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THESIS:

**'A Comparative Analysis of Different Types of  
Fear depicted by Edgar A. Poe in several of his  
Short Stories'**

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### Abstract

The goal of this master thesis is to present the specter of fears that author Edgar Allan Poe presented in his short stories. These fears range from ever-existing fears such as the fear of death to fears of insanity, environment, being buried alive and also a fair bit of autobiographical fears that Poe included in his writing. Each of the fears will be analyzed individually through chapters while incorporating interchangeably the stories and characters in them. Therein the perspectives of fear from the standpoint of the characters will also be a topic of debate generally focusing on the two specters of perpetrators and victims which contribute a lot of to the stories and shed more light to what effects Poe was trying to achieve with his writing. Furthermore, Poe's individual drive to the implementation of these fears will be put under a loop and the reader will thereby understand the motivation of Poe's writing and his aim as a writer of common short stories as well as a writer of one of the most prominent horror stories ever written.

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## Introduction

Undeniably, fear is something that accompanied Edgar Allan Poe in his personal life as well as his literary work and perhaps the biggest output of fear that Poe wrote was in his short stories. Short, concise, scary and thought-provoking is what many would describe his stories which for generations inspired many authors in the horror genre and not just.

This paper will go further into the element of fear in Poe's short stories and how it is divided into various sections, perspectives and roles that fear has within those stories which undeniably shifts the whole narrative. Perhaps many would link his attraction towards fear and insanity with the decay of his wife Virginia but a further analysis into Poe's life shows that fear accompanied him throughout most of his life and not that specific event. Some autobiographical fears made it into his work such as the fear of being buried alive which Poe shared with the character in "The Premature Burial" but there are of course a ton which Poe hasn't necessarily felt but therefore had a deep insight into them. The aim of this thesis is to highlight most of Poe's fears shown in several of his short stories. These would be analyzed as a cause firstly since most of the times fear is a drive in Poe's work but also as an effect of another event in the story. Based on how the characters deal with the fear felt, they let it drive them or consume however as we will see it undoubtedly has an effect which in most cases is quite tragic. Furthermore, the types of fear which will be put under the microscope will be Taphophobia (fear of being buried alive) as it's rose into the way of unusual fears both in fiction and in real life and is present in "The Premature Burial", Dementophobia (fear of insanity) which to this day is a terror to deal with from psychologists and the cause of a lot of anxiety both fictional and not and is present in "The Tell-Tale Heart", Ecophobia (fear of one's home or environment) that is perhaps one of the most troublesome phenomena to deal with and is in works such as "The Fall of the House of Usher", Thanatophobia (fear of death) which a lot of people share and is present in works such as "The Pit and the Pendulum" and many others linked directly or indirectly to Poe and his experiences. The reason I emphasized directly or indirectly is because the fears that Poe portrayed in his work were found to be linked with his life and experiences as well.

Therefore, Poe's life is a focal point in analyzing these fears while also resorting on accomplices, friends and critics that for years studied and continue to study Poe such as Charles Baudelaire which was Poe's translator all the way to Stephen King, the contemporary "machine" of horror fiction.

Apart from the types of fear that will be analyzed, there are also perspectives to the fears presented within those stories. Mainly the difference is between perpetrator and victim in the stories and the variety between their narratives is contrasted by many factors.

## TYPES OF FEAR IN EDGAR A. POE'S SHORT STORIES

The factors being: Thought process and reasoning, Diction, Self-control and others. To conclude with the whole thesis, certain aims will be achieved as following:

1. How did Poe portray fear and how did he incorporate his personal life into his work?
2. What are the different types of fear that Poe dealt with in his short stories and what is the value of using each one of them in the stories?
3. How much did Poe contribute to the horror story genre and the short story genre in general?
4. How did Poe link all of the characters, fears and circumstances in order for him to produce his masterworks?

Finally, all the above will be presented in retrospection and a personal opinion will be given as to the importance and contribution of the whole thesis as well followed by criticisms both positive and negative that highlight Poe's fears within his stories to the "grandstand" they belong.

## Biography – life and work

Edgar Allan Poe (born January 19, 1809 Massachusetts, US – died October 7, 1849 Baltimore, Maryland) also known as the “master of the macabre” was a productive American writer of short stories, poet and critic. Perhaps the best start to describe the character of Edgar fully would be to resort to the genesis of his character, the cradle where he grew up and how he did. Firstly being raised without parents is probably the start of the downfall for Poe, at least psychologically speaking. From then on he was brought to Richmond to live with his supposed godfather John Allen. In 1826, he got into the University of Virginia where he was quite a decent student. His relationship with his godfather was not a bright one as we learn that he sent Poe to school with way less money than what Poe actually needed. This in turn led Poe to pursue a lifestyle of gambling which unsurprisingly pushed Poe to more and more poverty. This ongoing argument between Poe and his godfather only stretched further with every game of gambling Poe participated in. Having no money, Poe was obligated to drop out of school which is strike number two in Poe’s life. After this, Poe returned to his origin in Richmond and where he found out that his fiancé had been engaged to another man. With that in mind Poe decided to join the army but was later expelled because of his lack of presence in many army activities. However after a series of unfortunate events, Poe went on to live with his aunt Maria Clemm which was also the start of his short stories that will be treated in this thesis.

As a writer, it was around this time that Poe had won his first contest and it seemed that his luck was turned around. After this however there was a much criticized action of Poe’s personal life. Poe fell in love with a woman named Virginia which happened to be his cousin and while Poe was 26 at that time, she was only 13. They married the next year in 1835. Poverty followed Poe throughout his marriage as well even though his marriage was said to be going good. With that said, Poe was continuing his struggle of making it big which seemed a dream too far for Poe to reach until he published his first book “Tales of the Grotesque and Arabesque” (1840) and more specifically within that book was Poe’s famous story “The Fall of the House of Usher” which optimistic at first didn’t seem to help Poe do better with his financial situation. It was only until 1845 when Poe’s poem “The Raven” was published that slingshot Poe’s career to new heights. Just as things started to get well, Virginia suffered an early death at the age of 24 due to tuberculosis which had its peak as a disease at that time. This consequently led to Poe falling in a trap of alcoholism which paved the way for Poe to return back to his former fiancé in Richmond where they were engaged to be married...again. Poe soon went missing and was found on October 3<sup>rd</sup> in a very weird state which was allegedly described as delirious, motionless and very poor. He was brought



in that weak and weary state in a hospital under suspicion of intoxication. Poe never recovered from this and during his last days, he hallucinated a lot and showed weird signs of delusion. The official cause for Poe's death is said to be phrenitis or brain swelling. Poe's death was also a point of interest and mystery for a long time with many claims of brain tumor, alcohol poisoning, fighting among some. With no autopsy ever done however the current consensus on his cause of death stands as brain swelling.

Poe's works range from a fierce critic to a poet of love and death to a short story writer that is concerned with horror and the macabre more than anything else.

As mentioned earlier Poe's start in the short-story-writing business was in the late 1830s with "Tales of the Grotesque and Arabesque" which contained short stories like his famous "The Fall of the House of Usher" as well as tales like "Ligeia" and "William Wilson". Later on in 1841, Poe even established a new genre of detective fiction with his book "The Murders in the Rue Morgue" which was later a source of inspiration to authors that we know today like Agatha Christie and many more.

Besides detective stories, Poe was mostly known for his tales of fear and horror which will be treated thoroughly throughout this thesis. One of them is "The Black Cat" where a once animal lover goes crazy, abuses his wife and their cat to the point where he murders his wife and descends further into madness. Another one would be "The Tell-Tale Heart" where the main character is plagued by his fear of insanity combined with disgust for the condition of the old man's eye that leads ultimately to murder and then a series of self-reflecting fear by the emergence of his insanity. I mentioned these two among many specifically since they encapsulate a lot of the things Poe dealt with in his writing.

Later in life, Poe also paid attention to his own writing and reflected upon it in works such as "The Philosophy of Composition", "The Poetic Principle" and "The Rationale of the Verse".

Poe was not only a great contributor to the whole gothic genre in general but he was also preoccupied with psychological ideas about the element of fear and the madness accessible to us all. They are especially displayed in his works in a physical state mostly when we are dealing with fear as we can see from his visual descriptions of it whether they are the stokes of fear that the main character has in the "The Pit and the Pendulum" or the beating heartbeat in "The Tell-Tale Heart". This may be the reason why he elevated the genre so much and why his work sparks a uniqueness rarely found. So much so that modern day writers such as Stephen King use him as a point of reference. In one instance when asked what terror is, King replied with 'Terror is the sound of the old man's continuing pulse beat

in "The Tell-Tale Heart".<sup>1</sup> He also made the distinction that Poe is an excellent example of inside evil (pure evil) in the aforementioned book.

Ultimately, Poe's legacy is still eminent today in terms of creating the detective story as well as The Edgar award which is given to archetypal works of the mystery genre. Besides this, Poe is featured in a lot of pop culture as well ranking from song influences like The Raven by The Alan Parsons Project to a lot of reenactments such as in the famous show, The Simpsons and even to sport by naming the Baltimore local team after the before mentioned famous poem. Despite having critics like Rufus Griswold going against him, Poe's literary work survived the premature burial.

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<sup>1</sup> King, S. (1981). *Danse Macabre*. New York: Gallery Books.

### Relevant Information

Poe was regarded as America's first professional author, a title which doesn't sound as good as his contemporary economic status at that time. Besides this he is believed to be the first great literary critic. These titles came as a result of Poe's prolific life which is filled with poetry, novels, short stories, books of scientific theories and a lot of essays and reviews.

As far as Poe's marital status goes, it's only fair to point out that there was speculation about his marriage to his 13 year old cousin and that in fact he had married her so that she wouldn't lose her inheritance due to the patriarchal system of that time. This remains enigmatic to this day, the same as his death where the cause for Poe's delirious behavior both at the end of his life and also, in cases, during his life remains unsolved. Mysteries, speculations and fears of Poe's life met with his words in his magnificent opus to create tales of profound contemplation and depth.

## Literature Review

This part of my master thesis will focus specifically on the literature used to form, implement and base my ideas concerning the topic of the thesis. Therein, one can clearly observe the previously conducted researches focused or indirectly linked with the topic at hand. Various studies have been done before concerning Edgar Allan Poe, his short stories, poems and way of writing. Famous critic of Poe, Michael Burluck mentions, in his book "Grim Phantasms: Fear in Poe's Short Fiction" that: *"of all the emotions by and affecting the mind, fear most intrigued Poe"*. This line does not come off as new information when reading Poe and much less when analyzing his works. Everyone who read Poe notices the author's affinity with the abovementioned subject. With that said, from a general perspective, the criticism Poe got throughout the years spans both extremes of evaluation, partly inflicted by the reason that Poe himself was a critic, sometimes a harsh one at that. More than the short stories, the focus is on the way Poe deals with fear and the psychological aspect of a character for that matter. Benjamin Fisher in his book "The Cambridge Introduction to Edgar Allan Poe" goes into deep analysis regarding the psychological context as he puts it. He argues that Poe's characters are characterized with fragile emotions (p. 24). This in turn is evident and it is precisely by this that the characters start to experience emotions to the extremes, mostly fear. Fisher argues further on that the way in which Poe presented terror in his stories is a result of one's own inner tumult which may arise from the misbalance of emotions rather than from external factors. Moreover he says that this is where Poe's power lies as well. The fears presented are directly coming from the depth of the soul and as such they are adaptable and readable by audiences even today and don't lose their authenticity through time.

Poe was undoubtedly inspired by Gothic tales that first started out in the 1870s and slowly crept their way slowly to aforementioned books in this thesis in opposition to the beliefs that Poe himself created the gothic horror genre. As well as making a story that thrills the reader, Poe also generally focused on the making the story short enough to read in one sitting. Therefore, not only does the story give the reader more time, it also is easier to analyze. If we link this short reading time to the heights in which Poe is regarded as a writer of fear, we see true mastery in explicating the narrative. There's true power in a limited amount of words within a story. To create horror one must be acquainted with it. Poe when referring to his tales of horror says *"To conceive the horror of my sensations is, I presume, utterly impossible; yet a curiosity to penetrate the mysteries of these awful regions predominates even over my despair, and will reconcile me to the most hideous aspect of*

*death. It is evident that we are hurrying onwards to some exciting knowledge – some never-to-be-imparted secret, whose attainment is destruction.”(p. 222)<sup>2</sup>*

I find these words to be very accurate when going in-depth with the stories as the horrors that are portrayed by various characters add up to one brilliant but terrifying mind that is without a doubt the origin of many of those fears. Author J. R Hammond in his book “A Companion to Edgar Allan Poe” (p. 70) argues that Poe’s writing is exceptional when referring to building up an atmosphere of horror. Hammond especially uses the introduction part of “The Fall of the House of Usher” to emphasize the economy of words and overall diction used. The following part being incredible as Hammond notes in terms of atmospherics or creating an environment that builds tension throughout the story.

