting chamber about the histories of the paintings in the chateau. The volume records that the painted woman, the artist’s wife who served as the model for his painting and sat in the ghastly turret of the chateau for a long while, died at the very moment the artist put the last brush and finished the work.

Contemporary critics did not pay much attention to this piece. Its reprints in the *Broadway Journal* and the posthumous collection *The Works of the Late Edgar Allan Poe* published in 1845 and 1850 respectively also did not come with any critical observations. Modern critics, however, offer their diverse commentaries on it, which reflects the text’s equivocal tenor. Botting argues that the open-ended tale ‘The Oval Portrait’ embodies the trait of phantasmagoreality, an amalgamation of phantasy and reality without verifying either and leaving the text unresolved (18). Weinstock suggests the tale is associated with Samuel

Taylor Coleridge's paranormal 'The Rime of the Ancient Mariner' (1798)[10] and Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1891).[11] He offers a supernatural reading of Poe's story, contending that the model-wife's 'vitality [is] drained and transferred to the portrait' in an instance of vampirism (*Monstrous Things* 76). Such vampirism, according to Weinstock, 'also allegorizes the artistic process as a vampiric one that entails the "murder" of the thing represented', given the painter's obsession with his art (*Monstrous Things* 76). Like Weinstock, Avril Horner and Sue Zlosnik note '[t]he supernatural power' in Poe's work, introducing 'The Oval Portrait' as a story that 'features a picture so lifelike that, once completed, it results in the death of its subject' (508). Obviously, Horner and Zlosnik, like Weinstock, blame the portrait for the death of the wife; it draws strength and life from a living human being. By contrast, through a realistic lens, Maria Antónia Lima rationalises the tale and takes the painter for a 'perverse artist' as well as a murderer of his wife (23).

Originally entitled, 'Life in Death',[12] 'The Oval Portrait' illustrates – through the death of the wife-model and the birth of a painting and the liveliness of the dead in the painting – the clear yet reversed oppositions between the subject/object, inanimate/animate, and life/death. These antitheses obscure the borderline between the supernatural and natural. As soon as the narrator enters the mysterious and deserted chateau, the antithesis between life and death is already delineated. He describes that the decorations inside the apartment where he stays are '**tattered** and **antique**', but meanwhile, there is 'an unusually great number of very **spirited modern** paintings in frames of rich golden arabesque' [emphasis added] (662). The opposition between the damaged and old and the lively and new (of paintings) is a prelude to the antithetical and enigmatic relation between

[10] The initial title of Poe's 'The Oval Portrait', 'Life in Death', according to Weinstock, alludes to the vampire-like entity, Life-in-Death, in Coleridge's poem (*Monstrous Things* 76).
[11] Similar to Weinstock, Dale Townshend assumes that in his novel, Wilde, '[s]elf-consciously' referred to Poe's 'The Oval Portrait', one among the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Gothic sources on the portrait and doubles ('Doubles' 193). Sova notes that Poe's work 'appears to adapt ideas later expressed in *The Picture of Dorian Gray*', in view of the fact that Wilde 'had praised Poe's rhythmical expression in poetry in 1886', five years before the publication of his novel (139).
[12] This appears in the first publication of the tale in *Graham's Magazine* in the April 1842 issue (Mabbott 662).

life and death which is later developed in the tale.

Soon after glimpsing the portrait on the wall, the narrator confuses it with 'a living person' (664). He then analyses 'the true secret of its effect', and says 'I had found the spell of the picture in an absolute *life-likeliness* of expression, which, at first startling, finally confounded, subdued and appalled me' (664). The lifeless painting seems to have life, which can be attributed either to the artist's virtuoso painting technique or to the painting's absorption of life from its painted subject, the wife. This secret of the painting's lifelike effect is then riddled in the following use of antithesis in the description of the painting: 'The arms, the bosom and even the ends of the **radiant** hair, melted imperceptibly into the vague yet deep **shadow** which formed the back ground of the whole' [emphasis added] (664). The lustrous hair of the wife, the emblem of energy and life, vanishes in the contrasting background of shadow of darkness. It makes one wonder whether this is a realistic portrayal of the light and subject in that locale, or whether it suggests that the human subject is lost her life to her own painting in that doomful chateau. The juxtaposed antithetical words and concepts, redolent of Brown, Schlegel, Blair, and Kames, facilitate mystery, suspense, and ambiguity in the text.

