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## A Study Of POE's Technique In Selected Tales Of The Grotesque And Arabesque

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A STUDY OF POE'S TECHNIQUE IN SELECTED TALES  
OF THE GROTESQUE AND ARABESQUE



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A STUDY OF POE'S TECHNIQUE  
IN SELECTED TALES OF THE GROTESQUE AND ARABESQUE

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A Thesis

Presented to the Graduate School  
of Prairie View Agricultural and Mechanical College

In Partial Fulfillment of the

Degree of

Master of Arts

By

Thetis Charlene Edmond

August, 1964

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### DEDICATION

It is with a deep sense of sincerity that I dedicate my thesis to my beloved sister Cheryl Janis Edmond with the hope that she will aspire to greater heights in English than I did.

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## Introduction

Early in his career, Edgar Allan Poe recognized the necessity to escape the American tradition of colonial imitation and saw the need for a fresh beginning in literature. His central contribution to this field was the structure of the short story or tale. The much-quoted passage from Poe's "Review of Nathaniel Hawthorne's *Twice-Told Tales*" enunciates his entire theory of writing the short story:

A skilful literary artist has constructed a tale. If wise, he has not fashioned his thoughts to accommodate his incidents; but having conceived, with deliberate care, a certain unique or single 'effect' to be wrought out, he then invents such incidents--he then combines such events as may best aid him in establishing this preconceived effect. If his very initial sentence tend not to the outbringing of this effect, then he has failed in his first step. In the whole composition there should be no word written, of which the tendency, direct or indirect, is not to the one preestablished design. And by such means, with such care and skill, a picture is at length painted which leaves in the mind of him who contemplates it with a kindred art, a sense of the fullest satisfaction.<sup>1</sup>

Poe recognized the short story as a whole made up of parts harmoniously related to one another; he interpreted this whole as a certain effect that a writer definitely intended to produce in the reader's mind, and to accomplish this singleness of effect, the true artist, Poe believed, should utilize "the means most advantageously applicable."<sup>2</sup> He treated the subject common to his

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<sup>1</sup>The Complete Works of Edgar Allan Poe, ed. James A. Harrison (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell and Company, 1902), XI, 109--hereafter cited as Works.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.



day, the grotesque tale, but he artistically imbued terror and horror with his own brand of mysticism and transformed his type of tale into a unique creation. Because Poe ventured into a new realm of the imagination, his critics attacked him and accused him of imitating habits or traits of Germanism. In his preface to the "Tales of the Grotesque and Arabesque," Poe defended this charge by stating:

The epithets "Grotesque and Arabesque" will be found to indicate with sufficient precision the prevalent tenor of the tales...published. I may...therefore, have desired to preserve, as far as a certain point, a certain unity of design. This is, indeed, the fact; because I am led to think it is this prevalence of the "Arabesque" in my serious tales, which has induced one or two critics to tax me, in all friendliness, with what they have been pleased to term "Germanism" and gloom. The charge is in bad taste, and the grounds of the accusation have not been sufficiently considered. Let us admit, for the moment, that the 'phantasy-pieces' now given are Germanic, or what not. The Germanism is 'the vein' for the time being....But the truth is that, with a single exception, there is no one of these stories in which the scholar should recognize the distinctive features of that species of pseudo-horror which we are taught to call Germanic, for no better reason than that some of the secondary names of German literature have become identified with its folly. If in many of my productions terror has been the thesis, I maintain that terror is ~~not of Germany, but of the soul~~ that I have deduced the terror only from its legitimate sources, and urged it only to its legitimate results....therefore, that I have sinned, I have deliberately sinned.<sup>3</sup>

Poe deliberately and clearly shows his literary attitude towards his gloom. This tone does not dominate him, but he uses it to preserve a certain unity of design.

In his book, The Power of Blackness, Levin says that "No deeply thinking mind is always and wholly free from this force of blackness or from the power of the dark side of life."<sup>4</sup> Poe was pre-

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<sup>3</sup>Edgar Allan Poe, Tales of the Grotesque and Arabesque (Philadelphia: Lea and Blanchard, 1840), pp. 5-6.

<sup>4</sup>Harry Levin, The Power of Blackness (New York: Knopf, 1958), p. 15.

occupied with the darkness which is related to man's depravity and helplessness on earth and he chose to set forth the mysteries which confront man, yet mysteries which man can never totally understand. Poe's reliance on the gruesome and horrid subject can be justified and explained on the grounds that the nineteenth century public favored it. Killis Campbell found such evidence.

He said:

Even in the partiality for the gloomy and gruesome, for the remote and mysterious, Poe was but falling in with the fashion of his day....<sup>5</sup>

And as Napier Wilt stated:

Even a casual study of the early nineteenth century English and American magazines yields hundreds of such (similar to Poe's) tales. Premature burials, murders committed under strange circumstances, men driven to destruction and madness by torturing consciences, morbid neurotic heroes, and unearthly and insane heroines abound.<sup>6</sup>

Poe's terrifying effect seems to slow down the reader, giving him time not only to absorb the tone, but also time to experience the vague forebodings of the imagination.

Every artist has a particular method that he follows in rendering an artistic work. Edgar Allan Poe must have been a conscientious artist who labored diligently to achieve his technique in the writing of the "Tales of the Grotesque and Arabesque." Even today literary critics praise his artistic accomplishments and attach such complimentary titles to him as "the dark genius of the

<sup>5</sup>Killis Campbell, Poe's Short Stories (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1927), xix.

<sup>6</sup>Napier Wilt, "Poe's Attitude Towards His Tales," Modern Philology, XXV (August, 1927), 103.

early nineteenth century,"<sup>7</sup> "the most original American genius,"<sup>8</sup> and "the best writer that America has produced."<sup>9</sup> He has been recognized as "the father of the short story,"<sup>10</sup> and "as a writer of short stories Poe must be ranked among the masters."<sup>11</sup> Poe was a highly gifted writer who sought to captivate his readers by means of the short story; he constantly emphasized singleness of effect and his "attention never wandered for a moment from his effect."<sup>12</sup>

He seemed to possess a "power of influencing the mind of the impalpable shadows of mystery, and a minuteness of detail which does not leave a pin or a button unnoticed."<sup>13</sup> By always keeping in mind the achievement of a certain pre-established effect, Poe made everything in the setting, every movement and gesture of the character, every piece of furniture and decoration, and every word contribute to the preconceived effect, and all these effects blended into the final totality which the author had envisaged. Hamilton Mabie stated:

The moment one breathes the air of Poe's tales an oppressive sense of something ominous and sinister is felt. For Poe had the art...of securing possession of the reader's mind by assailing his senses one after the

<sup>7</sup>Leonard Paris, "Master of Mystery: Edgar Allan Poe," Senior Scholastic (December 6, 1957), p. 15.

<sup>8</sup>Haldeen Braddy, Glorious Incense (Washington: The Scarecrow Press, 1953), p. 138.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid., p. 140.

<sup>10</sup>Rocco Fumento, Introduction to the Short Story (New York: The Ronald Press Company, 1962), p. 3.

<sup>11</sup>"Edgar Allan Poe," New Standard Encyclopedia (1958), XVI, 282.

<sup>12</sup>W. C. Brownell, American Prose Masters (New York: Scribner's Sons, 1923), p. 175.

<sup>13</sup>Braddy, p. 143.

other with the same set of sensations. Poe's tales... are marvelously constructed to shut the reader in by excluding all other objects and impressions until the imagination is entirely at the mercy of the storyteller. In the most perfect of the prose tales, "The Fall of the House of Usher," "Ligeia," etc. the full force of Poe's marvelous accuracy and 'vraisemblance' of detail is felt by the imagination. In these tales, so full of powerful effects and charms wrought out of the potencies of sin, disease, solitary desolation, abnormal play of the senses, Poe's artistic quality is supreme; in them he is one of the modern masters of technique; and their limitations as works of art must be sought not in the skill but in the soul of the workman. That limitation is found in the fact that Poe deals with experience of a very narrow and limited kind; with emotions, passions, and tendencies, which are exceptional and abnormal; with landscapes and localities which are essentially phantasmal and unreal; not in the sense of being purely imaginary, but of lying outside the range of the imagination creating long lines of normal activity.<sup>14</sup>

Nathan Fagin quoted Dostoyevsky on Poe's ability as a literary artist as follows:

He chooses...the most extravagant reality, places his hero in a most extraordinary outward or psychological situation, and then, describes the inner state of that person with marvellous acumen and amazing realism. Moreover, there exists one characteristic that is singularly peculiar to Poe and which distinguishes him from every other writer, and that is the vigor of his imagination.<sup>15</sup>

Since Poe has won universal acclaim as the author of such strange, unforgettable tales as The Fall of the House of Usher, Ligeia, and The Cask of Amontillado, which seem to hypnotize both our senses and our mind, the writer desired to know how Poe manages in all these tales to make the reader experience vicariously the feel-

<sup>14</sup>Hamilton Mabie, "Edgar Allan Poe," The Outlook, LXII (May, 1899), 56.

<sup>15</sup>Nathan B. Fagin, The Histrionic Mr. Poe (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1949), p. 176.

ings of uneasiness, disquietude, and horror. Undoubtedly, the exclusion of the horror element from Poe leaves for the reader no Poe at all. The fact that Poe's stories inspire emotions of terror and horror is well known. What is not so well known, however, is that Poe consciously used specific techniques in order to achieve the desired effect. With this assumption in mind, the writer is faced with the problem of determining, through a study of selected Poe short stories, the techniques he used in achieving his desired effects of terror and horror, of revealing Poe's philosophy governing the use of such techniques, and of ascertaining what makes the reader experience feelings of disquietude, uneasiness, and horror.

The study of Poe's techniques will be confined to the following short stories: The Fall of the House of Usher, Ligeia, and The Cask of Amontillado.