*“During the whole of a dull, dark, and soundless day in the autumn of the year, when the clouds hung oppressively low in the heavens, I had been passing alone, on horseback, through a singularly dreary tract of country; and at length found myself, as the shades of the evening drew on, within view of the melancholy House of Usher. I know not how it was- but with the first glimpse of the building, a sense of insufferable gloom pervaded my spirit. I say insufferable; for the feeling was unrelieved by any of that half-pleasurable, because poetic, sentiment, with which the mind usually receives even the sternest natural images of the desolate or terrible.”(p. 452)*

Here one can see the little details of what makes Poe such a great author.

One instance that makes Poe unique among horror writers is his tendency to go out of the conventional story and shape what is known right now as the final, perfected work of a horror story. Poe was known to not shy away from exposing the manifold intricacies of fear and his stories mostly end on a negative note as opposed to the other writers of that time who were trying to incorporate a happy ending or a moral lesson within those stories. Lovecraft saw this as a great strength of Poe that is perceived throughout the stories since Poe does not, in any way, become a teacher or a giver of opinions but let’s the reader dive into constructing his/her own ideas from the presented information. Perhaps what helped this was the fact that Poe was more into the psychological side of things and knew a great lot according to H.P Lovecraft in his book “Supernatural Horror in Literature” which cites Poe as a writer who *“studied the human mind rather than the usages of Gothic fiction, and worked with an analytical knowledge of terror's true sources which doubled the force of his narratives and emancipated him from all the absurdities inherent in merely conventional shudder-coining”<sup>3</sup>*. Furthermore, Lovecraft gives Poe qualities relating to how he wasn’t

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<sup>2</sup> Poe, E. (1849). *The Complete Tales and Poems of Edgar Allan Poe*. Delphi Classics.

<sup>3</sup> Lovecraft, H.P. (1927). *Supernatural Horror in Literature*. Project Gutenberg Australia.

cliché in the sense of using the classic duel of good vs. evil but rather focused on one of the two parts (bad in most cases) and tried to elevate that to the highest level of understanding for the reader by dramatizing the diseases, decay, insanity and pain and projecting their terrible consequences on the characters, good or evil alike.

Going back to what I have consequently seen and as Hammond stated, the greatness of making a fearful story lies not only on the fear but in a way to communicate that fear to the reader and elevate it. We see Poe "laying seeds" for what's to come in the narrative with lines such as "*the clouds hung oppressively low in the heavens*" (p. 452) and "*as the shades of the evening drew on*" (p. 452) which signify a threat coming in a sort of way still unknown but undoubtedly on the specter of evil. Poe used this sort of foreshadowing, if one could call it that, quite often as an amplifier to producing horror stories. One of such instances is also "The Tell-Tale Heart". Fear creeps up quite early in the life of the old man in the story and it is presented even earlier to the reader with lines such as "*It was four o'clock – still dark as midnight*" (p. 771) which again indicate a dark energy present in the events to come closely linked to the idea of darkness. Poe's diction is elaborated a lot when referring to his short stories. When reading one of Poe's tales of horror, one might encounter words like "chamber", "hung", "decay" etc. which are self-explanatory as to why they create an image of loneliness, hopelessness and isolation. In this sense, the terror that follows in his stories is not abrupt but rather omnipresent in Poe's suspenseful atmosphere. The grip of Poe's horror lies in its relevance with every person's life as well. As mentioned above through the criticism of Benjamin Fisher, the psychological context plays a huge part in the development of the story. So while on this topic each of the characters' mindset, whether they are victims or penetrators, are mirrored by real life hypothetical situations that can be just as real and frightening. Of course this introduces the specter of fear from which the categories in this thesis are derived from. Naturally the affection towards the element of fear has to be linked and based upon different themes that serve as a focus point of the given fear and these can range from various themes of revenge to love to mental illness and unreliability.

Perhaps the author which knew Poe most fully is no other than Charles Baudelaire who regarded Poe as his "spiritual brother". In "Baudelaire as a literary critic: Selected Essays"<sup>4</sup>, among many of his essays it is stated that he shares a lot of similar themes with Poe; them being: the notion of perversity that Poe included in his writing which coincided with Baudelaire's belief in the original sin. Albeit Poe was not a huge believer, to say it

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<sup>4</sup> Hyslop, L & Hyslop Jr., F. (1964) *Baudelaire as a literary critic*. The Pennsylvania State University Press.

softly, Charles found a way to connect his ideas with those of Edgar. What Charles mostly valued in Edgar were his ideas to present to the world the various mental illnesses that plague people as well as the possibilities of life while also including rich symbolism to tie it all together. These among many other admirations of Baudelaire would've been enough to show at what a standard he is held in the eyes of Charles Baudelaire. Furthermore, Baudelaire notes the value of imagination that Poe held in high regard as one of the most important aspects of thinking and the creative force for every author. It is also said that in Poe's view, a scholar without imagination is a pseudo scholar or at least an incomplete one. This in turn can be seen in Poe's short stories that leave little to imagination and a diverse story to the reader characterized with complex characters and bizarre happenings. It is, in fact, due to Charles Baudelaire's criticism and praise towards Poe that the latter gained a lot of popularity. Baudelaire was also Poe's translator and as such made Poe's works available around the world and Poe's general popularity increased a lot during Baudelaire's time of activity. This effect continues even today, more than a century after his death. Perhaps what is most interesting in Baudelaire's affection towards Poe's work is also the fact that they had things in common such as opium use and alcohol abuse; self-destructive characteristics that both authors shared. Baudelaire gave Poe the status of "*Poète maudit*" – a suffering artist unvalued by the society for what he truly is and to this day, the words relate and are befitting to an author like Poe. Baudelaire as I've stated and will state further on recognized the problem with Poe in relation to his country was that Poe was not the type of author to gain America's love since he wasn't the "money-making" kind which ultimately set him back a lot. Of course Baudelaire wasn't the only one to appraise Poe since there were also authors and critics such as André Gide who claimed that Poe was the master of "interior dialogue" and Stephen Mallarme who encouraged the French to dive into Poe's works. Andre Gide especially noted that Poe does excellent work when describing the way the characters think and says that he has done a better work than stream of consciousness would in the way that the descriptions were very direct<sup>5</sup> (p. 341).

On the other hand, Mallarme viewpoint of Poe was that Poe was almost an angelic figure who elevated the value of poetry and made people reevaluate every word that they put into their poetry (p. 371).

Furthermore, Another interesting viewpoint that critics often observed and evaluated as a strong point when talking about Poe's writing is death and its many

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<sup>5</sup> Sova, D. (2007). *Critical Companion to Edgar Allan Poe: A Literary Reference to his Life and Work*. Facts on File Library of American Literature.

possibilities. Daniel Hoffman, American Poet, was especially preoccupied with the many ways Poe dealt with death, its intricacies and the weight they hold in Poe writing which undoubtedly one would agree give his writing the eminent dread of what the character might do next. He argued that no other author went more in depth when explaining the devastating effects of death. Furthermore, he noted the ways in which Poe incorporated his autobiographical fear and how he played with the characters' psyche throughout the tales while maintaining a balance and showing great understanding of the inner emotional tumult. <sup>6</sup> (p. 67)

Poe's work ranges extreme possibility however. The genre is fiction after all yet many would not shy away of saying that Poe's works explore circumstances which aren't thinkable to ordinary people. The incorporation of the supernatural and many other elements leave Poe in a tricky situation of introducing what is perhaps the most difficult art of unreal circumstances. Fyodor Dostoyevsky, the giant of Russian literature, admired this quality of Poe precisely because according to him, Poe made it logical. Up until that point in Poe's life, he was always compared to the German author Hoffman to whom Poe, according to the public, shared many characteristics yet Dostoyevsky noted that Poe's stories were different in that they could incorporate the unnatural narrative while still leaving room for that specific thing to occur in the realm of probability. *"Poe merely supposes the outward possibility of an unnatural event, though he always demonstrates logically that possibility and does it sometimes even with astounding skill; and this premise once granted, he in all the rest proceeds quite realistically. In this he differs essentially from the fantastic as used for example by Hoffmann."*<sup>6</sup> (p. 68)

Later within Dostoyevsky's opinion of Poe, he regards the latter as having one of the most amazing qualities; the vigor of imagination. It seems after Dostoyevsky observation that quite a lot of authors have exclaimed their liking to this quality of Poe which Dostoyevsky states as a quality that we have not met anywhere else, especially when it comes to the matter of the inclusion of details in the stories. He states as an example "A Voyage to the Moon" to further emphasize his point of how Poe can drag a person out of the ordinary and teleport him within an illusion of a reality. This is precisely the case that in my mind makes Poe an author of great lengths as every author's goal is essentially to open the reader their mind in a way that is easy to follow but intricate and challenging. In fact Poe's way of writing went far beyond his ability to just stand out and so much so in fact that

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<sup>6</sup> Bloom, H & Tally, R. (2007). *Bloom's Classic Critical Views: Edgar Allan Poe*. Bloom's Literary Criticism.



some authors have cited him as someone who is in his own world. One of them was Charles Whibley, a famous British literature critic, who in 1896 stated that Poe had created his own "fairy-land". Part of the reason why he held Poe in such a high regard was also Poe's way of mixing horror and the comical to create a uniqueness in itself. However Whibley also refers to the way in which *Poe is a great maker of stories, but not a great writer* (p. 79). The reasons for this being Poe's abrupt and awkward sentences which I'd partially agree with if it weren't for their intricate way of bringing forth emotions to the reader. What I believe is that Poe, being a friend with great writers like Coleridge, would not make a sentence without thought put into hence I believe that the effect Poe wanted to create was that the reader should not expect of what's to come. That, consequently, would destroy the effect of a good horror story. Perchance Poe was also seen as a repeating writer in the sense that he also didn't change the first person to another person. He overuses the first person pronoun which we see in works such as "The Tell-Tale Heart" and "The Black Cat". This may be monotonous yet Poe does not shy away from it; on the contrary, he embraces it. Baudelaire commented this phenomenon of Poe's writing and stated that the trait, although cynical in nature, helps us understand the pain in its primal form. One feels the supernatural power, pain and emotions through one's own skin while reading it in first person better than what he would if it was in the third person for example.

With that being said, Poe was dealing with other issues that directly influenced his writings and one of the most prominent ones that reoccur from time to time is Poe's coldness. His art of writing or better yet thinking in general stretches the specter of an analytical mind more than a mind operated on emotions. This brought to light the problem that Poe couldn't be an author because of his geniality which is often associated with coldness. Poetry as well many of his other short stories had to include emotion since after all it is the single motive by which people associate with characters or the narrative in general. This coldness made Poe look like a person who himself could not experience the situations at hand and merely described them for the reader just to skip by occasionally. George Gilfillan suggests that there are several reasons why Poe has created this way of thinking.<sup>7</sup> *"Poe's choice of subject matter, particularly in his well-known tales, might relate to his analytical sensibilities as well as to his own fears. Mysteries, natural disasters, madness, and above all death, these test the limits and ultimately defeat the cool, calculating reason that tries to comprehend them. In the "puzzle" stories, we see that riddle*

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<sup>7</sup> Bloom, H & Tally, R. (2007). *Bloom's Classic Critical Views: Edgar Allan Poe*. Bloom's Literary Criticism.

*being solved, but in most of Poe's stories, the inexplicable is presented without being solved.*"(p.59). what this suggests is that Poe has grown up very keen to this sort of thinking because that's how he tackles issues in his life as well. Unfortunately, without luck in finding the answers for himself, this also transcends to his writing and creates a mysterious atmosphere where a mystery or puzzle isn't ultimately solved. James Russell Lowell, American poet and critic, went deep into the topic and investigated how Poe can incite fear while still staying analytical. He argues that in raising image of horror, Poe conveys them but because he doesn't do it fully, he finds the most powerful tool of creating a good horror story and that is doubt. Doubt makes your mind wonder and from there, your mind is assigned the task of shuffling through possibilities and so it finishes the task and puts the puzzle pieces into place without even knowing them. Lowell thereby praises Poe's "The Fall of House of Usher" by which, according to Lowell, Poe had already cemented his place as a genius and as a master of the word.<sup>8</sup>

As far as recent culture goes, Poe was seen as a father figure when it comes to writing and this can be based on Stephen King's words towards Poe when citing him as one of his biggest inspirations.<sup>9</sup> "Poe was the first writer to write about main characters who were bad guys or who were mad guys, and those are some of my favorite stories" argues King as he, in a humble manner, raises Poe to the position of a "grandfather" that not only influenced him personally but also other well-known horror writers such as H.P Lovecraft and Robert Bloch. The respect, so to say, between King and Poe went so far as King redoing Poe's "Tell-Tale Heart" with a twist of his own as a show of tribute to the author who paved the way, relatively speaking, for the others to come.