As the story proceeds, Poe applies more antitheses to the antagonistic yet correlated subject and object of the painted wife and the painting. Their competitive relationship is introduced, 'He [the painter], passionate, studious, austere, and having already **a bride in his Art**; **she a maiden** of rarest beauty…loving and cherishing all things: hating only the Art which was her rival…' [emphasis added] (665). Though she is the painter's bride in the real life, prior to her, the painter himself has had an (in)animate bride, Art. Also, though she harbours jealousy and grudge against her rival, her husband's Art, the wife agrees to be painted to support his Art, which, to some extent, can be construed as a gesture of succumbing to or subordinating herself to her rival. From then on, her liveliness is gradually lost to the painting of herself. In that process, 'the painter, (who had high renown,) took a **fervid** and **burning** pleasure in his task, and wrought day and night to depict her who so loved him, yet who grew daily more **dispirited** and **weak**' (665) and 'some [visitors] who beheld the portrait spoke of

its resemblance in low words, as of a **mighty** marvel' (665). The contrast between the production of the painting being 'fervid', 'burning', and 'mighty', adjectives associated with strength, whereof the painter or painting is concerned, and the painted wife, being 'dispirited' and 'weak', can be read that it is the painter-husband's attention and devotion for his art, not his bride, that dishearten the latter or the painting that gains her vitality. It is also worth noticing that the word 'dispirited' resonates – and at the same time – contrasts to the earlier 'spirited' modern paintings (including this finally completed oval portrait) in the narrator's apartment. 'Spirited' can refer simply to the liveliness and vibrancy expressed in the painted subject; it can, however, also be associated with the *life* of the object of the painting itself. It pairs with the 'dispirited' wife's discouragement and loss of vigour. Antitheses are carefully selected, deployed, and coupled with each other by Poe to function like riddles, not providing a clear answer to the cause of the painter-wife's death or the true nature of the painting.

The following sentence, 'And he *would* not see that the tints which he spread upon the canvass were drawn from the cheeks of her who sat beside him' (665), similarly indicates the antithetical rivalry between the wife and her portrait, and vaguely, expresses that it could be either the creator of the painting or the painting itself that weakens the wife. The tale ends with the climax of the obsessed painter's exclamation, '"This is indeed ***Life*** itself!"', while, in the same second, he 'turned suddenly to regard his beloved: – *She was **dead**!*' [emphasis added] (666). The antithesis is carried out to the last; the competition and variation of growth and decline between the painting, and the painted person, is eventually resolved by life and death.

The conflict reaches an end, but the ending opposition extends the suspense and mystery of the painting and its model, the monomaniacal painter, and the shadowy chateau. Did the painting or the painter kill the model-wife? Or is it the castle that, with certain magical power or its depressing aura, manipulates the inhabitants and the objects inside it? While the wife sits as her beloved's model in the castle, it is described that 'she was humble and obedient, and sat meekly for many weeks in the **dark** high turret-chamber where the **light** dripped

upon the pale canvass only from overhead', and 'the light which fell so ghastlily in that lone turret withered the health and the spirits of his bride' [emphasis added] (665). The darkness and light are in juxtaposed antithesis here, but instead of conveying a vivid picture of differentiation, Poe taints the light with the concept of darkness. It does not nourish but, with its ghastliness, weakens her physically and spiritually in the turret-chamber of the chateau. The dual imagery of light contextualises the ambiguity of meaning in the text: can everything be read straightforwardly towards a supernatural account (haunted antiquated locale, malevolent light, and consuming portrait), or does it point to a realistic reading wherein the darkness (insufficiency of light) of the castle and the lack of nutrition and affection, owing to her husband's frenzied pursuit of artistic consummation, results in the heroine's premature death? Such equivocality between the preternatural and naturalistic, aroused by the functioning of antithesis, echoes the ambiguous beginning mentioning the spellbound life-likeness of the picture and the way the painted person's contour melted into the darkness of the chateau. It also embodies the tension-induced theme and former topic of the tale, 'Life in Death'. The mystery of simply lifelikeness or genuine *liveliness* of the portrait, initiated from the outset, remains unresolved in the denouement.