Before proceeding further, however, the investigator wishes to define certain terms as they apply to this study:

- |               |  |
|---------------|--|
| Techniques    | - The methods or details of procedure essential to expertness of execution in any art  |
| Grotesque     | - A deviation from Nature, permitted in order that an effect may be produced, which cannot be produced by adhering to Nature <sup>16</sup> |
| Arabesque     | - A kind of ornamentation consisting of fantastic interlacing patterns--sometimes geometric in character                                   |
| Foreshadowing | - The process of giving the reader an intimation of some event which is to follow later in the action <sup>17</sup>                        |

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<sup>16</sup>Ruth L. Hudson, "Poe and Disraeli," American Literature, VIII (March, 1936), 406.

<sup>17</sup>Cleanth Brooks and Robert P. Warren, Understanding Fiction (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1959), p. 684.

- Irony - A figure of speech in which the actual intent is expressed in words which carry the opposite meaning<sup>18</sup>
- Figurative language - An intentional departure from the normal 'regular' language to gain strength and and freshness of expression, to create a picture quality and a poetic effect<sup>19</sup>
- Metaphor - A figure of speech based on a comparison which is implied rather than directly expressed<sup>20</sup>
- Alliteration - A repetition of successive words having the same beginning consonant<sup>21</sup>
- Assonance - A resemblance of sound in words or syllables

The purpose of this study is to point out fundamental techniques primarily used by Poe in the development of the short story and to show, specifically, using tales of the grotesque and arabesque as examples, how the author blended character, setting, and plot to produce a unified and vivid effect.

It is hoped that this study will be of some value to all Poe scholars who are yet marvelled by his outstanding ability as a writer of short stories and who are interested in his rigid theory of narrative art governing the use of such techniques.

The investigator is cognizant of the many studies made in the field of Poe literature. She acknowledges with some indebtedness the

<sup>18</sup>William F. Thrall and Addison Hibbard, A Handbook to Literature (New York: Odyssey Press, 1936), p. 219.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid., p. 204.

<sup>20</sup>Ibid., p. 250.

<sup>21</sup>H. W. McGraw, Prose and Poetry (Dallas: L. W. Singer Company, 1935), p. 260.

attempts and findings of the following scholars who have completed master's theses of related work:

Bradfield, Elizabeth. A Study of Poe's Narrative Art. Austin: University of Texas, 1933.

Gill, Lucille A. Poe's Influence in American Literature. Austin: University of Texas, 1925.

Herring, Louise L. Poe's Habits of Composition. Austin: University of Texas, 1937.

Stovall, Jennie. Fantastic Effects in Poe's Stories: A Study of the Supernatural. Austin: University of Texas, 1936.

However, none has attempted an exhaustive study of Poe's tales of the grotesque as the investigator proposes to do.

In Chapter One the investigator will discuss Poe's techniques in the handling of morbidly ill, abnormal, and unusual characters. Chapter Two will be concerned with Poe's techniques in the creation of bizarre, fantastic, and unusual settings. Chapter Three will be a treatment of Poe's techniques of deliberately foreshadowing his tragedies in the plot. In Chapter Four the investigator will present an extensive treatment of Poe's deliberate use of language to produce the effects of terror and horror.

Poe's "Tales of the Grotesque and Arabesque" are distinguished by their strangeness through elaborate and exaggerated descriptions.

In "The Fall of the House of Usher," a considerably lengthy and exaggerated description is given about the chief character, Roderick Usher. In applying his pleonastic technique, Poe skillfully reveals the

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Edward S. Wheeler, "The Spectral Images of Poe's 'Fall of the House of Usher,'" Current Literature, XLIV (January, 1944), 41.

## Poe's Technique in the Handling of Characters

Most critics contend that Poe's creation of characters was a masterful example of his artistic genius. However, the writer saw his creation and handling of characters as his most important and most highly perfected technique for establishing his effects of terror and horror, in short, for perfecting his "Tales of the Grotesque and Arabesque." As Edward J. Wheeler so aptly stated, "When Poe reached out for a human being, one who might come ready-made from the byways of life into the particular course he was laying out for his story, he pressed human truth out of the figure after a minute of handling."<sup>22</sup> He made him the character needed for projecting his "Tales of the Grotesque and Arabesque." All attention was focused upon the one striking side of the character which bore directly upon the story; and no details were given which were not necessary to heighten the effect of the story. Consequently, Poe purposely selected morbidly ill, abnormal or unusual characters for his "Tales of the Grotesque and Arabesque" and emphasized their strangeness through elaborate and exaggerated descriptions.

In "The Fall of the House of Usher," a considerably lengthy and exaggerated description is given about the chief character. By applying his pleonastic technique, Poe skillfully reveals each detail

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<sup>22</sup>Edward J. Wheeler, "The Spectral Loves of Edgar Allan Poe," Current Literature, XLIV (January, 1908), 49.



of Roderick Usher's changed appearance, a description requiring eighty-nine words:

A cadaverousness of complexion; an eye large, liquid, and luminous beyond comparison, lips somewhat thin and very pallid, but of a surprisingly beautiful curve; a nose of delicate Hebrew model, but with a breadth of nostril unusual in similar formations; a finely moulded chin, speaking in its want of prominence, of a want of moral energy; hair of a more than web-like softness and tenuity; these features, with an inordinate expansion above the regions of the temples, made up altogether a countenance not easily to be forgotten.<sup>23</sup>

The reader had little to assume, for attention had been called to the smallest, yet most dominant, physical features that could possibly be imagined. Usher was described as no ordinary being, one with "a countenance not easily to be forgotten." It was also observed that Roderick "also suffered from 'habitual trepidancy--an excessive nervous agitation' and he was given to action alternately vivacious and sullen. His voice varied from a tremulous indecision to 'that species of energetic concision--that abrupt, weighty, unhurried, and hollow-sounding enunciation--that leaden, self-balanced and perfectly modulated guttural utterance, which may be observed in the lost drunkard, or the irreclaimable eater of opium, during the periods of his most intense excitement."<sup>24</sup> Again Poe gave a more detailed and elaborate account of Usher's morbidly ill condition:

He suffered much from a morbid acuteness of the senses; the most insipid food was alone endurable; he could wear only garments of certain texture; the odours of all flowers were oppressive; his eyes were tortured by even a faint light; and there were but peculiar sounds and

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<sup>23</sup>Works, III, pp. 278-279.

<sup>24</sup>Fagin, The Histrionic Mr. Poe, p. 193.

these from stringed instruments which did not inspire him with horrors.<sup>25</sup>

Gordon and Tate affirmed that Usher was afflicted with the split personality of the maniac depressive. At the onset, he greeted the visitor with "vivacious warmth" and sincerity. As he and the visitor had been "boon companions," they engaged in long and trivial conversation. They painted and read together. After much poring over many curious volumes of rare books, Roderick would sit dreaming for hours. "His action was alternately vivacious and sullen,"<sup>26</sup> as "he roamed from chamber to chamber with hurried unequal, and objectless steps." He experienced moods of habitual quietness, gloom, and gaiety; and he would "sit and gaze" with a "mad hilarity in his eyes" upon vacancy for hours. In his sudden outbursts of temperament, Roderick made "wild improvisations" upon his guitar. He had an unusual "dread of events of the future" and he was "enchained by certain superstitious impressions" about the Usher house. He was haunted by seemingly unwarranted fears.

Fear radiated terror throughout his entire being and was transmitted to those about him. He expressed a peculiar fear of doctors because of their "obtrusive and eager inquiries" about his sister's illness. He had a particular fear of death; for his sister's death would leave him, "the hopeless and the frail, the last of the ancient race of the Ushers." Yet he personally buried his sister alive, while she was in a helpless state of catalepsy. Thus he was a

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<sup>25</sup>Works, p. 280.

<sup>26</sup>Ibid., p. 279.

"bounden slave to a species of terror." The many descriptions of the miserable Usher so consistently portrayed complete physical and mental disintegration that verisimilitude was afforded.

Although Madeline was the character in The Fall of the House of Usher around whom all action was centered, Poe deliberately treated her as an inferior character to her brother. "Poe never wrote a story in which a woman is the central character; all stories revolve around a man, a romantic hero, and the woman is presented only insofar as she impinges upon his consciousness and helps to solve his problem, his dilemma, or to inspire his philosophy, release his eloquence, create his mood."<sup>27</sup> This accounts for the fact that passages concerning Madeline as an individual are unusually concise, with no elaboration of details. For example, after Poe discussed at length and in most minute detail the condition of Usher, his only reaction to Madeline was one of astonishment at the great change in her appearance; yet he managed to create an effect of mystery and terror by giving his reactions (totally unaccounted for) to her brief appearance:

I regarded her with an utter astonishment not mingled with dread; and yet I found it impossible to account for such feelings.<sup>28</sup>

Poe tended to make her equally as elusive as Roderick--a shadow which created suspense in the reader. Her apparitional movements "through a remote portion of the apartment" were most unusual and they radiated a gloomy effect upon the reader. Madeline's disease, which

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<sup>27</sup>Fagin, p. 195.

<sup>28</sup>Works, p. 281.

"had long baffled the skill of her physicians," consisted of "a settled apathy, a gradual wasting away of the person, and frequent although transient affections of a partially cataleptical character." Although she was mysteriously ill with a type of "malady," she was not bedridden when the guest arrived. Poe maintained an air of uncertainty about Madeline by never allowing her to utter a word nor to become aware of the presence of others. She died in the maturity of her youth with a "faint blush upon the bosom and the face" and a "suspiciously lingering smile upon the lips." For several days after her death, she was forgotten (for Poe had revealed all that he had planned for the reader to know), but Roderick's failing condition and his habitual nervousness were consistently emphasized. This was Poe's unique way of isolating the main character and building a terrifying anxiety within the reader until the end of the story. Not until the "seventh or eighth" day did Madeline reappear and avenge her premature entombment.

Likewise, the "I" character in The Fall of the House of Usher was an unusual one. When he first saw the melancholy old house, "a sense of insufferable gloom" pervaded his "spirit." This feeling was unsurpassed by no other feelings that he had experienced:

I looked upon the scene before me...with an utter depression of soul which I can compare to no earthly sensation more properly than to the after-dream of the reveller upon opium--the bitter lapse into every-day life--the hideous dropping off of the veil. There was an 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.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>29</sup>Works, 273.