One would question the role of Poe and his true value of an author but as Macmillan said "*Clearly his writings must possess some quality, some distinctive feature, which readers of succeeding generations have found relevant to their own concerns. This quality lies, I have suggested, in his unrivalled ability to enter the dark regions of man's mental world, to explore the hidden depths of the human psyche and expose the fears, uncertainties and irrationalities which lie beneath the facade of normal behavior.*"<sup>10</sup> (p. 41); a saying with which I completely agree. There is, I feel, a belief that Poe is unrivalled in his ways of dealing

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<sup>8</sup> Bloom, H & Tally, R. (2007). *Bloom's Classic Critical Views: Edgar Allan Poe*. Bloom's Literary Criticism.

<sup>9</sup> Staik, P. (2010). *Stephen King and Edgar Allan Poe, 2*.  
<http://talkstephenking.blogspot.com/2010/03/edgar-allen-poe-and-stephen-king.html>

<sup>10</sup> Macmillan, I. (1981). *An Edgar Allan Poe Companion*. The Macmillan Press LTD.

with the human psyche yet it's not much elaborated on. Macmillan later identifies that to his extent, this is not really enough to base Poe's popularity on so it is my thoughtful opinion that this comes as a result of not enough light being shone on Poe's work as also mentioned by Macmillan later in the book; *"It was his misfortune that in his own lifetime these distinctive gifts were not recognized and that his idiosyncratic world-view failed to meet with the response it merited."* (p. 43)<sup>20</sup>

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Hammond, J. R. (1981). *A Companion to Edgar Allan Poe*. The Macmillan Press LTD.

## Fear in Edgar Allan Poe's Short Stories

What is certainly no mystery is that fear is one of our main drives in daily life but it also is the drive in a lot of Poe's short fictions. When relying on the first read of Poe's short stories, one can quickly assume how fear ties in with the other themes such as death, love or mystery and how it is an essential component to the story. To start off with, Poe was no stranger to fear. He was, in fact, quite accustomed to it because of his less-fortunate life. All throughout his life, he had many fears that will also be talked thoroughly about in this thesis. Perhaps the two fears that stand out for Poe most was his fear of death and insanity, the latter also enforced by one of his famous quotes: *"I become insane with long intervals of horrible sanity"*. It is most likely because of this reason that he was able to portray so fully in his characters and fictional events. The raw tone of fear in Poe's short stories is especially prominent since more than often it presents an argument between the conscious and unconscious just like a real life person would struggle with his inner self when presented with a circumstance that would trigger his/her nervous system. The discomfort that a person feels when reading Poe's stories arises from a craftsmanship in certain terms of dealing with fear. Mostly I've encountered the specific way of Poe's writing self personally where the physical description of fear is one of the key features. Other features of fear that Poe uses are the element of mystery intertwined with fear. In many books as well as in Poe's poem "The Raven", the main character struggles to control his dread of the unknown since the unknown brings many possibilities with it. Consequently due to our own mental process which in most cases produces a negative prediction of an event rather than a positive one, we are left with a dread of that which is not known. We know this in today's world as Xenophobia and it is present in Poe's short stories as well. If we take a look at stories like "The Masque of Red Death", one of the attributes that raises fear most is exactly mystery. Death, which comes in a shade of red, wouldn't be as traumatizing for the nation in the specific story if it pursued a known path. What I mean by that is that it is a mystery when and where it will strike next and that is an amplifier to the fear, people were already feeling. While talking about "The Masque of Red Death", there is also a lack of fear or numbness towards it. Undoubtedly fear is felt over the nation but the masquerade ball and its atmosphere insists to numb fear at that particular state and time. The participants of the ball are brought to a state of oblivion almost due to their entertaining ways and the seclusion which they thought they dwell in.

*"There were buffoons, there were improvisatori, there were ballet-dancers, there were musicians, there was Beauty, there was wine. All these and security were within. Without was the "Red Death."* (Poe, E. 1849, p.664)

## TYPES OF FEAR IN EDGAR A. POE'S SHORT STORIES

It is precisely this that causes for such a grand entrance for the red death. So not only is fear experienced more thoroughly when it is something unknown to us but also when it is something which we haven't prepared for. The buildup such as this one is not a unique feature to this book only. In fact many of Poe's books follow a guideline of climax. Suspense is Poe's biggest ally in these stories as is the case with many horror writers, H.P Lovecraft and Stephen King to name a few. This, along with the many complications that undergo with fear such as the mental disability that it causes and the circumstances that go together with it, influence the narrative that fear can either be a cause or an effect to the story (sometimes both altogether) which significantly alters a previously occurring narrative in the stories.

## Fear as a Cause and Effect

Coming back to the element of fear, it is worth noting that fear is a cause or effect and sometimes both in Edgar Allan Poe's short stories. It is certainly a drive to many ferocious acts of violence and horror and it is the byproduct of those acts as well. Starting off with what many claim is Poe's best work: "The Tell-Tale Heart". We are introduced with the main character as someone whose actions are dictated by fear. He states this himself in lines such as: "*Whenever it fell upon me, my blood ran cold*"<sup>11</sup> (Poe, E. 1843, p. 768) where we see that his dread of the "vulture eye", as the narrator calls it, is the main drive of his preceding action. This fear is paired with the insecurity in his "well-functioning psyche" which further raises his anxiety to uncontrollable measures despite his objection that he indeed loved the old man. However no mistake should be made. The narrator's actions were precise and well-thought out. This contradicts the idea that fear had blinded the narrator; on the contrary, it filled him with a passion to overcome his fear. A passion that grew more and more with each peeking of every night that passed by. On one instance we see a different fear that ultimately drove him to kill the old man – the beating of the old man's heart. The fear of being heard by their neighbor's was the final alignment in his actions and he threw himself into action ultimately seizing the old man's pulse...for now at least. Following this we are introduced to three men who are described as police officers in the story. In this resolution of events, we have an absence of fear as the narrator states: "*I smiled, - for what had I to fear? I bade the gentlemen welcome*"<sup>3</sup> (Poe, E. 1843, p.772). This however doesn't last long as anxiety strikes the narrator again, symptoms of which are described as headache and ringing in the ears, possibly due to hypertension. The narrator breaks down and admits the deed as a result of the fear that the officers had already known of the he'd done. The intensification of fear is a common thing Poe dealt with and not only in this book. Nevertheless, the climax or better said the climax comes right at the end where fear is a cause for not only committing the deed but also admitting it. As the narrator states: "*But anything was better than this agony*"<sup>12</sup> (Poe, E. 1849, p.773) and telltale was the only way to calm himself according to him and indeed so he did.

The drive that fear can cause or be part of is not only prominent in "The Tell-Tale Heart", it shrieks and thumps in stories such as "The Fall of the House of Usher" as well. The narrator sets on a quest here to visit his friend from childhood Roderick Usher, one of the few Ushers left in fact. Fear as a theme is introduced quite early on in this novel as we see the narrator combating his own bravery to go into the houses that gives off a mysterious

<sup>11</sup> Poe, E. (1849). *The Complete Tales and Poems of Edgar Allan Poe*. Delphi Classics.

<sup>12</sup> Poe, E. (1849). *The Complete Tales and Poems of Edgar Allan Poe*. Delphi Classics.

vibe. It's surrounded by decaying trees and murky ponds, figures these that introduce a sense of abandonment and despair that line up with the title of the book as well as the Ushers family history. Despite his fear, he joins the old friend on the request of the latter. When joining inside the house, we are given detail of the decaying state of the building on the inside just as much as on the outside. Then we are introduced to Roderick Usher, pale in appearance. He explains that lately he's been feeling ill physically and mentally and as a result of that lives his life now in fear. The narrator is introduced to a conclusion by Roderick that he fears himself or rather his future and the future of his house;

*"I shudder at the thought of any, even the most trivial, incident, which may operate upon this intolerable agitation of the soul.", "I feel that the period will sooner or later arrive when I must abandon life and reason together, in some struggle with the grim phantasm, Fear."* (p. 459).

Furthermore, not only did his fear cause him to be almost immobile outside of his family's mansion for all these years, he is also scared of the mansion itself as we see in the next given lines. These have an immense effect on Roderick backed up also by his gruesome and badly kept appearance from staying inside the house for so long. Further into the story, Roderick seemed to have found the cause of his fear and discomfort which allegedly is his sister who had passed away that left such a mark in Roderick's life. Having no one to resort to as the last Usher alive, he is almost eaten up by the immense pressure of his ancestors who for generations were known to have survived very bleakly. The narrator doesn't get away easier either. To calm himself and Roderick's spirit, he starts reading a book. Soon enough he finds that whatever he's reading is being manifested in real life as well. At first, in disbelief towards his fear and current events, the narrator neglects it but later he found it impossible to battle with his inner dread and in a sequence of events we reach the climax of this frightful story and the ghost of Roderick's sister appears thereby causing Roderick to die of fear. The narrator in turn manages to flee the house barely. To conclude the cause and effect in this story: Fear is what ultimately killed Roderick; a fear from his history, a fear for his future and finally a fear from the person he held dearest to himself, his sister. The narrator in this case enters as a conscious normal, compared to Roderick, character and despite his troublesome quarrel to resist the fear of his surroundings, he succumbs to it which leads him to flee the house, leaving it falling inevitably.-

When we are on the topic of causes and effects of fear, "The Pit and the Pendulum" also goes to an extent to convey the drive of fear. The narrator describes his state as someone who is awaiting death, an event that causes him to feel fear and go into deep reflective states over his own mortality, life and consciousness which intermingle in the

passages. As such he experiences being consciousness and unconsciousness one after the other for a period of time accompanied thereby by fear which came to him in waves of reoccurrence and cause him to try and identify his surroundings physically:

*“Upon recovering, I at once started to my feet, trembling convulsively in every fibre. I thrust my arms wildly above and around me in all directions. I felt nothing; yet dreaded to move a step, lest I should be impeded by the walls of a tomb.”<sup>13</sup> (Poe, E. 1849, p.752)*

This already strong inclination towards fear is further strengthened by the possible outcomes the narrator thinks about. In best case scenario, he would starve which is a gruesome way to die or he would be killed. He continuously settles his mind for the latter since he is convinced that he knows the character of his judges who would not shy away from such thing. Following his quest of identifying his whereabouts, he stumbles upon a wall which further gives him no insight of how tall the wall is. Additionally, he also states that he could be running in circles the whole time which makes his demise more and more inevitable. He states that the Inquisition, The counterpart of the real Spanish Inquisition in real life, chose to end people's lives in two manners: A direct physical pain that cause death or moral agony and horror. The narrator in this story battles with the latter and that is precisely where fear comes into play. He is left to his own torment of imagination and the dreadful feeling of prolonged death which have taken their toll on the narrator as we in lines such as:

*“By long suffering my nerves had been unstrung, until I trembled at the sound of my own voice, and had become in every respect a fitting subject for the species of torture which awaited me.”(Poe, E. 1849, p.755)*

His fear goes so far as to hinder him from taking his own life. He claims that in other conditions, he would have been the one to jump into that abyss which was centered in the environment of the pit but right at that moment he felt unable to makes the slightest move to ease his suffering anyhow. Fear in this story makes the narrator both fall asleep due to the shock aspect of it but also makes him alert and causes at times to not fall asleep at all. Both of these being deadly combinations to the human psyche which produce a more and more imbalanced mental health system. The element of fear shifts then from darkness to the large pendulum hanging on top of the narrator's body which embodies death and/or the passing of time. Here we see the first time that the narrator's fear is combined with wonder as he gazes on the large structure swinging ever so slightly. Again here we have a sensation of fear coming in in waves with each swing of the pendulum as the narrator states that it was descending more and more:

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<sup>13</sup> Poe, E. (1849). *The Complete Tales and Poems of Edgar Allan Poe*. Delphi Classics.



*"What boots it to tell of the long, long hours of horror more than mortal, during which I counted the rushing vibrations of the steel! Inch by inch—line by line—with a descent only appreciable at intervals that seemed ages— down and still down it came!"<sup>14</sup>(Poe, E. 1849, p.759)*

Right at the end however in many series of events that befall our main character, he is freed from the terror and combat for his own soul. All in all fear is what our character goes through sequentially throughout the story and at times it was a cause of productive things such as the exploration of his environment but in most cases it results in a negative effect as it makes our character faint often, delusional and ultimately he is saved which proves that fear in retrospect wasn't a mean of moving forward anyway.