The analysis of these four works, 'Metzengerstein', 'Morella', 'The Island of the Fay' and 'The Oval Portrait', has shown that the riddling effect through the device of antithesis reflects Poe's Gothic and rhetorical context – Brown, Schlegel, Blair and Kames – and may have been inspired by it. In 'Metzengerstein', the riddling prophecy of mortality and immortality calls the supernaturalism of metempsychosis into question. The same is the case in 'Morella', In 'The Island of the Fay', Poe uses antithesis to evoke the two parts of the island which have such devastating effects on the Fay. Finally, antithesis also creates the idea that the portrait, or the creation thereof, is leaching the life out of the female protagonist. All four works, at the same time, maintain Poe's supernatural ambiguity.

Conclusion: The Historicisation of Style: Poe's Ambiguous Stylistics as the Reflection of His Nineteenth-Century Gothic, Critical, and Rhetorical Contexts

When Gero Guttzeit, in his 2018 monograph *The Figures of Edgar Allan Poe: Authorship, Antebellum Literature, and Transatlantic Rhetoric*, reviews current existing research on Poe's rhetoric, he notes the paucity of studies on Poe's relationship with his rhetorical context, saying, 'While some attention has been paid to Poe's own practice as a lecturer, very few studies have examined Poe's connection to contemporary oratory and the elocutionary movement' (10), and 'What is lacking is an investigation into Poe's singular representativeness for the interrelations of the literary and rhetorical cultures of his time' (10). It was in part to address this issue of a gap in the contextualisation of rhetoric and style in recent Poe studies that I adopted the approach of historical stylistics, a nascent methodology that has not yet been adopted and applied to the discussion of Poe. My aim here was to shed new light on Poe's ambiguous Gothic stylistics, and to connect the two independent fields of Gothic studies and stylistic studies, which have separate interests in Poe's Gothic ambiguity and his style. I argue that Poe's ambiguous style pertaining to supernaturalism is informed by the early- and mid-nineteenth-century Gothic, critical and rhetorical contexts in which he was situated. I focus in particular on his utilisation of the devices of literalisation, repetition, polysemy, and antithesis, relating it to supernatural ambiguity in his Gothic writing and to contemporary stylistic trends. Through historicised stylistic analysis, I discovered that his use of those techniques displays a close affinity to Gothic sources such as *Blackwood's Magazine*'s publications, the works of Hoffmann, Irving, and Brown, as well as aesthetic and rhetorical guidance from Schlegel, Blair, and Kames, all of whom were known to and/or published their works earlier than Poe.

Those Gothic writers whose works find stylistic correspondences in Poe's supernaturally ambiguous writings are mostly those who published tales in the early- and mid-nineteenth century; that is, Poe's time. *Blackwood's* periodical, a magazine that was very influential and that Poe mentioned several times, may have suggested to him the idea of literalising and animating abstract concepts for extraordinary effects. Amongst these were Samuel Warren's 'The Turned Head' and Christopher North's 'Dialogue between the Marquis of Anglesea and the Ghost of His Leg'. Poe takes further the literalisation inspired by *Blackwood's* and creates works in which the presence of the supernatural cannot be verified. Through his contemporaries Hoffmann's and Irving's novels and short stories regarding uncanny doppelgängers, a type of folklore that originated in Germany, Poe learned to use the device of repetition of individual words or use of polyptoton to write his own ambiguous tales about doubles. Unlike Hoffmann and *Blackwood's* authors, whose works resolve into either supernaturalism or rationalism, Irving's Gothic sometimes ends with a lingering sense of supernatural ambiguity, the same trait that appears in the novels of Brown, another American writer whose style of riddling by means of antithesis, discussed in chapter four, may have provided a model for Poe's ambiguous enigmas. In terms of Gothic writing, therefore, Poe's supernatural ambiguity may, as Crow, Lloyd-Smith, and Weinstock have noted, be derived from Brown and Irving, his countrymen.