After much contemplation, he readily agreed that perhaps this feeling of "gloom" was due to the desolation of the scene that he had surveyed. A letter in "its wild importunate nature" compelled him to make a personal visit to the Usher household. The visitor's own superstition and imagination, coupled with the peculiar atmosphere and the "image of the pool," radiated a very "strange and ridiculous fancy" within him that deeply oppressed him.

Within the mansion, the feeling of gloom was more intensified:

A valet, of stealthy step, thence conducted me, in silence, through many dark and intricate passages...to the studio of his master. Much that I encountered on the way contributed, I know not how, to heighten the vague sentiments of which I have already spoken.... while I hesitated not to acknowledge how familiar was all this--I still wondered to find how unfamiliar were the fancies which ordinary images were stirring up.<sup>30</sup>

After he conversed privately with Roderick and "busied" himself in "earnest endeavors to alleviate the melancholy" of his friend, and after he vaguely saw Lady Madeline as she "passed slowly" and disappeared, the narrator felt a kindred sympathy and experienced the same "radiation of gloom" expressed by Roderick. He listened intently to Usher's "long improvised dirges" on the guitar, especially "the wild air of the last waltz of Von Weber." He shuddered helplessly from the ghastly paintings. He yielded hesitantly, but with curiosity, to the verses composed and sung by Usher. He assisted in the temporary entombment of Madeline without question or suspicion, after which his close scrutinizing of Usher resulted in his own (the narrator's) condition of terror that "infected" him, unnerved him, and caused him much sleeplessness.

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<sup>30</sup> Works, p. 277.

The narrator said:

I felt creeping upon me, by slow yet certain degrees, the wild influences of his own fantastic yet impressive superstitions.<sup>31</sup>

The "I" character became entranced with an overpowering and startling fear that lasted until the spell was broken at the end of the story, at which time he "fled agast" from the mansion and witnessed its complete destruction. In each instance, Poe emphasized in minute detail the effects of terror and horror that he wanted to produce in the reader by putting terror and horror in all his characters. For a brief moment the reader became a part of this strange world and experienced feelings of startling fear akin to those of Roderick and the visitor.

Poe maintained that Ligeia was unquestionably the best of his tales and the reader was made aware that Poe's ideal woman was one who was not only beautiful but one who also possessed some element of strangeness. Ligeia was primarily a study in character, and approximately the first third of the story was concerned with the intense, passionate nature and strange beauty of the lady Ligeia and her influence upon her husband. "No details of character are given which are not necessary to bring about a clearer understanding of the story or to produce a heightening of effect."<sup>32</sup> In spite of the immensely long and elaborate descriptions, the reader was presented one harmonious impression of horror. Within the tale, Ligeia was forced to succumb to some mysterious death that

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<sup>31</sup>Works, p. 290.

<sup>32</sup>Elizabeth Bradfield, A Study of Poe's Narrative Art (Austin: University of Texas, 1933), p. 71.

was characteristic of all Poe's feminine characters in his "Tales of the Grotesque and Arabesque." Fagin stated that Poe's "obsession was the death of a beautiful woman" and because Poe was a conscious artist he used this death-theme to produce terror in his tales. In all her strange loveliness, Ligeia was to him the impersonation of celestial beauty; her influence soothed and elevated him; and in her presence he was gentle and subdued. She was remarkable for her beauty, her character, her intelligence, and her learning; yet it was this "strangeness" that permeated the reader and induced a dreadful fright. Poe described Ligeia in the following typically detailed passage:

In stature she was tall, somewhat slender, and in her latter days, even emaciated. I would in vain attempt to portray the majesty, the quiet ease of her demeanor, or the incomprehensible lightness and elasticity of her footfall. She came and departed as a shadow. I was never made aware of her entrance into my closed study save by the dear music of her low sweet voice, as she placed her marble hand upon my shoulder. In beauty of face no maiden ever equalled her....I perceived that her loveliness was indeed 'exquisite,' and felt that there was much of 'strangeness' pervading it,...I examined the contour of the lofty and pale forehead--it was faultless...the skin rivalling the purest ivory, the commanding extent and repose, the gentle prominence of the regions above the temples; and then the raven-black, the glossy, the luxuriant and naturally-curling tresses, setting forth the full force of the Homeric epithet, 'hyacinthine!' I looked at the delicate outlines of the nose--and nowhere but in the graceful medallions of the Hebrews had I beheld a similar perfection. There were the same luxurious smoothness of surface, the same scarcely perceptible tendency to the aquiline, the same harmoniously curved nostrils speaking the free spirit. I regarded the sweet mouth. Here was indeed the triumph of all things heavenly--the magnificent turn of the short upper lip--the soft, voluptuous slumber of the under--the dimples which sported, and the color which spoke--the teeth glancing back, with a brilliancy almost startling, every ray of the holy light which fell upon them in her serene and placid, yet most

exulting but radiant of all smiles. I scrutinized the formation of the chin--and here, too, I found the gentleness of breadth, the softness and the majesty, the fullness and the spirituality, of the Greek--the contour which the god Apollo revealed but in a dream, to Cleomenes, the son of the Athenian. And then I peered into the large eyes of Ligeia.<sup>33</sup>

Although Poe created Ligeia as his idea of celestial beauty, he left a vagueness about her that seemed to detach her from the material world. This was Poe's usual technique for handling feminine characters in the "Tales of the Grotesque and Arabesque." It was this vagueness, this strangeness that produced a sense of anxiety and an intense fear in the reader. For each appealing word used to describe Ligeia's beauty, Poe added a grim word to suggest strangeness. For example, in the quoted passage, Poe made her tall, slender, emaciated yet majestic; she had lovely but irregular features with a lofty and pale forehead. Her movements were incomprehensibly light, elastic, but shadowlike. Her hand was smooth but cold and hard like marble. He spoke of her skin as white as the "purest ivory." Her hair was black and glossy like the feathers of the raven. Only the Hebrews had a similar perfection in the formation of the nose which appeared hooked like the beak of an eagle--"aquiline." Though her mouth was regarded as sweet, the upper lip was short with a magnificent turn while the under lip was soft and voluptuous, and her teeth shone with a startling brilliancy. Thus each description that presented Poe's idea of the beautiful became even more strange than the former example. And this same strangeness seemed to evoke terror-instilling

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<sup>33</sup>Works, II, pp. 249-251.



sensations within the reader.

Poe continued to emphasize strangeness in beauty by his following description:

For eyes we have no models in the remotely antique.... They were, I must believe, far larger than the ordinary eyes of our own race. They were fuller than the fullest of the gazelle eyes of the tribe of the valley of Nourjahad. Yet it was only at intervals--in moments of intense excitement--that this peculiarity became more than slightly noticeable in Ligeia. And at such moments was her beauty--in my heated fancy thus it appeared perhaps--the beauty of beings either above or apart from the earth--the beauty of the fabulous Houris of the Turk. The hue of the orbs was the most brilliant of black, and, far over them, hung jetty lashes of great length. The brows, slightly irregular in outline, had the same tint. The 'strangeness,' however, which I found in the eyes, was of a nature distinct from the formation, or the color, or the brilliancy of the features, and must, after all, be referred to the expression.<sup>34</sup>

However important a part other physical features have played in producing effects of terror and horror, they faded into insignificance in comparison with the stress that Poe placed on the eyes. Because of his elaborate treatment of the eyes in Ligeia, the effect of all references to eyes in Poe's death stories seemed to find summation in that portrait. The most outstanding feature of Ligeia's strange beauty was her eyes, which had a brilliant distinctiveness about them when she became excessively emotional. Her eyes were larger than any generation of the graceful and swift antelope's eyes--"gazelle," and far more beautiful than the black-eyed women of Mohammed--the "fabulous Houris of the Turk;" in fact, Ligeia's eyes had no rivals on earth nor apart from earth. It appeared that her strangely beautiful eyes aroused an unusual

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<sup>34</sup>Works, p. 251.

and mysterious feeling of passion within her husband that estranged him from material things of the earth. Poe's creation of Ligeia's unusual eyes and the indefinitiveness about them were his usual technique for achieving his "Tales of the Grotesque and Arabesque." And it was through the strange character that he produced horror and terror in his readers.

Poe not only painted the exquisite loveliness and strangeness of her beauty and character, but also the peculiarity of her learning and intelligence. Ligeia was a woman of immense learning, and Poe called the reader's attention to proficiency in the "classical tongue," her knowledge of "all the wide areas of moral, physical, and mathematical science," and "her readings" of the mysteries of transcendentalism. Because indefinitiveness was an essential element in the creation of his "Tales of the Grotesque and Arabesque," Poe made Ligeia an unusually well-learned character, yet he pointed out the peculiarity of her knowledge of life beyond reality to maintain his vague indefinitiveness throughout the story as well as to keep suspense in the reader.

By contrast, Lady Rowena was merely referred to as "the fair-haired and blue-eyed Lady of Tremaine." In order to make Ligeia's character more dominating in the story, Poe deliberately treated Rowena as an inferior character. This same technique enabled Poe to bring about Ligeia's reincarnation through Rowena. Rowena was the extreme opposite of Ligeia. She dreaded "the fierce moodiness" of her husband's temper; she "shunned" him and loved him "but little." Yet the husband found pleasure in this strangeness because he loathed Rowena "with a hatred belonging more to demon

than to man."

Another technique of Poe's in his "Tales of the Grotesque and Arabesque" was that the feminine character was always made susceptible to some strange malady or ravaged by a disease that marred the character's beauty. Rowena as well as Madeline was a victim of a number of alarming and recurring illnesses, fever, and chronic disease, and she suffered endlessly.