Moving onto works what strikes fear even today with current events in the world, "The Masque of Red Death" is surely a shiver we are familiar with. There is a clear distinction which should be made in this novel regarding the element or theme of fear in that it is treated differently by various social groups. Right at the beginning we are given an introduction to what is perhaps the most cruel, macabre disease that marks its presence with death; absolutely fatal. As such it is said that it causes terror in the streets except sometimes it seems only in the streets. This is because Prince Prospero "immune" inside the walls of his castle along with the friends he invited for the party give off the impression that they do not fear the red death or at least they "postpone" their emotions that is. We learn however that this lack of fear that they experience is not helpful in the least as they are caught off guard by the red death in the middle of their masquerade and the same fate was written for both of them: *"And the rumor of this new presence having spread itself whisperingly around, there arose at length from the whole company a buzz, or murmur, expressive of disapprobation and surprise—then, finally, of terror, of horror, and of disgust."*<sup>15</sup>(Poe, E. 1849, p. 668)

There are elements here that are compiled with fear, such as Prince Prospero's wealth, that are used to signal that he is somehow immune to the disease which we find he is not. This goes back to a tale as old as time that even the strongest forts and the seclusion that you put yourself in cannot shelter you from your destiny.

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<sup>14</sup> Poe, E. (1849). *The Complete Tales and Poems of Edgar Allan Poe*. Delphi Classics.

<sup>15</sup> Poe, E. (1849). *The Complete Tales and Poems of Edgar Allan Poe*. Delphi Classics.

## Types of Fear

With every theme that Poe put in paper, comes a nuance with them. Fear is no different. While the omnipresence of fear is what plagues his books and characters, they have distinguished places and fear appears in all sorts. Throughout Poe's opus, as with every writer, the events have always a biographical hint to them and in this case we can also draw parallels between Poe's life and work. Starting off with what is perhaps the most known fear in Poe's works, the fear of mystery or the unknown. Not only is it almost omnipresent in his short stories, it also is "seasoned" by many symbols. In "The Black Cat" we are left mostly without knowledge of what actually drives the main character to go insane and commit the act of murder. We, as readers, experience that the aforementioned character is struggling in his narrative and this is also evident from the alcohol he is drinking yet he personally has no reason to intend the action because of an imaginable dread of something.

One theory suggests that it is the narrator's very environment, the "sweet home" that leads to such gruesome acts which can be defined as – Ecophobia. In fact, Poe was obsessed with houses and places that have this effect on the human psyche. Take for instance, "The Masque of Red Death" which is almost bursting with environmental descriptions and it serves as a mean of creating a division between the powers of fear. There's a clear contrast between how fear is perceived from the people in the castle and those outside of it.

This contrast is not only prominent in material or external things like castle walls and masquerade balls but also in the human's internal and external world. If we take a look at "The Pit and the Pendulum", there's a clear focus point where fear is located and that is undoubtedly the swinging pendulum over the character's head. We perceive such fears of death as logical as long as a reason for that fear is found. When resorting back to internal fears, that's another matter. They cannot be identified and brought forth to the external world that easy and this is the case with "The Tell-Tale Heart". Right at the end, where the character is experiencing anxiety from the actions he'd done, the police question him. Now, we as readers are easily able to perceive the fear that the character has but if we assume perspectives of the police, the fear experienced is illogical.

Speaking of perspectives, there is a line which can be drawn between the perspectives of fear amongst victims and perpetrators in Poe's work. The mental process between the two differs and not only in the way that it was written but also from the rationality of their thoughts. "The Tell-Tale Heart" serves as a perfect example of the overflow of anxiety that a perpetrator feels in Poe's works. While continuously fighting his own rationality and failing in attempts of reassurance, he spirals down a rabbit hole of

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madness that further eats him from the inside. Many claimed this to be a symbol of guilty conscience, a phenomenon we see in a lot of works that were also influenced by Poe such as Dostoevsky's "Crime and Punishment". When compared to the victim's mindset and way of reasoning in Poe's stories, there is almost a night-to-day difference at times. The victim, while faced with an event that could easily prove to be lethal, has a focused attention and a direct trail of thoughts. This can be the effect of many psychological diseases which undoubtedly one needs to be a perpetrator in Poe's stories to start with.

In fact, mental conditions are misbalanced by many factors in the books. Alcoholism in "The Black Cat" and medical conditions in "The Fall of the House of Usher" all contribute to a buildup that ultimately has a negative resolution which of course is combined with the element of fear whether fear in that case was a cause or effect.

## Taphophobia - Fear of Being Buried Alive

This fear may seem irrational from our standpoint right now, and it is mostly considered by many so, but in the era of weak medicine when tuberculosis was wreaking havoc it rarely can be considered the same. This may come as a fact that at that time doctors were, in certain cases, unable to really tell if a person had passed away and most likely they would base it on the decay of flesh which showed that time had passed. There have been cases where people were buried by accident with the thought that they had actually passed away. None other than Poe goes into details in this specific type of fear in his book "The Premature Burial". It is most thoroughly debated and brought under the microscope in the aforementioned book however it mustn't be neglected that it is also a major part of "The Cask of Amontillado" too albeit in a different tone or fashion shown. Poe goes into an extremity by calling it the biggest fear for a mortal being in lines such as:

*"To be buried while alive is, beyond question, the most terrific of these extremes which has ever fallen to the lot of mere mortality."*<sup>16</sup> (Poe, E. 1849, p. 903)

As proof of the narrator's fear, he goes on to mention some instances in which interments had happened before. So here fear is an effect of past experiences that the narrator witnessed or had heard about. These in turn introduce us to the thinking process of the narrator which seems to have thought of any possible scenario, convincing himself that the fear felt is not only real and possible but also more eminent than thought. After relentlessly going through one person to the other explaining their circumstances prior to their burial as well as after, he notices some things in detail that are characteristics or nuances of this peculiar fear:

*"The unendurable oppression of the lungs- the stifling fumes from the damp earth- the clinging to the death garments- the rigid embrace of the narrow house- the blackness of the absolute Night- the silence like a sea that overwhelms- the unseen but palpable presence of the Conqueror Worm - these things, with the thoughts of the air and grass above, with memory of dear friends who would fly to save us if but informed of our fate, and with consciousness that of this fate they can never be informed- that our hopeless portion is that of the really dead- these considerations, I say, carry into the heart, which still palpitates, a degree of appalling and intolerable horror from which the most daring imagination must recoil."*<sup>9</sup> (Poe, E. 1849, p. 909-910)

As one can envision all the aforementioned events or phenomena spark a sense of seclusion and loneliness, a cold characteristic found in death behind coffin door and a

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<sup>16</sup> Poe, E. (1849). *The Complete Tales and Poems of Edgar Allan Poe*. Delphi Classics.

hopeless one as well. Yet after the whole discussion of other perspectives, the narrator returns to his point of view sharing his personal experience and knowledge on the topic. Another technique of writing that Poe uses is the long structure of sentences as seen on the abovementioned part of the book. Poe deliberately does so to not lose focus from the terror that is being buried alive and in a way forces the reader to really delve in the theme or trail of thoughts that goes on within the person experiencing this. Continuing with the story, he explains his role as a patient, suffering from catalepsy for several years. A condition that renders a person to display death-like qualities of fainting and unconsciousness, these being amplifiers to the aforementioned topic that our narrator oh so fears. This condition puts our narrator in a state of lethargy or inactivity while also having a pale appearance. His fears go so far as to him envisioning himself in the positions of those who had been buried alive talking to an entity which on the first read strikes you as the narrator's conscience or the voice within. Furthermore this fear goes beyond that in that it transcends the simple mindset to an actual lifestyle. It causes the narrator to, rarely if ever, leave the house as well as to rely only on people who know about his condition. However we see that the narrator has taken some steps to soothe his fear of being buried alive by leaving some instructions for his dearest friends:

*"I exacted the most sacred oaths, that under no circumstances they would bury me until decomposition had so materially advanced as to render farther preservation impossible."*<sup>17</sup> (Poe, E. 1849, p.914)

As well as informing his friends, we also get details on plans he'd made concerning the coffin's ability to be open from the inside among others but even these precautions aren't thought to be enough by the narrator who still lives with dread. Later on he finds himself in what appears to be a coffin if we base it on the narrator's senses but in much contemplation he found out that he was in fact resided in a coffin-like cabin and of course this relieved the narrator to the extent of not having Taphophobia anymore. He also claims that his catalepsy has gotten better which in retrospect is argued to have been caused by the fear felt. He acknowledges this change as a contrast between two extremes of the human mind- the one to which earth is hell and the one to which sees the beauty of this world.

Apart from "The Premature Burial", works like "The Fall of the House of Usher" and "The Cask of Amontillado" also treat the aforementioned subject. This may be due to a closed link that Edgar Allan Poe shared with the fear itself which will be talked in detail later. While different based on the plot, they give other perspectives to the fear that cannot be

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<sup>17</sup> Poe, E. (1849). *The Complete Tales and Poems of Edgar Allan Poe*. Delphi Classics.

found in "The Premature Burial". In "The Fall of the House of Usher", the narrator's journey to visit his old friend Roderick is disturbed by the story of Roderick's sister Madeline. Both brother and sister are sick and in a turn of events, the sister supposedly dies and is buried in the coffin underneath the house of Usher. The events in the story all give signs to a big climax waiting to happen which eventually does. Madeline returns from the grave in a grand entrance which leaves both Madeline and her brother Roderick dead and ultimately their house in shambles. The narrator manages to escape yet harmed however by the fear of life in the grave.

Another example of a different kind would be "The Cask of Amontillado" as well. Here there is a different kind of approach in that the character who is buried alive is not particularly sick or plagued by something other than alcoholism. This in turn has its own effect as Fortunato doesn't experience the fear of being buried alive since he is unaware of it for the most part. His judgment is clouded by alcoholism so his cognitive abilities start to only function at the last part when there is no hope for our character. After that, Fortunato's bleak voice is heard which is when his senses finally get to him and he realizes the situation which he is in. So the fear of being buried alive or Taphophobia is not present until an act done by revenge mixed with contemplation is brought forth. It is worth noting that being buried alive was the only option in this story in terms of taking revenge as the characters debate and talk about wines, as wine connoisseurs that they are, so inevitably the situation was alluding to an underground pattern of wine construction and storage which would be the downfall of Fortunato thereby also presenting the dangers of alcoholism and pride.

Finally, Taphophobia is one of the most unique fears portrayed by Poe in his work and as such it is deserving of an analysis because of its complexity, personal experience and cultural relevance.

## Dementophobia - Fear of Insanity

*"...very, very dreadfully nervous I had been and am; but why will you say that I am mad?"*<sup>18</sup>  
(Poe, E. 1849, p. 767)

These words may come as quite reoccurring when you are reading one of Poe's classics, namely "The tell-Tale Heart". Insanity goes hand in hand with Poe's opus but most noticeably perhaps it is in the aforementioned book. Nevertheless it makes "appearances" in other books such as "The Black Cat" and "The Pit and the Pendulum" as well. The main character in "The Tell Tale-Heart" which is also the narrator in this book has clear issues with himself that lead him to stray away from a well-functioning psyche to a straight path into insanity which wouldn't be the case if only it wasn't mixed with anxiety. To give insight, the narrator has some issues with the old man he is living with. His eye in particular disgusts him. All the while the narrator feels insecure in himself and his actions and tends to camouflage this with reassuring the reader that he is sane. This ongoing process induced by the narrator's anxiety could be a premonition about the future guilt-trip he will experience. One of the ways, the narrator seeks to justify his madness is by presenting cautious plans he arranged which to hold whatever sanity he has left that is already hanging from a thread:

*"You fancy me mad. Madmen know nothing. But you should have seen me."*<sup>11</sup> (Poe, E. 1849, p.768)

The narrator also displays other signs of mental instability by showing that his senses have greatly improved, in particular hearing, and as such he is allegedly able to listen to the sounds of heaven and hell and the beating heart underneath the floor board all justified from the anxiety of "seeing himself in the mirror" and reflecting upon himself. However, as with most insanity and anxiety combinations, this too culminated in a tragic ending for the narrator as due to his exuberated fear of insanity and the pressure of his heightened senses, he succumbs into admitting to the police officers that he had in fact murdered the old man. Being insane is a term that is so far gone for our narrator that he never crossed his mind whether he should actually come to terms and admit it, rather he continuously tries in many attempts to divert the conversation and distance himself greatly from it. From many of Edgar Allan Poe's works, we conclude that this denial of insanity is not a unique feature of this book only as we also find it in "The Black Cat". Here, Poe brilliantly displays Dementophobia or the fear of madness by connecting it to a lack of reason. After all, there is no reason why a person would kill the family cat, his spouse and dump her body in the basement. The reason for Poe's fear lies in the imagery of the black cat as we see that it only

<sup>18</sup> Poe, E. (1849). *The Complete Tales and Poems of Edgar Allan Poe*. Delphi Classics.

has one eye. This in turn links to an old saying known as an “eye-for-an-eye” which gives the narrator every reason to feel dread as every action in opposition to another being results in a quest of that being for revenge. This turns into a deep anxiety for the narrator however throughout the story the narrator never admits that he is mad and this is precisely where we notice fear the most; in his attempt to escape it. The narrator refuses to believe himself as mad and in turn finds a scapegoat for his actions; the scapegoat being alcohol (most of the time) and what the narrator calls, things “out of his control” which allude to imaginary powers that have control over our lives. In this stage of denial he also uses reasoning with the reader to gain assertiveness or assurance in what he is doing with the following lines:

*“Who has not, a hundred times, found himself committing a vile or a stupid action, for no other reason than because he knows he should not?”<sup>19</sup> (Poe, E. 1849, p. 821)*

It seems, the farther you go into the book’s story, the more the narrator excuses all his actions, from murder to irrational thoughts to alcoholism but won’t admit madness. Insanity was in Poe’s time a topic that was taboo and accepting yourself as someone who is mad or having a “screw loose” was off the table. Poe aims to portray a fear that is universal and that can happen to everyone which is why “The Black Cat” rose to its’ current stance in regards to Poe’s stories. Both from this and the previous story we can see that the narrators escape their own mind and thoughts in an attempt to silence this possessive force over them which really may be powers beyond our control or it may be so simple as the desire to kill and harm others.