Apart from the above contemporary Gothic authors, Poe's ambiguous stylistics is also interrelated with his critical and rhetorical context. This context functions, as historical texts for Poe, to supplement the styles exemplified in those contemporary Gothic paradigms. Amongst them, Schlegel's *A Course of Lectures on Dramatic Art and Literature*, an early nineteenth-century series of critical lectures, is the one that shapes Poe's conceptualisation of writing the most. Schlegel's concepts in relation to his idea of unity in writing are significant for Poe's stylistics of supernatural ambiguity. Schlegel speaks of developing multivalent meanings to enrich a composition but ending with a unified termination that joins all the different yet also parallel significations. His sense of

unity, comprising the double level of exterior denotation and interior connotation, sparks Poe's philosophy of unity of effect: the unity of two meanings, strictly speaking, if the literal sense is distinguished from the 'under-current of meaning' or 'suggestiveness', as Poe puts it in his essay 'The Philosophy of Composition'. Indeed, recent scholars such as Whalen, Erkkila, Machor, and Reynolds have made observations on the doubleness in Poe's unity and on the plurality of readings resulting from Poe's application of the unity of effect in terms of literal expression and suggestive import in his Gothic writings. Meanwhile, Hogle, Punter and Byron, and Fisher have differentiated Poe's Gothic external significance from his inner potentials and read ambiguity into his Gothic works. Nevertheless, their focus, along with that of others who have shown similar interest in Poe's writings, is not on Poe's stylistics or the sense of ambiguity between the supernatural and natural characterised by his Gothic. I propose, through my historical stylistic study of Poe's Gothic supernatural ambiguity, that his internalisation of Schlegelian unity points itself towards the compositional direction of unresolved ambiguity. His Gothic tales 'Shadow – A Parable', 'The Fall of the House of Usher', 'Masque of the Red Death', and 'The Tell-Tale Heart', analysed in chapter two, are exemplars of such combinations of denotation and suggestive significance. In those pieces, Poe does not clarify if what he contours is a real shadowy apparition or a traumatic shadow in the inner self, a collapse of an ancient family house or a fallen family, the Red Death phantom or the plague Red Death, and the dead old man's haunting heartbeat or the murderer's conscience. Keeping it ambiguous and undecidable, in the meantime, retains the possibility of maintaining supernaturalism without transgressing against the idea of unity in writing which he acquires from Schlegel, or his own principle of unity of effect. This also elucidates why Poe seldom writes supernatural-explained Gothic, the type of Gothic that spoils the unity and effect that have been developed in a piece of work.

Schlegel's concept of unity runs throughout his *Lectures,* which intersects with other techniques or compositional suggestions that are found in Poe's Gothic

works. Repetition and polysemy are associated with Schlegel's idea of developing multivalent meanings. This provides the theoretical foundation and purpose for Poe's creation of ambiguous uncanny doubles, alongside those more direct practices of the uncanny from his Gothic contemporaries. Schlegel's lecture on antithesis, conjoining conflicts to converge into one voice, and thus still resonating with his ideal of unity, is also reflected in Poe's puzzling prophetic and riddling languages. Schlegel's rationale very much serves as the fulcrum that consolidates and enriches the Gothic devices and styles instantiated by *Blackwood's*, Hoffmann, Irving, and Brown.

At the same time, in Poe's context, Blair's *Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres* and Kames's *Elements of Criticism* offer their rhetorical insights for the application of devices that complement Schlegel's compositional philosophy and Gothic canon. Both collections were published in the late eighteenth century, yet they continued to be circulated and popular as the most influential rhetorical (text)books in nineteenth-century America. Poe's utilisation of literalisation, repetition, polysemy, and antithesis are in accordance with their commentaries on rhetoric. Their insightful advice on the correct and effective arrangement of those rhetorical devices, such as no mixture of literal and figurative language at plot level, enrichment of composition with words of double meaning, and juxtaposition of antithetical pairs in adjacency, reverberates, as I have shown, in Poe's use of these in his Gothic creations. Blair and Kames's rhetorical viewpoints regulate and reinforce Poe's efficacy in employing devices that interweave with Schlegel's unity for effective and impressive composition.