The "I" character in Ligeia functioned as the passionate husband who was overwhelmed by Ligeia's beauty, moreover, by the mysteriousness of her "wild" eyes. After Ligeia's death, Poe permitted the husband to become "a bounden slave in the trammels of opium." Poe described the character's unusual behavior as follows:

In the excitement of my opium dreams (for I was habitually fettered in the shackles of the drug) I would call aloud upon her name, during the silence of the night, or among the sheltered recesses of the glens by day, as if, through the wild eagerness, the solemn passion, the consuming ardor of my longing for the departed, I could restore her to the pathway she had abandoned--ah, could it be forever?--upon the earth.<sup>35</sup>

And Poe continued as follows:

I revelled in recollections of her purity, of her wisdom, of her lofty, her ethereal nature, of her passionate, her idolatrous love.<sup>36</sup>

With Rowena he felt little disquietude, moodiness, loathsome hatred, and little or no feeling for her. His passionate love was only for Ligeia and he sank into a "thousand memories of Ligeia" even as Rowena lay dying before him. Poe continued to make the husband a "helpless prey to a whirl of violent emotion" which he

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<sup>35</sup>Works, p. 261.

<sup>36</sup>Ibid.

expressed thus:

I listened in an agony of superstitious terror...<sup>37</sup>

and

I listened--in extremity of horror...<sup>38</sup>

then

I had long ceased to struggle or to move, and remained sitting rigidly upon the ottoman, a helpless prey to a whirl of violent emotions...<sup>39</sup>

and finally

I trembled not--I stirred not--for a crowd of unutterable fancies connected with the air, the stature, the demeanor of the figure, rushing hurriedly through my brain, had paralyzed--had chilled me into stone. I stirred not--but gazed upon the apparition. There was a mad disorder in my thoughts--a tumult unappeasable. What inexpressible madness seized me...I shrieked aloud....<sup>40</sup>

With this final example, Poe had purposely created the morbidly ill character needed for evoking terror and horror not only in the tale but also in the reader. Stovall called the "I" character's actions "hallucinations of insanity." And he asserted that the narrator or "I" character "actually kills Rowena, but attributes her death to the struggle with Ligeia's spirit."<sup>41</sup> Upon completion of the reincarnation, the "I" character awakened from a semi-

<sup>37</sup>Works, p. 264.

<sup>38</sup>Ibid., p. 266.

<sup>39</sup>Ibid., p. 267.

<sup>40</sup>Ibid., pp. 267-268.

<sup>41</sup>Floyd Stovall, "The Conscious Art of Edgar Allan Poe," College English, XXIV (March, 1963), 419.

trance to recognize the "wild eyes" of his "lost love" Ligeia. Poe utilized Ligeia's passionate will to live, which led to her dissolution to make her death scene more agonizing. Poe made the other characters subordinate in description and movement in order to make the entire story a study of Ligeia and her struggle with death. To maintain his singleness of effect, horror and terror, throughout the tale, Poe deliberately made all his characters subordinate to the effect.

Poe, however, changed his technique for creating horror and terror in The Cask of Amontillado, but "the course of action of the chief character reveals his passionate nature, his power of undeviating and crafty devotion to one purpose, and his entire heartlessness"---all carried to an extreme for producing the effects of horror and terror.<sup>42</sup> Poe created Montresor, who was imbued with a heartless, merciless revenge (for his fellowman) so vividly imagined that the reader sensed the danger and felt a kindred sympathy for the victim. Montresor had the shrewdness and hostility of a man who will go to any limit, even murder, to avenge an insult. In his cold, implacable hatred, Montresor sought to avenge himself with "impunity" and in such a manner that the victim would know exactly who had caused his downfall. Until the time was ripe, Montresor continued to treat his victim with complete goodwill "by smiling in his face" and exhibiting much friendship. So perfect was Poe's creation of a gruesome murderer that the reader was amazed at the cruelty of the cunning Montresor, who literally laughed with a sort of mad hilarity at the completion of

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<sup>42</sup>Bradfield, p. 72.

the "perfect crime." It was through Montresor that Poe produced the most gruesome character necessary to fit the singleness of effect he sought to achieve in this tale, and Montresor conveyed these effects of horror and terror to the reader by means of his cold, implacable hatred of Fortunato, his bitter mocking irony, and his crafty devotion to achieve revenge.

was a striking feature because of the pale, livid, and ghastly that it showed in the reader. Nathaniel Hawthorne said:

The striking thing about Poe's setting is that while they appear homogeneously vivid they at the same time remain indefinite. He depicts just enough of the scene to give it an air of reality.

Bradfield, another Poe scholar, contended that "the extreme feature of the detailed portrayal of setting is not the intrinsic interest of the description, but the powerful emotional effect which it exercises in the reader."<sup>24</sup> It was this effect, developed by the scenic environment, that Poe sought in his "Tales of the Grotesque and Arabesque."

To provide an atmosphere of gloom for the tale and for the reader, Poe created a dreary, fantastic, and unusual setting through vivid and elaborate descriptions and details of nature. Perhaps the most effective as well as the most grotesque of all Poe's settings was that of The Fall of the House of Usher.

It would be of every imaginable detail conducive to an atmosphere of terror has been skillfully woven into every portion of the story. The details of setting appear throughout the story, and

### Poe's Creation of Setting

One of the most striking techniques of the "Tales of the Grotesque and Arabesque" was Poe's creation of setting. The setting was a striking feature because of the powerful emotional effect that it aroused in the reader. Nathan B. Fagin found that:

The striking thing about Poe's settings is that while they appear impressively vivid they at the same time remain indefinite. He depicts just enough of the background to set the mood.<sup>43</sup>

Bradfield, another Poe scholar, concluded that "the essential feature of the detailed portrayal of setting is not the intrinsic interest of the description, but the powerful emotional effect which it arouses in the reader."<sup>44</sup> It was upon this effect, developed by the scenic environment, that Poe built his "Tales of the Grotesque and Arabesque."

To provide an atmosphere of gloom for the tale and for the reader, Poe created bizarre, fantastic, and unusual settings through vivid and elaborate descriptions and choice of words. Perhaps the most effective as well as the most grotesque of all Poe's settings was that of The Fall of the House of Usher.

It seemed as if every imaginable detail conducive to an effect of terror has been skillfully woven into some portion of this story. Its details of setting appeared throughout the story, even

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<sup>43</sup>Fagin, p. 176.

<sup>44</sup>Bradfield, p. 72.

in the last paragraph. In the opening sentence, the author gave the season of the year, the time and character of the day:

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>45</sup>

In sixty words, this initial sentence of the story awakened in the reader a gloomy response. He seemed to breathe the very air of the decaying old mansion; he felt the loneliness of the environment; and he experienced vicariously a sense of oppression that was unjustly severe. The choice of words is worthy of notice. The day was not only "dull" and "dark," but also "soundless." Poe purposely selected the season when the trees were barren and there was a lack of physical beauty. He intensified the desolate scene characteristic of his "Tales of the Grotesque and Arabesque" by calling attention to the time of day, which was evidently late in the evening as the "clouds" hung oppressively low. He continued to describe the setting as follows:

I looked upon the scene before me--upon the mere house, and the simple landscape features of the domain--upon the bleak walls--upon the vacant eye-like windows--upon a few rank sedges--and upon a few white trunks of decayed trees--with an utter depression of soul which I can compare to no earthly sensation more properly than to the after-dream of the reveller upon opium--the bitter lapse into every-day life--the hideous dropping off of the veil.<sup>46</sup>

By means of pleonastic description, Poe not only put a desolate scene before the reader, but he emphasized the desolation by calling

<sup>45</sup>Works, III, p. 273.

<sup>46</sup>Ibid.



attention to minute details--bleak walls, vacant eye-like windows, rank sedges, white trunks of decayed trees--each of which became more dreary than the preceding one. One can readily understand the depression that the "I" character experienced at such a sight.

In climatic order, Poe presented to the reader another aspect of the weird scenery:

I reined my horse to the precipitous brink of a black and lurid tarn that lay in unruffled lustre by the dwelling, and gazed down--but with a shudder even more thrilling than before--upon the remodelled and inverted images of the gray sedge, and the ghastly tree-stems, and the vacant and eye-like windows.<sup>47</sup>

Poe intensified the gloomy scenery by calling attention to another detail in keeping with its surroundings--the black and lurid tarn in all its "unruffled lustre." Then he repeated the dominant features again--gray sedge, ghastly tree-stems, vacant and eye-like windows--but he increased their morbid appearance.

Again Poe called the reader's attention to the effect that the scene had wrought upon the visitor:

I had so worked upon my imagination as really to believe that about the whole mansion and domain there hung an atmosphere peculiar to themselves and their immediate vicinity--an atmosphere which had no affinity with the air of heaven, but which had reeked up from the decayed trees, and the gray wall, and the silent tarn--a pestilent and mystic vapour, dull, sluggish, faintly discernible, and leaden-hued.<sup>48</sup>

The dreary atmosphere around the mansion and domain was heightened by these same principal features--decayed trees, gray wall, silent tarn--but he also added a peculiar vapour that was "pestilent,

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<sup>47</sup>Works, p. 274.

<sup>48</sup>Ibid., p. 276.

mystic, dull, sluggish, faintly discernible, and leaden-hued." Poe chose distinctive adjectives and adverbs to emphasize the dreary scenery and each time the effect of gloom was enhanced.

The final appeal to the emotion of terror, regarding the exterior scene, occurred in the following sentence:

While I gazed, this fissure rapidly widened--there came a fierce breath of the whirlwind--the entire orb of the satellite burst at once upon my sight--my brain reeled as I saw the mighty walls rushing asunder--there was a long tumultuous shouting sound like the voice of a thousand waters--and the deep and dank tarn at my feet closed sullenly and silently over the fragments of the "House of Usher."<sup>49</sup>

The elaboration of details, the complexity of beauty, and the power of gloomy surroundings were conveyed through careful, artistic handling of words and phrases, so that they corresponded to the incidents and happenings in climatic order. Again he called special attention to the "fissure" which he mentioned earlier in the story, the "walls" and the "tarn" which he had mentioned a number of times. Seldom did he play upon the imagination with a single modifier; usually the modifiers appeared in pairs as a "long tumultuous shouting sound," "deep and dank tarn," which closed "sullenly and silently," and the second modifier he consistently made more profound than the first.