Another example although maybe not talked much is that of Roderick Usher in “The Fall of the House of Usher” where the main character steps into dangerous territory by constantly crossing the line of slightly going mad. Of course the consensus stands that this story is nothing more than a story influenced by supernatural elements however there have been cases where scholars argued that the story is in fact set inside of Roderick Usher’s mind where a constant battle is being fought between the conscious state of mind and the unconscious one. The first one (Consciousness) is personified in the book as Roderick himself whereas the latter (Unconsciousness) is personified as Roderick’s sister. Since neither can outweigh each other, the house which is seen as the mind, crumbles as a result. Another interesting theory linked to the fear of insanity and the consequences it brings is also the theory that Roderick went mad in his pursuit of the sublime. After all we get information that Roderick spends a lot of his time reading and that contrasts with Madeline, inevitably making Roderick face with the reality that he is too far gone into the otherworldly studies. Metaphorically here the house doesn’t actually fall despite the title but rather it is

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<sup>19</sup> Poe, E. (1849). *The Complete Tales and Poems of Edgar Allan Poe*. Delphi Classics.



Roderick's fall into madness that is symbolized by the ancient Usher house. This can in fact be taken quite lightly as we are given constant descriptions of the house whose depictions most clearly resemble words like "depressing" and "uncomfortable" and as such, a descent into depression and insanity is as close to Roderick as the four walls are around him. Of course, all the information we get about Roderick is from our narrator. This is evidently different from the other stories where the narrator was the actual person with mental issues so the information about Roderick, as seen from the lines above, must be taken out by our narrator's words and remarks about his best friend. This can be quite tricky as our narrator struggles to describe Roderick's inner workings himself and we see him progressively trying to put Roderick's anxiety into words but fails to do so as the story becomes more complex.

## Ecophobia – Fear of the Environment

Generally, Ecophobia relates to the fear of one's home however in certain cases it has a more generic approach; that of the environment. As a gothic writer, Poe included a lot of dark descriptive expressions of the narrator's environment which contribute to the fear of the narrator or is in itself the fear. A classic instance of such case is the story of "The Fall of the House of Usher".

*"During the whole of a dull, dark, and soundless day in the autumn of the year, when the clouds hung oppressively low in the heavens, I had been passing alone, on horseback, through a singularly dreary tract of country, and at length found myself, as the shades of the evening drew on, within view of the melancholy House of Usher."*<sup>20</sup> (Poe, E. 1849, p. 452)

Right from the first lines, we are introduced to a dull environment that influences our narrator. Clouds especially in this case refer to the narrator's attitude through his endeavors in that it he's quite dull himself emotionally. Then we have the adjective "melancholy" to describe the house of Usher thereby already foreshadowing a negative course of events to come. In fact, Poe used a lot of lines in this story to signal a concluding event and build up tension. With lines such as *"the clouds hung oppressively low in the heavens"* and *"as the shades of the evening drew on"*, Poe fuels the idea of building up pressure in the story in a way that foreshadows what is to come. Another thing that should be noted here is that it is not in fact specifically the place that causes the fear but the memories that come with it. The dread caused by nature in this story is understood from the perspective that nature will outlive us. We cannot escape the flow of nature no matter if we go against or accept it. This exact thought is what trembles the character of Roderick as well. He lived in the same house as his parents and their parents before them. As such he is scared because of his family's destiny that is not too bright and this is represented in Ecophobia. So in other words, the walls of his very house are what remind him of his destiny and what's to come.

Nevertheless, going back to the narrator's description of the house, we see a lot of bleakness and dullness which inspire a feeling for no hope or escape.

*"...with the first glimpse of the building, a sense of insufferable gloom pervaded my spirit."*<sup>13</sup> (Poe, E. 1849, p. 452)

Whereas with Roderick, it was his fear of the family's history that frightened him, to our narrator, it is the very presence of the building. This suggests that the house is not only feared for its memories but also for its aesthetics. "Pervaded" is also an interesting word that Poe used in this instance. Instead of the cliché fear reactions, that one feels, our

<sup>20</sup> Poe, E. (1849). *The Complete Tales and Poems of Edgar Allan Poe*. Delphi Classics.

narrator is lost inside it. He isn't trembling or sweating from fear but that does not, at the slightest, mean that the fear felt is not real or engulfing. Our narrator cannot understand why he feels the way that he feels but he continues to express his uneasiness throughout the story as he comments on the house's walls and windows and their aesthetical output. Now, upon further inspection of his arrangement of ideas concerning the house, one might conclude that this fear could be related to the narrator's struggle to understand the house. At one point the narrator also describes the house's windows as "eye-like". These human-like attributes give more might and more power to nature which in turn is scary to the humans' sense of control. When referring back to the narrator's uneasiness felt throughout the story, we see a lot of mystery linked to it. Mainly one can observe that the reason for his fear as I stated earlier remains rather...unknown. In an instance the narrator states to the fear as an *"after-dream of the reveler upon opium – the bitter lapse into every-day life – the hideous dropping off of the veil"* (p. 453). All these descriptions of the narrator's inner tumult relate to something deeply soul-touching and awakening. So much so that it seems like the narrator's fear opened his eyes towards something that he should've been aware of much earlier. He also goes on with the description; *"There was iciness, a sinking, a sickening of the heart – an unredeemed dreariness of thought which no goading of the imagination could torture into aught of the sublime"* (p. 453). The emotions are very well presented in these lines and thoroughly put out by the narrator nevertheless he goes back to it being a mystery after all why he feels this way. *"It was a mystery all insoluble;"* (p. 453)

However, we also get context from the narrator that he is visiting his friend. For someone visiting an old friend, having a negative reaction to his house is quite unusual. Therefore the uneasiness of the narrator could be related to the change from what the house once was and the terrible condition that it is now since it can be concluded that this is not his first visit. So in the words of American author Andrew Smith, "People fear what they can't understand". This feeling of dread continues to haunt our narrator as he is continuously experiencing some sort of existential crisis and identity loss because of nature. When reflecting back to the other character, Roderick, we have a character that profoundly understands the horror of nature in this case and attributes his poor mental and physical health as a result of his surroundings. The fact that Roderick confesses this to our narrator is unsettling as one can only imagine that Roderick has spent his life there and the effects of the house plagued him more than anyone else in the arch of the story. These feelings of Roderick shift from fear to a sort of hate and vice versa interchangeably as we see his attitude towards nature is quite hostile. This resentment is only temporary from Roderick as any attempt of his against nature backfires and harms only him. The house of Usher was for

generations passed down from one Usher to the other and as such it symbolizes a sort of stance against nature which we ultimately see fail, from generation to generation. Poe deliberately wrote the book in this way to show that we are not superior towards nature in any way and every attempt to conquer or control nature's power flops. So when we go back to analyze the house's features and details that were described in the book, we can see that it wasn't the house itself that caused fear but the negative changes it had undergone due to the desire to control and affect nature. If one thinks about it, you build a house to "signify" that a specific part of nature is "yours". The vines growing outside the house are a sign that nature doesn't let herself be conquered or possessed but rather the house along with the residents is a part of her entirely. There's a continuous argument to be made about the tarn and the house in the book; both representing the natural and artificial element respectively. The fear or discomfort felt by the characters is justified in the end because we see that the house is succumbed to nature's will (the tarn) along with Roderick. Ecophobia in this way is treated by Poe as fear of the memories linked to that place rather than fear of the place itself since that would be unreasonable. Therefore, Ecophobia plays a huge role in our character's psyche about how they perceive the outside world in contrast with themselves.

## Thanatophobia - Fear of Death

Whereas the other phobias are rarer in nature, the fear of death or Thanatophobia is present across literature for generations. We saw characters struggle with this fear from the first writings of literary work found to present day novels. Poe was not excluded from this mix. Being an omnipresent fear throughout the timespan that humans have roamed the earth, Poe of course included it in his works as well. This fear however ranges from different ways of dying to intense ways of fearing death. While this fear ranges quite through different books and short stories, it is predominantly found in books like “The Tell-Tale Heart” and “The Premature Burial” as well as “The Masque of Red Death” and “The Pit and the Pendulum”.

So we know it is present in Edgar Allan Poe’s “The Tell-Tale Heart” which in consideration reflects a character whose own mortality frightens him hence why he murdered the old man. This view is sometimes seen as a satire of how far people are willing to go driven by the dread that they feel or experience. Perhaps a better analogy would be that of a soldier going to war. His instincts are to kill the opposition, not because he wants to do such thing but to hinder the other from killing him first so as a “precautious activity” which the character also defends as a reason why he is not in fact mad but the reader of course can tell whether such actions are truly needed. This mindset is seen in lines such as these:

*“He had never wronged me. He had never given me insult. For his gold I had no desire. I think it was his eye! yes, it was this! One of his eyes resembled that of a vulture—a pale blue eye, with a film over it. Whenever it fell upon me, my blood ran cold; and so by degrees—very gradually—I made up my mind to take the life of the old man, and thus rid myself of the eye for ever.”<sup>21</sup> (Poe, E. 1849, p. 768)*

From the abovementioned lines we observe that the narrator puts down any argument of monetary gain or revenge that may serve as the reason for his killing, instead he is frightened by the eye of the old man which looks like a vulture. Vultures are generally known as mighty predators and are correlated most of the time with death. This fear of the eye which forbears death is a powerful drive of the story.

Furthermore there is justification for his fear which relates to the mental state that the narrator finds himself in. He talks about hearing things, in specifically things that are in the afterlife:

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<sup>21</sup> Poe, E. (1849). *The Complete Tales and Poems of Edgar Allan Poe*. Delphi Classics.

*"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?" (p.767)*

This can be taken in many ways, one might assume that it is a conscious fight of between evil occurring in his brain but the probability is also that our narrator has heard things about heaven and hell throughout his life yet nothing is certain. This uncertainty is what drives our narrator mad and the fear of death is thereby justified by the mystery that might unfold after we die. In addition he also mentions that he had "heard many things in hell" which is a direct link that shows the pessimistic and hopeless mind frame that the narrator has. Death and old age is something that can be easily said to be one of the main things that should be feared according to this story. Nevertheless, the narrator cannot escape the deafening cry of death; no one can. After committing murder, he goes on to hear "dull voices" which is obvious to the reader as the dead man's heart. The actions we do because of madness and to escape death are only actions and not a mean by which we can cheat death. His mental condition worsens by the end of the story, also affecting the narrator's fear. Because of that, he gives himself up and breaks under the heavy toll that death took on his senses. With that being said, the narrator is seen and considered many times as unreliable hence why the general reader's view of his fears is skeptical and at times hard to believe that such fears would influence such outcomes.

A much more detailed perception of this specific fear can perhaps be found in Poe's "The Premature Burial". Here the character doesn't only fear death but also the process leading up to it and the mental disease from which he is suffering that makes him "experience" death so to say. Due to his catalepsy, he is often combated with an unconscious state that terrifies him, slowly drawing his life force out of him. Remaining in this trance or rather on the border between consciousness and unconsciousness, our narrator goes into deep thinking of death, afterlife and mortality which causes feelings of anxiety and distress. To fight against his own dread of death, he takes precautionary measures. Here again we have the theme of man vs. death which again proves in vain as the narrator finds himself in what appears to be a coffin. After further inspection the narrator realizes that he is not in such thing but rather in a specific sleeping place and it is this event that made the narrator drop his fear of dying. If anything this story has a moral meaning behind it in that we shouldn't be afraid of death but rather seize the opportunity and make the most out of life.