In addition to the contextual sources that illuminate Poe's supernatural ambiguity, I also observe, in my historical stylistic analysis of Poe's poetry and fiction, a difference in genre regarding Poe's expression of supernaturalism in his works. Critics have mentioned the difference in the way in which Poe expresses his preferred subject matter, the trope of a beautiful woman's death, between his poems and short stories. In his poetry, he focuses on beauty and melancholy, while in his Gothic prose, he focuses on truth and mystery. I take this observation

further, arguing that such different treatment of the same subject distinguishes Poe's Gothic poems from his Gothic stories and makes the latter the genre that contains the majority of his supernaturally equivocal pieces. Poe's distinct foci on the two genres, poetical beauty on the one hand and truth in fiction on the other, determine the way in which supernatural ambiguity is used – or not used – in his poetry and fiction. His only unresolved Gothic poems, 'The Raven', 'Ulalume', and 'Annabel Lee', are works written late in his career, which runs counter to the facts that he began his authorship with poetry and that his very first published story, 'Metzengerstein', is marked for its supernatural enigma. The very few ambiguous poetical pieces and their less thorough or prominent utilisation of literalisation, repetition or polysemy and antithesis, in comparison with that in Poe's Gothic tales, accentuate his distinction between poetry and fiction, demonstrating that Gothic prose, especially the serious type, is the genre that captures the essence of Poe's ambiguous stylistics.

To conclude, this historical stylistic study of Poe's supernatural ambiguity in his Gothic has explored Poe's plurivalent language, and will fill the gap in the current Gothic and stylistic research of Poe's ambiguity, as well as recent authorial investigation of Poe's composition, and his historical and literary context. It demonstrates that Poe's Gothic writing interacts with and reflects his nineteenth-century Gothic and rhetorical milieu, which in turn shapes his view and method of composing Gothic works. His ambiguous stylistics is framed by Gothic contemporaries' hesitation to use wild and absurd imagination, including supernatural elements, in their writings in the post-Enlightenment era, and the critic and rhetoricians' reserved attitude towards composing supernatural pieces, as well as the craftmanship of unity and use of rhetoric. His Gothic ambiguity bespeaks the contemporary Gothic and rhetorical trajectory in his age.

This project is a preliminary investigation of Poe's Gothic style in his context through the approach of historical stylistics. More research can be undertaken in relation to this study in the future. For instance, the research scope of historical stylistics can be extended to Poe's other genre writings. Apart from

being known as a Gothic author, Poe also writes science fiction and detective stories. He is commonly recognised as the founding-father of detective stories.[1] His Dupin series, 'The Murders in the Rue Morgue' (1841), 'The Mystery of Marie Roget' (1842-1843) and 'The Purloined Letter' (1844), which centre around the detective C. Auguste Dupin, and 'The Gold-Bug' (1843) and '"Thou Art the Man"' (1844), those that share the detective feature of cryptography and crime-solving, can also be discussed in relation to Schlegel, Blair, and Kames's rhetoric; particularly since Poe's detective tales share the characteristics of mystery and ambiguity with his Gothic works. The contextualisation of Poe and rhetoric is a subject that has not yet been researched much in current academia, and further exploration could expand our knowledge of Poe's reference to and use of rhetoric in his time and differences and/or similarities of his stylistics across his genre writings.

His comical and satirical Gothic also deserves a closer look for future studies of Poe and his style. In this thesis, I focus on the supernatural ambiguity in his Gothic fictions. Most of those ambiguous pieces, throughout my study, are in the serious Gothic stories, which are distinct from his light-hearted, laughter-provoking, and oftentimes, satirical Gothic pieces. I term, tentatively, the former, the 'serious Gothic', and the latter, the 'comic Gothic'. Poe's comic Gothic contains works such as his 'The Duc De L'Omelette' (1832), 'Loss of Breath', 'Bon-Bon' (1832), 'King Pest' (1835), 'How to Write a Blackwood Article', 'The Devil in the Belfry' (1839), 'The Man That Was Used Up', 'Never Bet the Devil