Although the exterior scene was impressively vivid, Fagin described Poe's technique for creating the effect of terror best in his interior scenes:

It is...in his interior scenes that Poe really extends himself. The main action is usually confined to a re-

mote tower or turret or to some strange, high-ceilinged room in a distant part of the building. Access to these sequestered spots is by means of winding staircases and mysterious passages. The room itself is seldom normal in shape or dimension; it is vast, circular or pentagonal, full of nooks and niches, and lighted only in spots, so as to permit weird shadows to hide in corners and tremble on walls and vaulted ceilings. In spite of the vastness of the chamber, the action is generally concentrated in restricted sections....The furnishings are carefully selected and arranged for their atmospheric value.<sup>50</sup>

Inside the House of Usher, Poe was striving for an effect of antiquity and decay, neglect and dissolution, an essential characteristic of his "Tales of the Grotesque and Arabesque." The narrator entered "the Gothic archway of the hall" and was "led in silence" through "many dark and intricate passages" to a room that was "very large and lofty." He noticed the "sombre tapestries of the walls, the ebon blackness of the floors, long, narrow and pointed windows" at a vast distance from the floor, and ceilings that were "vaulted and fretted." The furniture was "profuse, comfortless, antique, and tattered." The phantasmagoric armorial trophies "rattled as he strode through the room." A number of "books and musical instruments lay scattered about....Dark draperies hung upon the walls."<sup>51</sup> The light appeared "encrimsoned" as "feeble gleams" shone through "the trellissed panes." Each gloomy aspect of the interior of Usher's studio reflected negligence and decay and contributed to his effect.

With the same gloomy effect in mind, Poe designed the interior of the abbey in Ligeia. To catch the reader's eye, he used spots

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<sup>50</sup>Fagin, p. 182.

<sup>51</sup>Works, p. 278.

of color and glitter in contrast to the spectral dimness of the surrounding atmosphere, which became an essential feature of his "Tales of the Grotesque and Arabesque." Special attention was drawn to the "gorgeous and fantastic draperies" with "Egyptian carvings," "the wild cornices and furniture," and the "tufted gold" carpets in "Bedlam patterns," which were in keeping with his idea of grotesque and arabesque. The most lavish description was that of the bridal chamber which was "pentagonal in shape and of a capacious size." Other minute details that made up this chamber were well worth noting for their suggestive and terror instilling words:

Occupying the whole southern face of the pentagon was the sole window--an immense sheet of unbroken glass from Venice--a single pane, and tinted of a leaden hue, so that the rays of either the sun or the moon, passing through it, fell with a ghastly lustre on the objects within. Over the upper portions of this huge window, extended the trelliswork of an aged vine, which clambered up the mossy walls of the turret. The ceiling of gloomy-looking oak, was excessively lofty, vaulted, and elaborately fretted with the wildest and most grotesque specimens of semi-Gothic, semi-Druidical device.<sup>52</sup>

Poe gave much concern to the description of the window which he referred to as the "sole window," "an immense sheet of unbroken glass," "a single pane," and "this huge window." Even though the "huge window" occupied the whole southern part of the room, Poe deliberately covered a major portion of the window with a vine, thereby making the entering light appear very ghastly. The ghastly lustre which resulted was in keeping with his plan of ingenious lighting in his grotesque and ornamented tales. The ceiling was de-

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<sup>52</sup>Works, II, p. 259.

scribed by Poe's usual method of pairing distinctive adjectives and adverbs as "gloomy-looking," "excessively lofty," "vaulted and elaborately fretted" with the "wildest and most grotesque" specimens of "semi-Druidical" device. The reader cannot refrain from feeling the morbid effect of the description.

Poe continued to achieve his desired effect of terror through his choice of words describing the magnificent beauty of the room in its grotesque design. He carefully designed the color and lighting to blend into his idea of the grotesque and arabesque.

Though the colors were strange and vivid, they attracted the eye and kept it away from the rest of the scene, where all was mysterious darkness. The shape and position of the sole window with its single pane partially covered by a vine provided for ingenious lighting. In the center of the "melancholy vault," as he called it, there was a golden censer, which gave a continual glow as a result of "partly-colored fires." There was an odd variety of furnishings--ottomans, golden candelabra, and a bridal couch. The couch was "an Indian model," low, and "sculptured of solid ebony with a pall-like canopy above." Perhaps the most unusual of all furnishings in the room was the "gigantic sarcophaguses of black granite," which stood on end in each angle of the chamber. The draping of the bridal chamber was vivid and elaborate. Poe pointed out that:

The lofty walls, gigantic in height--even unproportionably so--were hung from summit to foot, in vast folds, with a heavy and massive-looking tapestry--tapestry of a material which was found alike as [sic] a carpet on the floor, as a covering for the ottomans and the ebony bed, as a canopy for the bed and as the gorgeous volutes of the curtains which partially shaded the window.

The material was the richest cloth of gold.<sup>53</sup>

There was a profusion of "heavy and massive-looking" gold material about the room which gave one the idea of immense wealth, yet the "partially shaded window" suggested a somewhat dismal quality of the "melancholy vault." Poe's use of extremely vivid, detailed, and consistent description struck the predominating emotional effect of gloom and horror. The room provided a ghastly sight to anyone who entered. And Poe referred to this room as the "melancholy vault," as grotesque a title as any living quarters could ever be called. Certainly nothing could be more morbid for a bridal chamber. Although the chamber walls were gigantic and disproportioned in height and covered with heavy-looking tapestry of a rich golden color, the material was also "spotted all over" with patterns of black arabesque figures which seemed to move or change at certain times. The sole purpose of this elaborate and vivid interior scene was to produce in the reader one unified emotional effect of impending tragedy and terror.

Poe continued his technique of creating dismal and gloomy settings in The Cask of Amontillado, where there was a contrast of gaiety and gloom. The scene was appropriately set in the damp grounds of the catacombs during carnival season in Italy. But the smaller scene of action was enveloped in the gay city, and such a contrast made even more impressive the dark and gloomy reaches of the subterranean passages where the main action took place. Entrance to the catacombs was gained by means of Montresor's "palazzo," where one had to go through "several suites of rooms to

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<sup>53</sup>Works, p. 260.

the archway" and finally descend a "long and winding staircase" before reaching the damp catacombs. This was in keeping with Poe's technique of producing his grotesque setting in a secluded area.

Within the catacombs, one could feel the dampness far below the bed of the river, where the "foulness of the air" was stifling. The dismal atmosphere became more fearful. Walls were lined with human remains, and bones were lying "promiscuously upon the earth." Various crypts of enormous sizes formed the "interval between two of the colossal supports of the roof of the catacomb." The flambeaux glowed, yet the glare was too dull or feeble to enable the eye to see more than Poe had planned to be shown. Consequently, the contribution of lighting to the final artistic and emotional effect of terror produced by the story was immeasurably great.

Another means by which Poe achieved his effect of terror and horror in the setting was by deliberately repeating certain crucial words and phrases. With Poe, every word used was chosen for its effectiveness in rendering an impression; therefore, every word was important. Poe increased his effect of terror by adding dismal qualities each time he described the tarn: "a black and lurid tarn," "the silent tarn," "the dim tarn," "the rank miasma of the tarn," and "the deep and dank tarn." He referred to the walls of the mansion some eleven times, each time adding another ghastly aspect as "the bleak walls," "the gray walls," "the sombre tapestries of the walls," and "the mighty walls."

As he described the setting, there were at least ten references made to the eye. As the eyes were the chief organs of perception, the author depended upon them to help reflect the mood and

tone of his grotesque and arabesque tales. Poe caused his reader to become obsessed with eyes--eyes that struggle, gaze, scrutinize, perceive, discover, appall, arouse, or even see unusual happenings. He subjected his readers to "eye-like windows," and then at one time and then another he referred to an eye that was large, liquid, and luminous; to eyes that blazoned; and to a wide and rigid opening of an eye. He made these references as though he intended the use of eyes to put the reader into a terrifying hypnosis.

Poe seemed fond of repetition. He played upon the word gloom in his descriptions of the furniture and in the action of his characters. The reader was provoked by "insufferable gloom," "a mansion of gloom," "irredeemable gloom," "the gloomy grandeur of the building," "the ceiling of gloomy-looking oak," and a "radiation of gloom." This repetitious use of gloom emphasized the gloomy effect that was maintained throughout the story.

To emphasize terror and horror even more in his "Tales of the Grotesque and Arabesque," Poe made use of other concrete and abstract nouns. The name Ligeia, "that sweet word alone," reverberated throughout the story a total of twenty-five times, as if Poe were attempting to produce a haunting refrain of terror. F. M. Perry supported this same idea when he explained that "Poe occasionally used in his stories, if not literally a refrain... Ligeia furnishes an example."<sup>54</sup> By contrast, the name "Rowena" was used only twelve times, thus subordinating her to Ligeia but also creating the same refrain through repetition. Because Poe was so

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<sup>54</sup>F. M. Perry, Story-Writing (New York: Henry Holt Company, 1926), p. 19.



appalled by the strangeness of Ligeia's beauty, he linked that strangeness to a quotation from Bacon:

There is no exquisite beauty...without some strangeness pervading it....<sup>55</sup>

Then Poe referred to Ligeia's beauty eight times throughout the story in which these examples, "beauty of face," "exquisite beauty," "genera of beauty," "the beauty of beings," and "the beauty of the fabulous Houri," gave a tone of strangeness and an air of indefinitiveness to the story, which was characteristic of his theory of grotesque and arabesque. Perry stated that with Poe, "there must be something implied, something left to the imagination."<sup>56</sup> Therefore, associated with her beauty, her dominating eyes were referred to at least twenty-three times, five of which are listed here to show his technique:

those eyes; those large, those shining, those divine orbs; Ligeia's eyes; her large and luminous orbs; the full, and the black, and the wild eyes.

Each description provided for the reader a more gruesome aspect of Ligeia's strange beauty and the effect was heightened by Poe's repetition of the same or similar words.

Continuing to provide an air of uncertainty and strangeness, Poe cast over the air-shadows, sometimes "a faint, indefinite shadow," or "the shadow of a shade," or "traces of the shadow," or even "shadowlike." He added to his strangeness sounds that decreased in audibility with each repetition as an "earnest low whis-

<sup>55</sup>Quoted by W. H. Auden, ed., Edgar Allan Poe: Selected Prose and Poetry (New York: Rinehart and Company, 1960), p. 23.