"The Masque of the Red Death" also features intricate details of death by disease. What makes this not a phobia but only a fear is since the dread is reasonable here. There's an enemy which is seen, felt and known in contrast to death's mysterious omnipresence.

This adds to the theme of man vs. death as it creates an illusion that what can be seen, can be fought. So in an attempt to protect or isolate himself from death Prince Prospero secludes himself into his castle where the walls made of bricks and flesh (people) are his thread that holds him. The measures taken by the narrator in "The Premature Burial" and "The Tell-Tale Heart" fade in comparison to the Prince's in the aforementioned story yet it is again inevitable that one's demise will come to pass. This is backed up by the symbol of the clocks in the story as well. Their passing of time signifies the inability of humans to stop nor manipulate time to their liking and as such anything that is ought to happen, will. In this story, the clocks are an intensifier of the fear of death and it causes panic even to the people who seem to be enjoying themselves in lines such as:

*"..While the chimes of the clock yet rang, it was observed that the giddiest grew pale, and the more aged and sedate passed their hands over their brows as if in confused reverie or meditation"*<sup>22</sup> (Poe, E. 1849, p. 666)

I already mentioned that death can come in many ways and this is explored in Poe's "The Pit and the Pendulum". Here the narrator feeds his anxiety and puts his imaginations on the many ways he might go out. What can be considered a fear without reason in other books is not the case here as we see that not only is his fear rational due to his circumstance but it is also very raw in that it creates an argument of the narrator with his unconscious self. The argument as already put forth in the book is the way in which one has to die; an argument this that drives our narrator to fluctuate between the various options, each more gruesome than the other. This choice's importance fades however when the narrator is reminded that no matter the way he chooses, death is unavoidable and we see that in lines such as:

*"Free!—I had but escaped death in one form of agony, to be delivered unto worse than death in some other."*<sup>23</sup> (p. 763)

Many of the narrator's choices include a sort of prolonging end in that the narrator's death cannot be immediate no matter the intense suffering. The scene which portrays this is the pit. The narrator throws a stone in to assume the length, the stone travels, until it hits water. One might consider this an analogy for the narrator's life that is formed in the narrator's mind when throwing the stone. Just like the stone, the narrator will inevitably hit the end of his downfall; no matter how long this might be delayed. The fear of death in this novel plays out in many little details as well. We are introduced to candles in the inquisition's chamber, seven of them to be precise. The value that the candles hold is holy.

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<sup>22</sup> Poe, E. (1849). *The Complete Tales and Poems of Edgar Allan Poe*. Delphi Classics.

## TYPES OF FEAR IN EDGAR A. POE'S SHORT STORIES

Yet the phobia of dying turns this once angelic confrontation between the narrator and the hopefulness of the candles into the exact opposite; a sense of hopelessness and nausea. In a nutshell, "The Pit and the Pendulum" presents us with different perspectives of the same fear whether it is dying from starvation, the pendulum, falling or fire. It is undoubtedly Poe's only work that finds such diversity within the same genre and the same fear.

This particular fear plays a huge role behind the motivation of the characters to survive and to strive to defeat death although as seen from numerous books that it is, in fact, impossible. Poe included a lot of ways for readers to understand the nature of this fear, the combative patterns the characters follow and the miscellaneous ways our mortal mind challenges us to understand the way a person dies and the infinity that follows.



## Autobiographical Fear

It's not a mystery that Poe puts a lot of personal information into his works and as such they result in a realistic depiction of the specific phenomenon. The most noticeable of Poe's fears is without a doubt his fear of death and the unknown which is mentioned in the aforementioned chapters so far. These fears that stem from Poe's personal life are especially noticeable when it comes to works such as "The Black Cat" and "The Tell-Tale Heart" when it comes to the fear of insanity, "The Premature Burial" and "The Cask of Amontillado" when it comes to fearing the action of being buried alive and many other minor phobias/fears that have their roots in Poe's or the general public's mind of that time and were seen as matters intriguing and disturbing to the human psyche.

Poe hasn't had it easy. His life was full of trauma and stress as we know he has fought through his parents' death, growing up with a godfather, the death of his wife and many more circumstances that ultimately led to his fall. Along the way, these events influence someone deeply and just like any writer really, the effects of these are put into his work. We see this in his stories where the main character deals with problems like alcoholism or insanity, topics these plundered by Poe earlier.

We will stop on Poe's fear of insanity first. The death of Edgar Allan Poe's wife left him pretty damaged mentally as we see in one of the letters that he wrote afterwards where he says: *"I became insane, with long intervals of horrible sanity"*. This is Poe's way of showing his mental imbalance although terribly poetic as well. It is largely believed that this is the start of Poe's downwards spiral into serious mental conditions which he later would develop. Judging from the letter<sup>24</sup> he wrote to George W. Eveleth on January 4<sup>th</sup>, 1848, we can clearly see his stance on the human mind and thereby legitimize, in some way, his fear. The reason why he referred to insanity so easy is perhaps because it was the only sane thing to do. After the heavy toll that the circumstance takes on you, one might resort to alcoholism to become "insane" or unaware if you will. Poe in this case didn't want to deal with reality since reality comes with pain as well. This is what I could infer from the part of "horrible sanity" where his senses are aware of the pain. In Poe's mind, unconscious dwelling is better than direct confrontation with life and existence. Later on, he also talks about correlation between drinking and insanity. He argues that some people criticized him since he drank himself to the point of insanity but what Poe felt was the opposite. He drank to overcome insanity and considered it as a result of insanity itself. This problem to many but a solution to Poe has, in his words, came from the death of his wife which Poe sees as

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<sup>24</sup> (Letter of Edgar Allan Poe to George Eveleth, 4 January 1848, no place listed)

an event that lost all reason in him thereby making him also free from contemplating the never-ending cycle of debate between hope and despair.

Coming to what this means to his stories. If we relate to stories like "The Tell-Tale Heart" mentioned earlier, we see that his fears of insanity perfectly compare to Poe's ideas in the real life. The narrator, just like Poe, believes that he is not mad because a mad person wouldn't be able to prepare and construct obstacles to his own specific set goal. The narrator gives a reason for his actions which is the fear of the eye of the old man; albeit it is not a solid reason to commit the act of murder. The burden that insanity and overall a poor mental health holds gets to the narrator by the end just like Poe. It is documented that Poe was found in a delirious state at the end of his life, days before dying.

As far as alcoholism goes, we have that present in "The Black Cat". This parallel is drawn with Poe who was known to have been an alcoholic throughout his life which led Poe to many terrible events including, allegedly, his death. The narrator is terrified from the cat after stumbling upon a gigantic cat with a rope around its throat. This could allude to Poe trying to give up alcohol only for it to catch up later with him. This inability of himself to control aspects of his behavior is what terrifies Poe and what drives the narrator to affirm to the reader that he is not mad since one has a reason to be so.

Other than alcoholism and insanity, we also have different fears of death that Poe battled with. He lived in a time where tuberculosis was immensely feared and widespread. As such we have to account a time where medicine was not at its peak; far from that. Being that he lost both his mother and his wife to tuberculosis, it is evident that Poe had a dread that lingered for it. It was deadly to Poe's personal but flourished his artistic life instead. What is perhaps most evident in the face of all disasters that have befallen Poe is that loss made him who he is today. When referring to the fear of diseases, Poe was inspired to write "The Masque of Red Death". To back this up, he wrote the story at the same time his wife, Virginia was battling with tuberculosis. There's a certain depressive element that transitioned from real life to Poe's work since just as helpless as Poe felt when trying to save Virginia, as such Prince Prospero was helpless to save himself from the disease despite everything he'd done. Maybe this could hint at a sort of guilt that Poe felt or a certain lack of fear from the disease which he later came to regret.

Besides dying from natural death, Poe was also dealing with thoughts of Taphophobia or the fear of being buried alive. As was written in abovementioned chapters relating to this fear, it was quite a common terror that people felt. Real nightmare fuel so to say. It is as of now unknown if Poe himself had this type of phobia or whether he was relying on a topic of public interest. Nevertheless, we see this topic in some works of Poe such as

"The Premature Burial" and "The Cask of Amontillado". In "The Premature Burial", Poe gave his opinions on the fear from the standpoint of the narrator. He argues that

*"To be buried while alive is, beyond question, the most terrific of these extremes which has ever fallen to the lot of mere mortality."*<sup>25</sup> (Poe, E. 1849, p.903). Noting that Poe never uses "I" but rather "We" when talking in the beginning is also a clear indication that he himself wasn't the one suffering from Taphophobia but creates a sense of easier identification with the readers of the book. Since the perspective of himself is not enough, Poe goes onto lengths with presenting various scenarios by which every person would identify or understand the subject of Taphophobia better and clearer.

One reason why Poe was so scared of death could not relate to death at all probably, but rather on what happens after he dies. All the characters in Poe's story are known to be pessimistic as far supernatural things go. We observe this mostly with the character in "The Black Cat" who doesn't seem to agree or come to terms with the supernatural things going on throughout the story. This means that due to Poe's tendency to include autobiographical bits, we have a character who shares the same phobia as Poe. Neither of them can rest their souls with the thought of a good afterlife or at least one where they would be absent of the world's sufferings. It also comes down to the fact that Poe wasn't a believer or particularly had strong faith throughout his life despite there being religious symbols and themes on a number of his works ranging from topics such as judgment to atonement. To Poe, as is documented through his writing, his fear is eternal and stretches way beyond the worldly life. In a way, this characterized Poe's writing and gives the classic 'Poe aesthetic' to works like "The Black Cat" and many more.

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<sup>25</sup> Poe, E. (1849). *The Complete Tales and Poems of Edgar Allan Poe*. Delphi Classics.

## Perspectives of Fear

Like the types of fear incorporated into Edgar Allan Poe's writing, perspectives are also abundant and give different values to already present fears. These perspectives help us understand the fear by attributing it to different characters which in turn reason or act upon the specific fear and most of the time it's not the same for everyone in the story. A definite line can be drawn between how the victim of Poe's stories deals with fear and how the perpetrator or initiator of that fear deals with it. When resorting in the many books of Poe, we see a distinction between the reasoning of the given fear, the acting upon it and the source of it.

Besides the aforementioned two options of treating the perspectives of fear, we have the points of view in the stories that Edgar Allan Poe crafted and they also influence the fear aspect of the story with most of the stories being the first person point of view which give us, as the reader, more room for analyzing and understanding.

Firstly, the point of view is what gives reliability to Poe's stories. If we take "The Tell-Tale Heart" as an example, we deal with an unreliable narrator. In fact, this isn't the only time as Poe uses the unreliable narrator in many stories as we will see which causes confusion and doubt in many instances. Referring back to the narrator in "The Tell-Tale Heart", he is unsure of his actions and reassures to himself and to the reader that what he is doing is sane. Fear consumes him to drive unreasonable actions which are camouflaged with an excuse that the narrator himself brings forward. By giving into the narration, one might assume that the actions were truly done by fear but it is only through the narrator's thought process that we can deduct that things are off. He starts by exemplifying his sanity with precautions methods (rationality) he had made for a killing (irrationality). This gives the reader a hard time to fully grasp if the narrator's fear is something that should be accounted or if it is merely a reason the narrator made up to excuse the act. What we do know for certain is the final climax of the story in which the narrator blatantly tells about himself to the police due to his fear. Fear is something that is known to cause irregular or unplanned actions so when the narrator gave himself up to the police, it was a genuine action forced by his anxiety.

The same story pretty much repeats itself in "The Black Cat" where we have just as unreliable of a narrator as the previous story. Again here, we have the same excuse of reassuring to the reader that they are not insane because of their fear from their own mind. The narrator actually starts the story by explaining that the story which he will talk about is not expected to be believed. Following the narrator explains how he killed his cat in cold blood and he does the explaining in a normal emotionless way. After that he states that the

day after the killing his "reason" had returned to him which leaves us to believe that he did in fact know what he was doing. This unreliableness in narration and expression puts everything up for debate and devalues the facts that the narrator wants to present in the story. Quite clearly the narrator is scared but we do not really get the source for that. This fear of the unknown is a tale as old as time. Is the black cat really as scary as it is portrayed or is there more to the creature?