[1] Hayes says, 'Widely recognized as the first detective story in literary history, [Poe's] "The Murders in the Rue Morgue" established the conventions of the genre' (*Edgar Allan Poe* 103). Crow holds that Poe 'virtually created' the genre of detective fiction (*History* 38). John Cullen Gruesser likewise acknowledges Poe's contribution to the detective genre, stating that Poe 'invented—and then reinvented—what we now know as detective fiction' (54). In his *Edgar Allan Poe and the Dupin Mysteries*, Kopley, after a brief literature review of Poe's detective stories, remarks that 'Poe invented conventions that have lasted 170 years, shaping diverse subgenres of detective fiction…' (1).

From the angle of crime literature, Martin Priestman, in *The Cambridge Companion to Crime Fiction*, introduces that 'the detective story was invented in 1841 by Edgar Allan Poe, who acknowledged some debt to the structure as well as content of William Goldwin's earlier novel *Caleb Williams* (1794)' (2). He later reinforces, 'There is less to quarrel with in the standard view that Poe's own "Murders in the Rue Morgue" represented the first story structured entirely round the ingenious deductions of a charismatic detective…' (3).

Your Head', and 'Some Words with a Mummy' (1845). Those comic pieces also have the dark and fearful Gothic quality, but their tone is humorous and their purpose is levity and mockery, rather than, as in Poe's more serious Gothic tales, a sense of mystery and darkness. This telling difference in the nature between these two types of writings results in bold and clear use of supernaturalism in Poe's comic Gothic and ambiguity towards supernaturalism in his serious Gothic. Although in some of his comic stories, devices of literalisation are also employed for the sudden transformation into the marvellous, as seen in 'Loss of Breath', 'The Man That Was Used Up', and 'Never Bet the Devil Your Head', the result, nevertheless, is an explicit supernatural event and resolution, not unresolved ambiguity as in his serious Gothic tales analysed in this study. This probably suggests that Poe makes a distinction between his more formal Gothic and humorous Gothic fictions, in addition to his generic differentiation of poetry from prose.

Poe's collections of tales during his life time, published or unpublished, including *Tales of the Folio Club, Tales of the Grotesque and Arabesque* (1840), *Phantasy Pieces, The Prose Romances of Edgar A. Poe* (1843), and *Tales* (1845), probably do not give a clue to his classification of different genres of his own writings, given their generalised or comprehensive titles. His correspondences with his literary circle, however, do reveal, partly, his division of comic and satiric stories from veritable horror pieces. In his 1836 February letter to John P. Kennedy, Poe declares that his 'Lionizing' and 'Loss of Breath' are 'satires properly speaking' ('Letter 57' 125), while in an earlier letter, dated December 1, 1835, to Tucker, when mentioning his recent publications, he compares the proportions of 'the horrible' in 'Morella' and 'MS. Found in a Bottle' ('Letter 52' 115). This seems to indicate that Poe, in his mind, distinguishes the horrible from the satirical, and this explains the disproportionate use of supernatural ambiguity between his serious Gothic and comic Gothic fictions. Perhaps besides applying this approach of historical stylistics to Poe's comic Gothic genre tales, scholars could pay more attention to further generic differences in his Gothic fiction. In

particular, more recently, several Poe scholars agree on the fact that there is an admixture of Gothic and satire in his works. Peeples, for example, states: 'But how seriously should we take these tales? While many read "Berenice" and "Ligeia," for instance, as Gothic classics, the style in which Poe writes them is heavy-handed enough that one might well laugh at them…' (*Edgar Allan Poe* 48). Poe's works, for Peeples, are both Gothic and parodies of Gothic, especially considering Poe's mixed attitude of 'admiration and mockery' towards *Blackwood's* tales, his inspirations for writing (*Edgar Allan Poe* 48-49). Fisher states that Poe learned the blending of horror and comic from his Gothic precursor Walpole's *Otranto* to works published in his time; hence, sombre though his tales and 'The Raven' appear, they may have more than one (Gothic) interpretation ('Poe, Edgar Allan' 495). In a similar vein, Monnet contends that 'Poe's work is a perfect example of how horror and humour often go together': there is a 'tonal ambivalence' in his canon ('American Horror' 62). However, in view of Poe's identification of horror and satire in his different tales in letters, and that those *Blackwood's* works by Maggin, De Quincey, and Warren Poe mentions are still regarded more as 'terror fiction' (Morrison and Roberts 6),[2] it is presumed that Poe takes horror and satire differently for two distinct genres.