<sup>56</sup>Perry, p. 20.

per of sounds," "the slight sounds" or "some imaginary sound," or "the vague sound." Poe was also successful in emphasizing the gruesome by his unrestrained use of the word death. He made death appear shocking by referring to it, at different times, as ghastly beyond redemption, irredeemable, binding and fettered. Not once did he allow the reader's attention to stray from the center of action--the bed. He spoke of the "bed of ebony," "bed of death," "the region of the bed," and the "region of the ebony bed." He repeatedly mentioned the bed eleven times. The same technique of emphasizing the effect through repetition was achieved with Poe's use of the word chamber; he mentioned it twelve times to keep the reader's attention focused on the terrifying scene of the reincarnation.

Another descriptive word Poe frequently used to emphasize the setting as well as to depict feelings or sensations of his characters was the word terror. He employed this word at least twelve times in the tales. To illustrate how the setting created a powerful emotional effect, the writer might call attention to the fact that Poe spoke of "an anomalous species of terror," "absolute effect of danger--terror," "extreme terror," "wildly singular in its terror," "terror as a basis," "vague terror," "an agony of superstitious terror," and the "terror of the lady." The frequent repetition of the word terror produced vicarious feelings in the reader.

He used horror in much the same way. He spoke of an "intense sentiment of horror," "a species of unutterable horror," "an extremity of horror," "the unspeakable horrors of that night," and

"within this region of horror." Each time Poe used horror, he added another descriptive word to make the horror more shocking and grim. As a result, he produced a similar sensation in the reader.

In The Cask of Amontillado, Poe let the much searched for Amontillado echo throughout the tale a total of sixteen times. Perry was of the opinion that "Amontillado echoed throughout the story like a refrain."<sup>57</sup> Such repetition maintained a horrifying monotony and kept the reader's attention on that specific detail. The word Fortunato, the name of the unsuspecting victim, appeared thirteen times--as if Poe wanted to prepare the reader for the horrible fate of the character and also to maintain suspense in the tale from beginning to end. Birkhead found that "Poe experiments with language, painfully acquiring a conscious, studied form of expression which is often remarkably effective, but which almost invariably suggests a sense of artifice....we are forcibly impressed by the skillful arrangement of words, the alternation of long and short sentences, the device of repetition and the deliberately created choice of epithets."<sup>58</sup>

Color and lighting were definitely a part of Poe's magical skill with words. He must have pondered deeply the psychology of color and light and the ways of blending them in such a manner as to produce the effects of terror in his "Tales of the Grotesque and Arabesque." Poe made colors rich and striking, designating them

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<sup>57</sup>Perry, p. 20.

<sup>58</sup>Edith Birkhead, The Tale of Terror (London: Constable and Company, 1921), p. 214.

with such words and phrases as white, golden, encrimsoned, pearly, ruby-colored, and blood red; but these colors were still imbued with a tone of terror. Or they were strange and dismal as gray, jetty black and coppered. In a book written by Fagin, Walter Blair was said to have given the following account of Poe's artistic use of color:

Poe used psychological situations and symbolism to gain aesthetic effects. He worked in certain colors because they represented for him certain subjective associations and helped him to achieve certain desired effects. What color could have served him better than black for conjuring an atmosphere of dread and gloom, than purple or gold for representing opulence and magnificence, than scarlet and crimson for intensifying the illusion of bloody catastrophe?<sup>59</sup>

Light appeared in little islands that were vague and subdued as "the mystic vapour," "a tint of leaden hue," "feeble gleams of encrimsoned light," "feeble rays," "feeble light," "a partial glow," "a ghastly lustre," and "the unnatural light of a faintly luminous and distinctly visible gaseous exhalation" or the light was stunning and terrifying such as a "wild light," "a gleam so unusual," "rich lustre...from the censer," "parti-colored fires," and "the radiance... of the blood-red moon." These spots of light attracted the eye and kept it away from the rest of the scene where all was mysteriously dark and plunged the reader headlong into Poe's desired realm of terror emphasized in the setting.

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<sup>59</sup>Fagin, p. 216.

### III

#### Poe's Deliberate Use of Foreshadowing in the Plot

In the "Tales of the Grotesque and Arabesque," Poe deliberately used foreshadowing in the plot to create suspense, to initiate the effects of terror and horror, and to prepare the reader beforehand for the tragic end. Since foreshadowing was primarily a technique of Poe's, he deliberately used the technique a number of times in his "Tales of the Grotesque and Arabesque." Foreshadowing was "an essential element in the action, heightening the force of the conclusion and emphasizing the quality of inevitability that is necessary if the illusion of reality is to be maintained. The observant reader takes satisfaction in recognizing a hint dropped unobtrusively, and is pleased with himself when the conclusion bears out his suspicions."<sup>60</sup> Poe deliberately used foreshadowing as his technique for creating terror and horror.

Through the use of one of the most grotesque paintings ever put on canvas, Poe provided a premonition of what was to happen to Madeline Usher. This particular painting presented a weird and phantasmagoric picture of an "immensely long and rectangular vault or tunnel" that "lay at exceeding depth below the surface of the earth." Although no outlet was apparent, "a flood of rays seemed to shine through in a ghastly splendour." This picture was almost a replica of Madeline's place of burial. The vault in which she

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<sup>60</sup>Gerald D. Sanders and others, Unified English Composition (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1954), p. 354.

was entombed was "small, damp, and entirely without means of admission of light, lying at great depth" below the surface of the mansion. Thus Poe deliberately foreshadowed beforehand and created suspense, for any reader who has read Poe is aware that he did not include anything in his story without some specific purpose.

This same technique of foreshadowing to create suspense was achieved through the use of morbid readings and poems that were ominous yet subtly intricate. "The Haunted Palace" was Poe's own allegorical creation that told of Roderick's youth and old age and finally the corruption of his mind with diseased thoughts. Poe, in writing to Griswold, said: "By 'The Haunted Palace' I mean to imply a mind haunted by phantoms--a disordered brain."<sup>61</sup> The reader, captivated by the rhythmical creation of the lines, words, sounds, the beauty of sensuous description, and the phantasmagoric picture, often overlooked the allegorical references as illustrated in these lines, constituting the fifth and sixth stanzas:

But evil things, in robes of sorrow,  
Assailed the monarch's high estate;  
(Ah, let us mourn, for never morrow  
Shall dawn upon him, desolate!)  
And, round about his home, the glory  
That blushed and bloomed  
Is but a dim-remembered story  
Of the old time entombed.

And travellers now within that valley  
Through the red-litten windows see  
Vast forms that move fantastically  
To the discordant melody;  
While, like a rapid ghastly river,  
Through the pale door  
A hideous throng rush out forever,  
And laugh--but smile no more.<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>61</sup>Jay B. Hubbell, ed., American Life and Literature (Washington: Harper and Brothers, 1936), p. 602.

<sup>62</sup>Works, III, pp. 285-286.

In Stanza V, Roderick's mind, "the monarch's high estate," was violently attacked by imaginary fears referred to as "evil things;" while in Stanza VI, "the travellers" and "vast forms" were the terrors and horrors that led to "the discordant melody," the complete disintegration of Roderick's mind.

Likewise, to create suspense and to prepare the reader beforehand for the tragic end, Poe deliberately created "The Mad Frist," a prose work which the "I" character constantly read from at Roderick's insistence and which Stovall called a "strange invented episode."<sup>63</sup> "The Mad Frist," whose descriptions of sound were "horribly reproduced by Madeline as she left her prison,"<sup>64</sup> was a deliberate foreshadowing of her return and the final tragedy. An atmosphere of terror prevailed in the trist. Unusual shrieking, screaming, and grating sounds hypnotized the reader as he waited in terrifying suspense for approaching disaster. Just as Ethelred triumphed over the dragon and escaped, so did Madeline, accompanied by shrieking, screaming, and grating sounds, triumph over her temporary grave and return to succeed in causing her brother's death.

Poe continued his technique of foreshadowing his tragedies in Ligeia. His verse composition, "The Conqueror Worm," was another of Poe's poems created deliberately to foreshadow suspense and terror by relating the incident of a performance of "a motley" tragedy entitled "Man." It was pointed out that "Much of madness

<sup>63</sup>Stovall, p. 419.

<sup>64</sup>Lyle H. Kendall, Jr., "The Vampire Motif in 'The Fall of the House of Usher,'" College English, XXIV (March, 1963), 452.

and more of sin and horror" made the "soul of the plot." On the stage, helpless humans participated in the farce of life and were buffeted about in an endless circle of troubles and disappointments by "formless things that flapped their vulture-like wings" over them until they, the humans, were in a "rout." Then the "crawling worm" ate the rabble and was proclaimed the her. Such was the poem that Poe composed through Ligeia. Upon Ligeia's completion of the reading of the poem, Ligeia's dying shrieks pierced the air and she succumbed to the "Conqueror Worm."

Poe also used sounds to foreshadow tragic happenings and maintain suspense. Many of his characters were haunted by eerie sounds. Regarding Poe's use of such eerie sounds, Fagin said that Poe's

...ear was remarkably sensitive and his skill in manipulating a variety of sounds--variety in tone, quality, volume, range--at moments when their effect would be most telling was uncanny. Seldom, if ever, are his sounds mere additions to the plot, adventitious theatrical enrichment; usually they are so well integrated with the plot that they are, or seem to be, an inseparable part of it, a dramatic means of unfolding it.<sup>65</sup>

A stifled and dulled echo, the rattling of casement sashes, "a low and apparently distant, but harsh, protracted and most unusual screaming sound," and "a distinct, hollow, metallic, and clangorous yet apparently muffled reverberation" were used by Poe in The Fall of the House of Usher to forecast Madeline's rending of her temporary tomb and the sounds in the trist were the exact counterpart of her own. On the night of the seventh or eighth day, the "I" character of the House of Usher was excited by "certain low and indefinite sounds which came through the pauses of the

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<sup>65</sup>Fagin, pp. 203-204.



storm." He experienced extreme restlessness and nervousness upon seeing the draperies, "tortured into motion by the breath of a rising tempest," sway "fitfully to and fro upon the walls" and rustle "uneasily" about the bed.