Besides the perpetrator, as I mentioned we have also got the victim's point of view. In a nutshell, the differences between the way their fears arise and how they deal with can be summarized as two: Authenticity and Rationality. The authenticity, as we get to know the victims of the story, rises continuously and since we are familiar with them, the fears are mostly accepted as genuine and their emotions, in general, truthful. Also, they never actually commit irrational actions from experiencing the fears and try to keep things under control for as long as they can without causing harm to themselves or others in the process.

## Victim's Perspective

Whereas the perpetrator's perspective on fear serves more as a cause for the given action, the victim's perspective of fear is an effect or defense mechanism in most cases. Fear from the perpetrator's point of view is also sometimes regarded as "fake" because of the unreliable quality of the narrator but when we switch to the victim, it is real and honest. Initially, I would take "The Cask of Amontillado" as an example that is rather easy and presents us with an unusual way of dealing with fear that we haven't really seen from the other books or short stories written by Poe. As is known, Fortunato's friend or better said best friend, Montresor seeks revenge upon Fortunato and the punishment he deems fit is death. After a tricky situation brought forth by Montresor, Fortunato is brought to a basement or dungeon where Montresor's offer of high quality wine leads him to a dead end drunk and confused. Fear doesn't kick in yet because of Fortunato's drunken state and confused mind at that time. Montresor's revenge which is, literally, laid brick by brick harasses Fortunato's conscience so before we have fear as the primary emotion of Fortunato, we have a confusion manifesting in laughter. Fortunato's reaction as the victim of this deed is to assert that what Montresor is doing is an act of "bad comedy". Denial stays with our victim of the story for quite a while until the last few bricks are laid. Then we have genuine fear or realization. After coming to his senses and overcoming the dullness of alcohol, Fortunato begs for his life. This reaction is quite common and normal in victims in Poe's stories. The finale of Montresor's act leaves Fortunato with the release of a final screech before silence fills every part of the dungeon. One can finally understand the fear process in the victim of this story and it goes in waves of denial, realization, refusal and last but not least acceptance. All of the abovementioned stages so to say reflect a normal human being's behavior in a situation presented such as Fortunato's.

The same build up is more or less present in "The Tell-Tale Heart" as well. The narrator or our perpetrator in the story knows the old man he is living with all too well. In fact from the victim's perspective, he never was someone in which the victim doubted in. We learn that our victim is afraid of robbers partly because of his wealth but he is quite warmed towards the narrator. He leaves the door open because of his lack of fear towards the narrator and is thereby watched for eight nights in a row. The act or the climax of the story happens quite abruptly; so much so that the old man cannot really make heads or tails with the situation and is killed rather swiftly from the narrator. This abruptness in reaction could be attributed to the old man's age or to the sun which was shining directly on his eye, blinding him to the hostile surroundings. What this also is credited to is the realization

aspect that I mentioned in the earlier story. Since the old man never expected that the narrator would be his killer in the future, he is rendered speechless as fear causes him to stagger in his thoughts and cannot make a single move to save his life.

A character who was dealing with a poor mental state without being in danger yet is Roderick from "The Fall of the House of Usher" who is regarded as the victim of the story as the events unfold. His fear stems from many sources. We are introduced to his familial history which depicts a sort of curse if one can say so that befell them over and over again for centuries. If that wasn't enough for our ancestor to feel bad, we also have his struggling physical health. All these are traits of a victim of natural circumstances. More than anything else Roderick is plagued by his own fear which consumes him more than the disease ever could. There's one thing that served as glue so to say and that holds Roderick's pieces together; that glue is his sister, Madeline. With her dying, our victim of the story's state, both mental and physical, worsens. His fear of the house is amplified due to her coffin which is located inside the house. Ultimately, our victim dies of his own fear when he sees his sister "revived" at the room door. In fact he knew in a way that he was going to die so this begs the question as to why he called the narrator if he was sure that he couldn't help. The victim mindset that Roderick possesses in the story could also drive one to feel the need to have a witness for everything that was going down in the Usher mansion. Now, who is Roderick a victim of? For the most part it can be attributed to his own fear. Nevertheless there is an ongoing conflict between nature and man where we see nature triumph inevitably so the fear of Roderick's own decay is consequently the fear from nature's win over mortal life. This story presents us with a point of view that Edgar Allan Poe often shared in his stories. The victim is a victim of himself first and foremost. It is the common trait that all the above mentioned stories hold actually.

As far as the other character goes, Roderick's friend and our narrator, he is neither a victim nor a perpetrator in this story. We observe throughout the narrative that he too feels fear or better said uneasiness yet he never explains or gives a specific reason why and focuses on the exterior and interior of the house. This narrator who is an observer in the context of events happening takes more of a Watson role and lets Roderick be the Holmes or main drive of this story. This is why this story presents us with a very unique way of the narrator not being involved but instead he is merely giving us, the readers, eyes and ears to understand the general picture a little bit better and the supernatural forces that "torture" Roderick.

On the other hand we have stories where the victim is purely attacked by outside forces out of his/her control. One of such stories is "The Pit and the Pendulum". We meet

our narrator right from the start where his suffering has also just taken off. He finds himself in a dark room already creating a shock value that instills fear in him. As I've mentioned previously on the span of this whole thesis is that people are generally afraid of the unknown. The darkness in this case equals opportunity, opportunity combined with fear it is already a recipe for a future disaster. The narrator becomes a victim of the inquisition as it is called in the book (A counterpart to the real life's Spanish inquisition). Being in the darkness, his mind wanders off to questioning himself and mortality until it drifts to an existential crisis. The victim in this story perceives fear so much more deeply than the other stories because he is presented with both extremes of pain, mental and physical. This causes our narrator to wish for a fast ending of his life rather than wandering until inevitably he dies.

Something should also be considered when dealing with the fear of the narrator in this story is the background on why he is actually the victim of all of this. We know that the narrator is imprisoned by a group called the inquisition with obvious religious affiliation. This leads us to believe that the reason why the narrator was imprisoned in the first place is because of a crime committed against religion. With this in mind, one might actually understand the narrator's mind state more when reading about his thoughts. All the while, he is hopeless and looks at something to hold on to, God if you will. As a result of not having that kind of faith which is assumingly what brought him where he is, his anxiety deepens in a way. In the course of the story he also stumbles upon what appears to be a really abysmal pit, hence the name of the book. The pit in this story is regarded largely as a symbol of suffering or a symbol of the narrator's death. Both of them (suffering and death) being very profound and inevitable. The narrator is brought to a halt in this part of the book, partially because of a long contemplation over his mortality. Choosing between two paths of dying, one shorter (Pit) than the other (starvation) is mentally devastating and incredibly emotionally consuming as we see its repercussions even when the story ends and he miraculously survives. Right at the end we have the confirmation from the narrator about the debris that all the terrors have left in his soul:

*"At length for my seared and writhing body there was no longer an inch of foothold on the firm floor of the prison. I struggled no more, but the agony of my soul found vent in one loud, long, and final scream of despair."*<sup>26</sup> (Poe, E. 1849, p. 765)

What is also an interesting detail is that the main character in "The Pit and the Pendulum" gets out at the end of the story. This is known as an external rescue in the sense that he was brought out of his suffering by external factors rather than himself. The French

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<sup>26</sup> Poe, E. (1849). *The Complete Tales and Poems of Edgar Allan Poe*. Delphi Classics.



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soldiers finally confront and win against the inquisition thereby saving him as well and with that the fear or terror of our character ceases to exist.

It can be concluded from this that the victims in Poe's short stories suffer much more real pain which can be accepted as such by the readers compared to the perpetrators who are unreliable. Their reasons are acceptable and that's where the connection stems from. This in turn makes us sympathize with them much more and understand their worldview clearly and thoroughly albeit through their misery.

## Perpetrator's Perspective

Perpetrators in Edgar Allan Poe's story display and feel fear in a whole other level than victims do. What the victims felt is usual and perhaps adequate to some extent to their contemporary situation but when we talk about fears of perpetrators or the ones who commit the crimes and offenses, the fear is much more complex. So much so that at times it goes beyond logic and reason, at times it doesn't have a source and often it is devastating for the perpetrator as much as it is for the victim. These strange cases of fear are delicacies of Edgar Poe if one could say that. The fact that most of the times he uses the first person narrative in his stories makes the reader envision him/herself in the shoes of the perpetrator. Despite some of these attempts from Poe to make us understand the character better, sometimes we deal with an unreliable narrator as I've mentioned previously. This blurs our perception by quite a bit as one feels the loss of reason in the narrator and furthermore since no clear line is drawn then between what is right and wrong, anything is justifiable...right?

Most famously known are the perpetrators in "The Tell-Tale Heart" and "The Black Cat" which are taken as classic examples to talk about the before-mentioned topic.

Perpetrators in all stories more or less are good at excusing themselves. Their actions are defended by causes which they deem fit. Their fear is merely a normal reaction as opposed to the exaggeration one might actually believe easier. To start off, a perfect example would be the story of "The Tell-Tale Heart". It explores the narrator's mindset and thought process during the course of pretty much most of the storyline. From the treatment of fear in the first chapter we see that the old man's fear in the story is rational, straightforward and honest based on his life experience. In fact everyone would be scared if they heard sounds at night and were suspecting a person is watching them while they sleep. Now, in contrast, if we compare that to the narrator's fear, we detect some abnormalities. The first suspicion as to the narrator's experience of fear stems from the narrator himself who wants to justify his madness as something that is completely normal to be felt under the circumstances. If one calls insanity normal, fear might be assumed as the primary motive behind the acts however even fear is not pure. If the narrator justifies hearing "heaven and hell", the legitimacy of his emotions drops significantly. Despite that, a lot of people would make the claim that we do feel sorry in a sort of way for him. He is appallingly paranoid, thereby shattering his worldview, leaving him as a lonely fellow in the world. I referred to the narrator or perpetrator of this story as "he" even though Poe made no reference whether the narrator is male or female and as such there is more mystery to unfold while we dive deeper into his or her feelings. That is as far as sympathizing with the

murderer goes since nevertheless the fact stands that the narrator is indeed a murderer. On the other specter of analyzing the narrator's fear, we quite clearly can see that his fear is a reason to engage into violent activity. Continuously, he makes the case that it is the old man's evil eye that scares him yet he spies on him every night. Instead of referring to other means of escaping the old man i.e. the easiest one, leaving; the narrator continues to be driven towards full eradication of the so called problem he has. He treats this action of getting rid of his fear in one place in the story as a "triumph" (p. 769)<sup>27</sup> and for someone who is strictly operating from a practical standpoint of just removing the cause of his fear, the words that the narrator utters give off a certain feeling of more joy in the process rather than in the end result of finally being fear-free. What we can certainly know however from the story is that the narrator hears things as I stated earlier but we never dive into specifics as to what they actually are. From a medical standpoint this condition would be known as Tinnitus whereby the person suffering would hear noises and in certain cases even have enhanced hearing that would cause him to have auditory illusions. These would justify the spiral of madness that the narrator finds himself in and even the fear he says he has albeit it is only an old man's eye. However, sick of a medical condition or not, the murder of an old man cannot be justified as of yet and thereby the narrator's fear still stands on shaky ground. Right at the end of the story, we have finally gotten to a resolution of his fears and it is on no other part of the book where the narrator or perpetrator of the story shows his inner workings more clearly. In the presence of officers, called upon to investigate a scream, the narrator finally breaks because of the "loud" noise of the beating heart and speaks out on his evil deeds. Despite the narrator's immense and extreme attempts to escape fear, he could not in fact escape it as he also said that he must either scream or die because he couldn't bear the beating heart evermore. Being presented with this dilemma, the narrator and probably society in general would make the choice based on their survival instinct and let out a scream rather than die.

Another case of the perpetrator showing distinctive signs of fear right from the beginning of the whole story is also the narrator in "The Black Cat". More than often we get the story in the first person view of the narrator or perpetrator which directly links the reader to the fear. Contrastingly here the narrator does not actually fear death like in "The Tell-Tale Heart" nor does he feel fear towards something like an evil eye but in a general sense, he is rather scared of going insane. From the opening lines, the narrator explains that the story might seem so unbelievable that he doesn't expect people to believe and they might even think that he is mad. After saying this, the narrator quickly backtracks saying

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<sup>27</sup> 27 Poe, E. (1849). *The Complete Tales and Poems of Edgar Allan Poe*. Delphi Classics.