Through the stylistic lens, Zimmerman, in response to the scholastic critiques of Poe's horror-humour writings in his Gothic, expresses that 'I find some of their arguments a bit forced – Procrustean' (*Edgar Allan Poe* 64). He argues, regarding 'Ligeia', that Poe, as a 'conscientious craftsman', does not intend to create jocular effects in his Gothic composition but makes use of overblown diction to establish peculiar characterisation (*Edgar Allan Poe* 64).

[2] Robert Morrison and Daniel S. Roberts introduces short stories published in *Blackwood's*, saying that William Blackwood, the founder of the magazine, 'was most interested in terror fiction, and during his editorship he published tales by De Quincey, Galt, Hogg, Maginn, Warren, and Wilson, as well as by William Godwin Junior, John Howison, William Mudford, Michael Scott, Walter Scott, and Catherine Sinclair…' (6). This also echoes Morrison and Chris Baldick's earlier edited collection of *Blackwood's* tales, entitled *Tales of Terror from Blackwood's Magazine*. The two editors elucidate their selection of stories; they proclaim: 'We have also confined our choices to tales of terror, both because these represent the most remarkable of *Blackwood*'s specialities, and because the sentimental and comical fiction of that period is almost entirely unpalatable to modern readers' ('Introduction' xviii).

Zimmerman's reading of Poe differs from Peeples, Fisher, and Monnet's view on Poe's combination of horror and laughter in his Gothic works in general. I agree with Zimmerman's opinion more over Poe's stylistic choice. Also, like Zimmerman, I am more inclined towards distinguishing Poe's horror, his serious Gothic stories, from his comic and satiric prose, i.e. his comic Gothic. His generic differentiation of poetry and fiction, and his discriminating emphasis on the horrible and satiric in his fiction decides different nature, purposes, and tones of his tales. My analysis of Poe's style of supernatural ambiguity in this thesis has observed tangentially that he uses the supernatural machinery differently in his serious Gothic and comic Gothic pieces. It is likely that this was due to the fact that fewer concerns and limitations of ghosts and phantoms were attached to the amusing comic ones, whereas in the serious Gothic compositions, supernaturalism might be taken seriously and offend enlightened readers. In view of such different treatments of supernaturalism in Poe's different types of Gothic fictions, similar to that in his poetry and fiction, it would be interesting to conduct more detailed research on the generic distinction of Gothic in Poe. By understanding more his different genres of the Gothic, we would have more knowledge of his stylistics and the similarities and differences between his and other writers' Gothic aesthetic.

Since historical stylistics has not been adopted and applied much to Gothic studies, scholars can also take this approach to Poe's Gothic contemporaries. In this thesis, I focus on Poe's Gothic writings and stylistics. Though I have compared and found similarities between his Gothic fictions with writers such as *Blackwood's* contributors, Hoffmann, Irving, and Brown, my research is a Poe-centred project. To situate Poe in his context, it is beneficial to expand our knowledge to his Gothic peers, especially his American contemporaries like Brown, Irving, Neal, and Hawthorne, whose works, like Poe's, also display ambiguity in their supernaturalism. Knowing better the nineteenth-century American Gothic and rhetorical context will, in turn, enhance our understanding of Poe's style and his historical background, and will help form a fuller,

sequential picture of Poe and his contemporary Gothic authors in their context. In view of Blair and Kames's rhetorical treatises' wide influence across North America, it would be interesting to know if Brown, Irving, Neal, and Hawthorne's style is also inspired by those rhetoricians. Beyond this, it would also be interesting to learn if there are other contemporary rhetorical publications that shape their ambiguous Gothicism and composition and that, as a consequence, perhaps, differentiates or associates their stylistics from or with Poe's. In so doing, such studies will shed more light on how American Gothic's ambiguity arises, and what it signifies in its contextual framework in history.

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