Similarly, in the tale of Ligeia, Poe haunted his characters with weird sounds to initiate the effects of horror and terror and to create suspense in the reader. Here, he produced the sound in the draperies so realistically that Fagin concluded that "They are full of atmospheric color and even sound."<sup>66</sup> It was when Rowena spoke, a third time, of the "slight sounds--and of the unusual motions among the tapestries" in the chamber that she fainted and "rapid change for the worse took place" in her disorder. Immediately after the wind began rushing behind the tapestries a second time, there was the sound of "a sob, low, gentle, but very distinct" that directed Ligeia's husband to gaze upon the enshrouded corpse to witness the workings of metempsychosis.

In addition to using grotesque paintings, morbid readings and poems, and eerie sounds, Poe used a number of other tools and devices to foreshadow tragedy. The "barely perceptible fissure" in The Fall of the House of Usher indirectly suggested the crumbling condition and the eventual "fall" of the dilapidated, old mansion. Roderick's changed condition after the entombment of Madeline suggested to the narrator and to the reader the fact that Roderick was extremely fearful as he labored with some "oppressive secret." The narrator observed that:

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<sup>66</sup>Fagin, p. 183.

...an observable change came over the features of the mental disorder of my friend. His ordinary manner had vanished. His ordinary occupations were neglected or forgotten. He roamed from chamber to chamber, with hurried, unequal, and objectless step. The pallor of his countenance had assumed...a more ghastly hue--but the luminousness of his eye had utterly gone out. The once occasional huskiness of his tone was heard no more; and a tremulous quaver, as if of extreme terror, habitually characterized his utterance....I thought his unceasingly agitated mind was labouring with some oppressive secret....I beheld him gazing upon vacancy for long hours, in an attitude of the profoundest attention, as if listening to some imaginary sound. But, as I placed my hand upon his shoulder, there came a strong shudder over his whole person; a sickly smile quivered about his lips;...he spoke in a low, hurried and gibbering murmur....<sup>67</sup>

This description of Roderick's condition can only serve to foreshadow his imminent death.

A second time Roderick's extremely nervous condition was noticeable:

...I saw that his lips trembled....His eyes were bent fixedly before him, and throughout his whole countenance there reigned a stony rigidity...there came a strong shudder over his whole person; I saw that he spoke in a low, hurried and gibbering murmur...he sprang to his feet, and shrieked out his syllables, as if in the effort he were giving up his soul.<sup>68</sup>

And the reader was reminded that the violent terrors that Roderick had anticipated and experienced had been deliberately foreshadowed by Poe to heighten the effect of terror in the story. The "impetuous fury of the entering gust," "frequent and violent alterations in the direction of the whirlwind," which Kendall believed signalled "a spiritual presence,"<sup>69</sup> and the "exceeding density of

<sup>67</sup>Works, pp. 289-290.

<sup>68</sup>Ibid., pp. 294-295.

<sup>69</sup>Kendall, p. 452.

the clouds (which hung so low)" were Poe's deliberate means of foreshadowing the tragic end and keeping suspense in the tale as well as in the reader.

The drops of "brilliant and ruby-colored fluid" which fell from the "atmosphere of the room" into Rowena's goblet of wine hint to the reader the possibility of Rowena's death by "angelic poisoning" in Ligeia.

Poe also used dialogue to foreshadow suspense. The last line taken from the quotation which was read at Ligeia's insistence will serve to show Poe's technique for creating suspense:

Man doth not yield himself to the angels, nor unto death  
utterly, save only through the weakness of his feeble  
will.

W. P. Trent believed that these lines demonstrated "how the soul of a passionate woman long dead returned to her dying husband's side by appropriating the dying body of his second wife, even changing it back to her own appearance."<sup>70</sup> Thus Poe foreshadowed the reincarnation of Ligeia through verbal lines and kept his reader in suspense until the reincarnation was completed.

Similarly, Montresor's announcement in the opening lines of The Cask of Amontillado, "...but when he ventured upon insult I vowed revenge....I must not only punish but punish with impunity," foreshadowed the skill and cunning art by which Montresor executed his plan and annihilated Fortunato. The opening lines served to initiate the effects of terror and horror and to produce suspense in the reader.

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<sup>70</sup>W. P. Trent, Great American Writers (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1912), p. 97.

In the same tale, Poe used dialogue as a technique to foreshadow gruesome tragedy. Montresor's repeating of the family coat of arms:

A human foot crushing a serpent whose fangs are imbedded in its heels...

which implied the determined ruthlessness of Montresor toward any offender, and his motto

No man can harm me with impunity...

served as a means of foreshadowing to the reader that Montresor was going to kill Fortunato, yet Fortunato failed to recognize it and insisted on following him.

The very observant reader may notice that much of the dialogue between Montresor and Fortunato was Poe's clever technique for creating suspense and foreshadowing the tragic fate of Fortunato. Certain lines are used to show Poe's technique:

Montresor: "Come,...we will go back; your health is precious....You are a man to be missed.... and I cannot be responsible."

Fortunato: "...the cough is a mere nothing; it will not kill me. I shall not die of a cough."

Montresor: "True--true,...but you should use all proper caution."

Fortunato: "I drink...to the buried that repose around us."

Montresor: "And I to your long life."

Montresor: "The nitre!...see, it increases. It hangs like moss upon the vaults. We are below the river's bed. The drops of moisture trickle among the bones. Come, we will go back ere it is too late."

Fortunato: "You are not of the masons."

Montresor: "Yes, yes...."

Fortunato: "You? Impossible! A mason?"

Montresor: "A mason...."

It was during this part of the dialogue that Montresor showed the trowel indicating that he was a "mason," but one who built with stone and mortar. Also, in The Cask of Amontillado, the jest of the trowel being used as a masonic sign forewarned the reader of the implement that was to be used by Montresor in the plastering and walling up of the unsuspecting Fortunato. Along with the trowel, the niter and the conveniently hidden mortar and building stone enabled the reader to foresee the impending danger and to realize that the victim had little or no chance to escape. Hence, Poe deliberately foreshadowed Fortunato's fatal end.

#### IV

### Poe's Deliberate Use of Figurative Language and Sound Patterns

The interspersing of figurative language and sound patterns to emphasize the effects of horror and terror was a clever yet deliberate technique used by Poe in his "Tales of the Grotesque and Arabesque." His use of figurative language gave beauty to his style of writing, and it tended to emphasize the effect. The figures of speech seemed to flash upon the mind spontaneously in moments of high emotion and presented analogous pictures in the reader's mind. A number of times Poe declared his complete trust and "faith in the 'power of words.'"<sup>71</sup> And in the handling of words, Poe was a master; he was a "writer who understood the color-power of words and the most delicate subtleties of language as very few English or American writers have ever done."<sup>72</sup> Birkhead believed that "Poe experimented with language, painfully acquiring a conscious studied form."<sup>73</sup>

According to his "Marginalia," Poe had a particular fondness for metaphors. He stated that "An artist will always contrive to

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<sup>71</sup>Auden, p. 436

<sup>72</sup>George Snell, "Poe Redivivus," Arizona Quarterly, I (1945), 55.

<sup>73</sup>Birkhead, p. 214.

weave his illustrations into the metaphorical form."<sup>74</sup> An interesting point in the same passage brought out the fact that "he did not regard truthfulness in portraying the disagreeable as to be commended."<sup>75</sup> "In my view," he said, "if an artist must paint decayed cheeses, his merit will lie in their looking as little like decayed cheeses as possible."<sup>76</sup> Bradfield called attention to this same point when she concluded that "His use of such a striking metaphor here might seem to indicate that this was the type of figure of speech of which he approved."<sup>77</sup> Supporting this same idea of Poe's use of metaphors is the following statement by Harrison:

Metaphor, its softened image, has indisputable force when sparingly and skillfully employed. Vigorous writers use it rarely indeed.<sup>78</sup>

Thus Poe deliberately used metaphors to emphasize the effect.

In The Fall of the House of Usher, a number of examples of metaphors may be found to show his technique in emphasizing the setting; some of these examples are as follows:

the vacant eye-like windows

this mansion of gloom

an atmosphere...a pestilent and mystic vapour, dull, sluggish faintly discernible and leaden-hued

Minute **fungi**...hanging in a fine tangled web-work from the eaves

<sup>74</sup>Works, XIV, p. 27.

<sup>75</sup>Ibid., p. 28.

<sup>76</sup>Ibid., p. 29.

<sup>77</sup>Bradfield, p. 25.

<sup>78</sup>Works, X, p. 130.

I breathed an atmosphere of sorrow.

An air of stern, deep, and irredeemable gloom hung over and pervaded all.

The radiance was that of the full, setting and blood-red moon....

there came a fierce breath of the whirlwind...

The entire orb of the satellite burst at once upon my sight....

The same technique was used to emphasize character description, especially that of Roderick. Some examples are as follows:

a nose of a delicate Hebrew model

hair of more than web-like softness and tenuity

To an anomalous species of terror I found him a bounden slave.

...there was a species of mad hilarity in his eyes--an evidently restrained hysteria.

an eye large, liquid, and luminous

And in Ligeia, Poe employed metaphors to emphasize Ligeia's strange beauty. Several examples are pointed out:

...she placed her marble hand upon my shoulder.

the skin rivalling the purest ivory

the raven-black, the glossy, the luxuriant and naturally-curling tresses

The hue of the orbs was the most brilliant black.

...the pale fingers became of the transparent waxen hue of the grave.

...the blue veins upon the lofty forehead swelled and sank impetuously with the tides of the most gentle motion.

In each instance, Poe has purposely used metaphors to emphasize the effect of terror in the setting and in his characters by im-



plied comparisons.