"Yet, mad I am not" (p. 831) reassuring to himself that what really happened was real. The reasons for him acting irrationally are presented as other worldly in the story but we as readers are introduced to one catalyst that may interfere with the narrator's insanity; it being alcohol. While that can certainly be accepted as true, what we cannot deduce is how alcohol made the narrator commit the actions he does. Another theme to keep in mind when we analyze this story is also the avoidance of accepting oneself as insane because of fear which we will later know that it causes a snowball effect of negative outcomes. Gradually, we learn more and more from the narrator's life; his upbringing, family life, married life and his relations with pets especially his cat Pluto which he had as a child and was very fond of. Suddenly however the story takes a turn in that "fiendish powers" interpolate with his life and he grows colder to people and more short-tempered. The first action driven by this other-worldly power as he notes is that he carves out Pluto's eye while being a kid. Afterwards he again takes a step back by saying that many people do actions for the simple reason that they are not allowed to do it thereby sympathizing with a group of people and distancing himself that his actions were not psychotic in any type of way but rather normal human actions out of his control.

Actions like these, for the sake of the argument, can be taken as true if it weren't for the unreliable narrator and his fears which come into play periodically like in the culmination of the story where the narrator kills his own wife and envisions a black cat identical in appearance to the cat he had mutilated as a kid. While continuously fighting against madness with all that the narrator has, it is clear in some instances that the things he sees are merely hallucinations and not what is actually happening. One of the times when the narrator is caught in a lie is when he is describing the second cat to which he attributes a white spot on its fur while later disregarding that detail in general. Another instance of the narrator's false display of his emotions is the debris after murdering his wife. He is rather unemotional and numb and only seeks to find the cat so he could put an end to the cause of all that has befallen him thereby making him seem as though he was diverting attention from the real irrational action he did which he claims is unintentional to finding the cat as if it is the cause of all his madness. Nevertheless, it needs to be said that as of the end of the story, the narrator still hasn't admitted to being mad yet finds time to acknowledge that he indeed killed and mutilated people and animals alike. From this one could say that the narrator is more scared of being mad and admitting it than actually acting mad since the latter, as mentioned time to time again in the story, is a battle against "supernatural forces". Evident from the previously mentioned examples we can set out some parameters by how the fear is seen from the perpetrator's perspective compared to the victim's one. As cited

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earlier and probably much more obvious now is that fear is irrational from the standpoint of the narrator or perpetrator. Whereas the victims felt fear from a reliable source or reason for it, the perpetrators rely solely on their own judgment towards the fear. Their actions thereby are much less acceptable from the reader standpoint because the reason behind them hugely falters. One more thing we can get from what was mentioned is that the perpetrators' mindset is unreliable. In some cases they try to bend the truth and in others they outright lie. This again drops their credibility hugely and when contrasted with the victims' mindset in a danger state, the latter always seem to be honest in their description of the fear. All in all, perpetrators fear a lot of things in Poe's stories starting from perhaps the fear most of them share, insanity, to less common ones, cats. This, blended with their inconsistent art of storytelling give the reader a challenging time to decipher if the actions are really based on their fear or is their fear merely an alibi to operate and be driven by their underlying desires.

## Conclusion

Poe's way of dealing with fear in his stories shows exemplary work along the lines of H.P. Lovecraft and Stephen King when it comes to building up tension, character psychology and incorporate supernatural elements. He is widely regarded as the person who "invented" the gothic genre as well as perhaps the only one who profoundly dived into the emotion of fear with all its subgenres and implications. Nevertheless, to have a fondness with fear, one must understand and at times even experience it which we now know was certainly the case with Poe throughout his childhood and a good part of his adulthood too. Growing up without parents, being a witness to his wife's premature death and an alcohol abuser due to the before-mentioned causes, Poe most definitely went through quite a turbulent and tragic life himself which led to autobiographical bits in his work. He however seemed to weather a lot of storms in life despite the tragic explications that the events went on to have and was more than often put in high regard for this.

In literature it is not always the case where the author presents his own feelings on display for the world to see: in fact, many shy away, despite their turbulent and rather unfortunate life, and create works to be admired for so as to combat or better said to contrast their life with a better ideal worth living for. One must acknowledge the difference between these things as it has often been noted that Poe put much of his "life" or feelings into his works. Of course this opinion comes from various problems that Poe undoubtedly had such as alcoholism, spiritual disrupt, depression as well as a lot of stages of poverty from early adulthood to later years of his life. Poe's ability to create however should and cannot be limited to only his life choices since Poe was also quite fond of other themes that run throughout his works such as spirituality and the supernatural presented in the abovementioned works of "The Black Cat" or "The Fall of the House of Usher" which now in retrospect don't tie in with his life path and incorporate elements of amazing literary creation. Creative freedom with Poe, such as with all authors to be frank, must be acknowledged and not put into a box of what they can or cannot write. Fear plays a role in this context as well. For instance, Poe's creating freedom lies in the fact that he had an outstanding knowledge of things other than what he experienced. This is evident from the categorization of fears above whereby I cited that Poe was only familiar with one fear; that of being buried alive yet it was never documented that the other fears mentioned were in any way linked to him. This shows great expertise of the matter and makes us the readers appreciate his works much more as it is not easy to portray something so intricate with accuracy. With that said, Poe's works incorporate autobiographical and fictional elements that are well the reason that Poe is regarded as a great author who can tap into his own

thoughts and also present something so beautiful and eerie from what Poe considered the best part of the mind; the imagination.

Despite being an author, Poe was also known as a critic and a savage one at that by talking as one would say "honestly" but quite obviously savagely too about other authors of that specific time period who did not, in his mind, meet the standards of a good short story writer. Not only fear but these real life events as well, in one way or another, trespassed their way into Poe's literature as well, as is the case with every writer pretty much. Poe was more interested in poetry and short stories and especially the latter ones which earned him a lot of respect in his community, starting with Baltimore and slowly moving up to a national acclaimed author. He coined some rules about short stories which to this day are still held in high praise and serve as the prime examples of those stories such as being able to read in one sitting, the story's ending being the climax of it as well as using the right amount of diction by neither overdoing it nor underdoing it with the number of words used.

Preoccupied with psychological states of the human mind as well, Poe's fascination with madness and terror grew as he held fear as one of the most important aspects (if not the most important) of the human psyche. The inner conflict of fear vs. logic dominates through characters in Poe's story such as "The Tell-Tale Heart's" narrator or "The Cask of Amontillado's" Fortunato which in a drunken state tries to deduce between his beliefs and reality which by the way is also a hint at Poe's alcohol problem displayed in other works like "The Black Cat" as well. Every fear plays a part in Poe's story just as much as it plays a part in real life as well and dictates here and there our actions and words. Undoubtedly it is either a cause or effect but whichever it may be, it influences what the character does and of course consequently thereby the actions of the story quite significantly. So much so in fact as to drive a character out of the ordinary logical mindset of society and descend it into a fear-driven macabre way of acting, self-consuming and destructible. Fear in its essence in pretty much all of Poe's works is put on display as something that can change us and make us want to do unwilling actions which is precisely where the originality and fondness of Poe's way of dealing with fear comes from; from the thought that all these things can happen to us too.

Every character fears a different thing however and this wide variety of fears can easily be categorized in different types or subgenres of fear if one can refer it as such; one of them being fear of death (Thanatophobia) which is visibly present in a long list of Poe's short stories most noticeably "The Masque of Red Death" and "The Fall of the House of Usher" among countless others. In the aforementioned stories and many others, we see characters taken out of their normal course of action or modus operandi and slowly brought into a state where they do unwilling actions for the sake of combating or destroying the fear they

have. While this was perhaps the most significant fear because of its importance in the story and the relevance it holds up until present days with most people being scared by death and the unknown/afterlife, there are many others which are just as thrilling and key to Poe's rise as a gothic/horror writer. One of them is also the fear of being buried alive (Taphophobia). A fear presented in the book "The Premature Burial" that actually cemented Poe's place quite well mostly because of its contemporary relevance of that time; a time where burying someone alive wasn't too rare. This fear was actually shared by the author himself and quite a lot of people at that time so Poe's relevancy in the literary world of the 1800s was at a peak. Poe's fears are quite timeless in their form. They present a terror hidden within us that can be true at any circumstance or timeline, even today which explains Poe's relevance as an author and a topic which in my opinion should be elaborated further. One such of the aforementioned categories of fear is also that of the environment or Ecophobia which Poe has given special attention to, along his career. Poe's usage of words like "dark chamber", "clouds hanging oppressively low", "decaying walls" and many other signify that nature can be a component to our fear or in some rare cases like "The Fall of the House of Usher", it can be the focal point, the drive or the origin of the dread itself. Last but not least the other puzzle to this thesis is also Dementophobia or the fear of insanity which is perhaps one of the most disturbing ones. When referring to books which deal with this such as "the Pit and the Pendulum", the narrator goes crazy from the lack of his sight and wanders in a dark room for the most part. Having no outside vision, our character is resorted to look inside and contemplate the many ways he can die under such a situation signifying to the reader the value of human senses. Other examples such as "The Tell-Tale Heart" as well as "The Black Cat" have the narrator consolidating himself as a rational individual and put the moral aspect of the story upside down as he cannot differ what is rational, irrational, good, bad and even his logic and insanity anymore. As one might understand and grasp from this is that this specific emotional dread goes way beyond into the root of fear and presents an isolation effect of the narrator which the reader can understand vicariously by analyzing one, among others, of the aforementioned books.

Now another incredible feature of Poe's stories has to be the viewpoints of the fears or the perception by the different perspectives of the various characters. Not only have those characters got different things that send chills down their spines but they deal with these things differently given the situation they find themselves in which causes for a story that is both all-encompassing and also profound in the emotion. In this context specifically, we can identify two groups or viewpoints that Poe lets us see in his stories; Victims and Perpetrators. The perpetrators who act upon their fear, are antagonists of the story and all



in all use fear or act on it in a harmful way towards themselves and others which is visibly present in the climax of many stories whereas the victim's viewpoint is that fear consumes them, puts them in a place of terrible hopelessness and disregard for oneself or their own beliefs.

However Poe's mysticism shows in stories narrated by the perpetrator most as we are continuously questioning whether what the narrator says is true or not which give room for skepticism as to how reliable they really are when it comes to showing their emotions and fears. Poe as I mentioned earlier excelled in this direction of the human psyche and as a consequence the characters are most often understandable as to why they would react the way they did but where it's a bit harder to truly justify their actions, Poe included the hazardous byproduct of mental instability that fear brings to show that the characters' actions may be irrational yet driven by deep fear. If we could divide some characters whose fear is rationalized in their actions, it would be the narrator in the "The Fall of The House of Usher" who despite his fear which is very real and rational in an overall manner, went on to check on his friend and for the most part didn't let fear cloud his thought process, his supportive actions and his rational behavior while on the other specter of irrational reactions to fear we have the narrator in "The Tell-Tale Heart" who not only couldn't control his own thought process but it eventually led to him committing a disastrous act and then telling on himself after that, both non-understandable actions from a reader's perspective. Another instance of the latter topic would also be the main character in "The Pit and the Pendulum" whose fear completely destroys him mentally as he is unable to locate his surroundings. In this specific tale, we as readers are led into his perspective and we can clearly identify ourselves as a person that under the same circumstances would probably do the same thing. What can be said from the other end or the victim's end of the actions in the story is that their fear climaxes the same time the story climaxes. We see for example the old man in "The Tell-Tale Heart" who constantly is dreading his end and in the climax of the story and at his life's end, he is shocked and immovably horrified before it ultimately is "lights out" for him. Albeit here the fear crept up pretty fast, we have examples where the narrators go through a longer process before the fear actually kicks in. In "The Cask of Amontillado", the victim of the story is put into a cask alive and due to his drunken state, he is oblivious to this for a long time. It is only during the end of it all when the victim finally understands the situation and shrieks in pain. From the two aforementioned examples alone, one can come to the conclusion that Poe specifically aimed to show, in his mind, almost all the ways that humans deal with dying, natural or unnatural. All in all, these

perspectives cause us to see, understand and even sympathize in some cases with the victim's and perpetrator's stance that they hold.

We can now however refer to the aims of this thesis and how they have been explicated upon. It is fair to assume that the reader has a good claim on the different fears that are talked about in this thesis and how they crucially contribute within it. To add, Poe's way of writing short stories is also put under a loop and a clear argument is made on how Poe used to write his short stories and what he was basing them on. Furthermore, this thesis should help in further investigation and analysis done on Poe's work specifically on the implications and complexity of fear.

Last but not least, Poe as is known is one of the most influential and valuable American writes in the 19<sup>th</sup> century yet it is my considered opinion that he should be regarded as much more than that since his contribution to the overall evolution of short story writing, especially stories of macabre and mystery, is immense. During the course of time, it became known and facts emerged that Poe was the first author to pursue a professional career and really make a living out of writing, something unheard of at that time. This paired with the many challenges that he had to face during his life make Poe an admirable figure to be looked up to when talking about the passion for writing. While continuously reading through his tales of mystery and horror or through his poems of love and loss, one must wonder at this brilliant mind which gave so much and went so young.

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