In addition to extensive use of metaphors, the very observant reader may note many instances of Poe's use of irony in The Cask of Amontillado. Thrall and Hibbard found that the presence of irony "is marked by a sort of grim humor, an 'unemotional detachment' on the part of the writer, a coolness in expression at a time when the writer's emotions are really heated. Characteristically, it speaks words of praise to imply blame and words of blame to imply praise."<sup>79</sup> Edward Foster contended that "...'The Cask of Amontillado' may be regarded as an example of...artistic revenge, but it obviously exhibits a grim humor on the part of the leading character. The smooth trickery by which the victim leads himself into the trap, the grimly ambiguous dialogue, and the horrible death are...monstrous. Poe almost habitually injects a grim element into his mirth....Failure to recognize this fact can lead to a misinterpretation."<sup>80</sup>

Much of the conversation between Montresor and Fortunato in The Cask of Amontillado was purely ironical. Several examples are cited as follows:

Montresor: "Come,...we will go back: your health is precious. You are rich, respected, admired, beloved; you are happy as once I was. You are a man to be missed...."

Fortunato: "...the cough is a mere nothing; it will not kill me. I shall not die of a cough."

Montresor: "True--true,...but you should use all proper caution...."

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<sup>79</sup>Thrall and Hibbard, p. 219.

<sup>80</sup>Edward F. Foster, A Study of Grim Humor in the Works of Poe, Melville, and Twain (Nashville: Vanderbilt Univ., 1957), pp. 131-132.

Montresor: "I (drink) to your long life."

With much grim humor and wit, Montresor agreed that a "cough is a mere nothing" and that Fortunato would not "die of a cough" because Montresor had already provided the means by which Fortunato's death was to occur. The toast to the victim's "long life" was a contemptuous action. There was much irony as well as trickery and deception in the sign that Montresor used to indicate that he was "of the brotherhood." The action and dialogue continued in this manner: Fortunato laughed and threw the bottle up with a gesticulation that Montresor did not understand; Fortunato then repeated the grotesque movement, and the dialogue continued as given below.

Fortunato: "You do not comprehend?...Then you are not of the brotherhood....You are not of the masons."

Montresor: "A mason,..."

At this point, Montresor took a trowel from the folds of his roquelaire and said: "It is this...."

These expressions are ironic because they are misleading. In his drunken mood, Fortunato gave a sign indicating that he was of the masonic brotherhood. His request for the same or similar sign was not fulfilled. It was ironic that he should overlook the real meaning of Montresor's sign indicating that he, too, was a mason, but one skilled in the art of brick laying. Perhaps one of Poe's most artistic uses of irony was his choice of costume for Fortunato. The motley--"a tight-fitting parti-striped dress" with conical cap and bells--worn by Fortunato was "the characteristic dress of a professional fool."<sup>81</sup> Birkhead agreed that "in The Cask of

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<sup>81</sup>Rosa Mikels, Short Stories for English Courses (New York: Charles Scribners' Sons, 1960), p. 92.

Amontillado...the note of grim irony is sustained throughout. The jingling of the bells and the devilish profanity of the last three words--Requiescat in pace--add a final touch of horror to a revenge, devised and carried out with consummate artistry."<sup>82</sup>

Two of the quotations from The Cask of Amontillado referred to in the previous chapter may serve to indicate Poe's technique. It was ironic that a man of Fortunato's quality--rich, respected, admired, a connoisseur of wines, one of the few Italians who had the virtuoso spirit--should not recognize the threat apparent in the two statements of Montresor:

A human foot crushing a serpent whose fangs are imbedded in its heel....

and

No man can harm me with impunity.

Campbell and Thomas agreed that it was ironic that Poe should select the carnival season as a fitting time to execute the murder. According to them, "The customary expectation is that a carnival shall be a season of gaiety and goodfellowship; here it is a background for hate and evil action."<sup>83</sup> Thus Poe has deliberately foreshadowed, in each clever manner, the tragedy which will eventually take place in the story. Poe handled this technique so cleverly that the casual reader often overlooked such small hints.

To produce certain sound patterns and thereby heighten the effect in his tales, Poe used alliteration and assonance. In The

<sup>82</sup>Birkhead, p. 217.

<sup>83</sup>Gladys Campbell and Russell Thomas, Reading American Literature (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1944), p. 158.

Fall of the House of Usher, the opening sentence of the story shows a recurrence of d's, as in "during...dull, dark, and soundless day...." This same sound is repeated in "dark draperies," "dark and tattered draperies," and "deep and dank tarn."

The constant and repetitious sound of s can be distinguished in such examples as:

Its evidence--the evidence of the sentence--was to be seen, he said (and here started as he spoke), in the gradual yet certain condensation of an atmosphere....

It was thus that he spoke of the object of my visit, of his earnest desire to see me, and of the solace he expected....

No sooner had these syllables passed my lips...

...certain accessory points of the design served well the idea....

...a sensation of stupor oppressed me, as my eyes followed her retreating steps....

...he was enchained by certain superstitious impressions; and...

amid the rattling of the sashes of the casements, and the ordinary commingled noises of the still increasing storm, the sound, in itself, had nothing surely which should have interested or disturbed me.

Also in Ligeia the same sound was played upon in such examples

as:

In stature she was tall, somewhat slender, even emaciated;...

...there was the same luxurious smoothness of surface, the same scarcely perceptible tendency to the aquiline, the same harmoniously curved nostrils speaking the free spirit.

...most surely she presided over mine;

...she spoke...pertinaciously of the sounds--of the slight sounds--and of the unusual motions among the tapestries.

...near the closing in of September, she pressed this distressing subject with more than usual emphasis upon my attention.

With much deliberateness, Poe used figurative language and sound patterns to produce his desired effects of terror and horror upon the reader. His particular fondness for metaphors presented to the reader a comparison of two things that were fused into one by the power of the imagination and the intensity of the emotion. He used irony where a light sarcasm was needed to heighten the design of the tale. Frequently he interspersed sound patterns in his sentences through the use of alliteration and assonance. In fact, Fagin believed that "Poe's prose has subtle rhythms;...and his melody was a combination of alliteration and assonance."<sup>84</sup>

...with events as my text will give it an overpowering and  
 pronounced effect....<sup>85</sup>

It was Poe's firm belief that the artist conceived a high, original  
 invented incidents, and discussed the incidents in such a way that  
 would best serve him in establishing the pronounced effect.

Regarding Poe's artistic skill in his "Tales of the Grotesque  
 and Arabesque," the investigator has found that in order to achieve  
 and maintain his "unity of impression" or "singleness of effect,"

Poe followed certain basic techniques as follows:

1. The use of carefully ill, arranged, and unusual characters
2. The creation of a specific setting and atmosphere
3. The deliberate foregrounding of tragedy in the plot
4. The deliberate use of language and sound patterns.

Although each of the above selected tales from Poe's  
 "Tales of the Grotesque and Arabesque" was contained from the list.

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<sup>84</sup>Fagin, p. 200.

## SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Each of the selected tales from Poe's "Tales of the Grotesque and Arabesque" left upon the mind of the reader a single outstanding impression. Poe's definite intention of producing a vivid, even exaggerated effect was predetermined at the outset of his tales in a manner consistent with the following of his theories:

A skilful literary artist has constructed a tale. If wise, he has not fashioned his thoughts to accommodate his incidents; but having conceived, with deliberate care, a certain unique or single 'effect' to be wrought out, he then invents such incidents--he then combines such events as may best aid him in establishing this preconceived effect....<sup>85</sup>

It was Poe's firm belief that the artist conceived a single effect, invented incidents, and discussed the incidents in such tone that would best serve him in establishing the preconceived effect.

Regarding Poe's artistic skill in his "Tales of the Grotesque and Arabesque," the investigator has found that in order to create and maintain his "unity of impression" or "singleness of effect," Poe followed certain basic techniques as follows:

1. The use of morbidly ill, abnormal, and unusual characters
2. The creation of a specific setting and atmosphere
3. The deliberate foreshadowing of tragedy in the plot
4. The deliberate use of language and sound patterns.

Although each of the three selected tales taken from Poe's "Tales of the Grotesque and Arabesque" was contrived from the four techniques, each technique was dominated by the singleness of

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<sup>85</sup>Works, XI, p. 109.

effect--terror--which was attained by subordinating all to achieve the effect.

The characters which Poe used were created specifically to establish and maintain terror. Arthur H. Quinn said that "It will be noticed that he does not mention the revelation of character as important; it is the effect he is after, and his tales are primarily short stories of effect. That his characters are often types is true, but that is because they live in an atmosphere of the abnormal or the wonderful....For Poe's purpose they are part of the general effect; to have placed an ordinary person of common sense..."<sup>86</sup> in The Fall of the House of Usher, Ligeia, or The Cask of Amontillado "would have been simply to misunderstand the art."<sup>87</sup>

In writing his tales, Poe knew and understood the value of creating the specific setting and mood at the beginning. Quinn believed that Poe's introductory devices enabled the reader to experience the tone of terror before he had read the first ten words. In each of the selected tales, Poe has formed the habit of striking the keynote of terror as the desired effect at the beginning of the tales and by sustaining this effect until the very end.

Because of the brevity of the short story, Poe deliberately and cleverly foreshadowed his tragedies in the plot. Foreshadowing not only prepared the reader by helping to ease his tensions, but it also intensified the effects of horror and terror, because the reader remained in suspense until the tragedies occurred.

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<sup>86</sup>Arthur H. Quinn, American Fiction (New York: D. Appleton-Century Company, 1936), p. 91.

<sup>87</sup>Ibid.

Perhaps this technique was also Poe's means of fulfilling his theory that:

During the hour of perusal the soul of the reader is at the writer's control.<sup>88</sup>

Poe emphasized the effects of horror and terror by deliberately using figurative language and sound patterns. His complete trust in the power of words led to the manner in which he artistically used words. He knew language and he understood the color-power of words as well as how to baffle the reader with words.

Therefore, the investigator contends that the clever manner in which Poe used characters, setting, plot, and language to create his "Tales of the Grotesque and Arabesque" was his deliberate technique of creating and maintaining the effects of horror and terror, the most important characteristic of the selected tales.

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<sup>88</sup>Auden, p. 450.



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