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The Language of Mourning: Analyzing Poe's Imagery of Death in a Series of Selected Poems

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Abstract

Death haunted the life and works of the American writer Edgar Allan Poe all along his tumultuous existence. It usually came disguised as an illness, taking away the women he dearly loved. The loss of the female figures who were essential to him would leave a void so terrible that he showed an obsession with the subject of the romanticization of the portrayal of dying females in Literature. Hence, in poems and short stories alike, Poe often reconstructs tragic episodes in which passive muses are doomed to expire, and bereaved speakers gravely mourn their deaths to the point of madness.

Readers can identify these two motifs: death and victimized ladies, in the foundation of Poe's poetic vision. Still, a whole array of different motifs stems from this basis, constituting the intricate and varied imagery of death in his poetry. This metaphorical universe comprises elements such as mythological, Christian, and biblical references, manifestations of nostalgia, irrationality and chronic grief in the speaker, dichotomies of opposites, the marginalization and objectification of women, the distortion of reality and the quest for a dreamland. Indeed, this dissertation focuses on illustrating the presence of these recurring motifs in Poe's imagery of death by means of the analysis of five of his most famous poems: *The Sleeper*, *Lenore*, *To One in Paradise*, *The Raven*, and *Ulalume – A Ballad*, arranged in their chronological order of appearance.

Keywords: Edgar A. Poe, poetry, death, women, common motifs, *The Sleeper*, *Lenore*, *To One in Paradise*, *The Raven*, *Ulalume – A Ballad*

0. Introduction

The works of Edgar Allan Poe (1809 – 1849), master of the macabre and artisan of the gothic, continue to hypnotize readers and scholars alike nowadays, more than a century and a half after his puzzling death. Although today he is considered a genius of literature and the father of the genre of the detective fiction novel, it was not all glory. His literary merits would often be disregarded, for critics of his generation hesitated to give him a place alongside recognized creators. Poe was a critic himself, a poet and a theoretician who produced hundreds of enlightening works.

His short lifespan - died aged forty - coincided with the peak of the cultural movements of Romanticism and the Gothic, which had their origins in Germany, the UK and France in the late eighteenth century. Both inspirations dwelt thoroughly on Poe's creation. He was a fervent admirer of Percy Bysshe Shelley, Lord Tennyson, Lord Byron, and Mary Shelley's work. His own poetry emulated many of the topics explored by the Romantic and Gothic authors, such as the worship of the beauty of nature, the praise of childhood, the predilection for the occult, the sinister, the nightmare, the supernatural, and victimized women.

Largely known for his horror short stories, Poe actually confessed that he would have devoted to poetry writing solely - his true passion -, had it provided enough financial profit to support him. However, he felt obliged to turn to other literary forms as a source of income.

Having witnessed it in first person several times, death is by far the subject most often recreated in his writing - and poems -, found in inseparable association with mourning. However, one must first appraise the set of common motifs he used in his

fabrication of a diverse symbolism of death, in order to understand his poetic conception of this latter. Such conception was highly influenced by an autobiographical facet that involved women: Poe lost many of the women he dearly loved, to disease. His vision of death cannot be formulated without dying females, whose departures cause irreversible pain. Death and women go hand in hand for this poet, founding the basic structure that allows his creativity.

Previous research has intended to determine and prove the most frequent constituents in Edgar Allan Poe's imagery of death. For instance, in his thesis, *Greek and Latin Influence on Edgar Allan Poe's Poetry* (2020), Roberto Serrano discusses the influence of classical tradition in the aesthetics of this author. Similarly, Eve Célia Morisi's *The Female Figure of Poe's Poetry: A Rehabilitation* (2005) and Floyd Stovall's *The Women of Poe's Poems and Tales* (1925), both study the issue of the representation of female identity in Poe's literature. On the other hand, in her article, *Poe and Gothic Creativity* (2010), Maria Antónia Lima remarks about Poe's miscellany of Gothic elements:

The number of possible associations can be as infinite as the endless capacity of Poe's fiction to inspire new creators in themes such as death, enclosure, transgression, decay, instability, ruins, the supernatural, the grotesque, the divided self, the abject, excess and terror, using images of monsters, violated or mutant bodies, ghosts, dolls, masks, skulls, etc. (Lima 25)

Lima brings forward some of the most relevant Gothic subjects connected with Poe. She later states: "Gothic creativity should certainly pay homage to Edgar Poe because he developed a kind of art that makes visible the psychopathology of contemporary culture, maintaining a vision unblinkingly focused on the oddities and perversities of the outside and inner world." (27) This is a clear reference to Poe's contribution to the modern representation of the psychological sphere in literature. It is

equally worth mentioning that in the article *Edgar Allen Poe: Psychic Pattern in the Later Poems* (1987), Catherine A. Runcie examines the complex manifestations of (ir)rationality in some of Poe's most famous verses.

In his poems, Poe articulates a discourse that suggests passing and languor, emotional dependency, and huge sorrow. Many exhibit the same pattern: the poetic persona laments the premature death of a beautiful woman, obsessively revolving around the idea of an afterlife with her. The speaker makes continuous allusions to mythology, reminiscences of idyllic pasts, Edenic Gardens, as well as to gloomy and morbid elements. Likewise, Poe often displays a huge sense of introspection, highlighting the cloudiness of reason due to despair.

This dissertation focuses on evidencing the recurrent motifs present in Poe's imaginary of death by means of the analysis of five of his best well-known poems: *The Sleeper*, *Lenore*, *To One in Paradise*, *The Raven*, and *Ulalume – A Ballad*. The poems, belonging to different collections, have been arranged in their chronological order of appearance. Since previous investigation conducted by scholars has attributed them most of the qualities this paper describes in the upcoming pages, they have been chosen as fair examples to illustrate the aforementioned arguments. It must be clarified that it concentrates on disclosing their content - studying language, rhetorical figures, word choices, themes, and tone - and not on their form, in an attempt to sustain its main points.

0.1. The Syndrome of Chronic Mourning in Poe's Biography

It is widely known today that a fair amount of Poe's work was sculpted by the loss of the women who played a prominent part in his life. Their saddening deaths - mainly to

tuberculosis - originated the seed of grief and abandonment that would populate his poetry and narrative. Critics and readers alike have pointed out this fact.

Poe had a tumultuous existence. Truth be told, tragedy would mark him way too early, and come visit from time to time. His father left home leaving him alone with his mother, Eliza, an actress who died of tuberculosis when he was still an infant. Orphaned, Poe was adopted by the Allan family, and raised in Richmond, Virginia.

Given that his foster mother, Fanny Allan, suffered from poor health, she could not deliver the motherly devotion Poe was craving, so he searched for it in someone else. It was by then that Poe fell in love with the mother of a school friend, Jane Stanard. Unfortunately, Jane would die unexpectedly, adding one more name to the list of Poe's dead beloved women. Shortly after that, he had a failed romance with a college acquaintance: when she got engaged to another man Poe felt betrayed and disenchanted. In 1827, Fanny Allan got severely ill after the young Poe set off to serve in the military, and ultimately died in 1829.

Poe first met his cousin and future wife Virginia Eliza Clemm when she was just seven years old, after he left Virginia for Baltimore, to briefly move in with her and her mother. Only a few years later, Poe returned claiming to be in love with the thirteen-year old.

They officially got married in 1836 and she would be his greatest muse, his socalled "child bride" in the haunting *Annabel Lee* and other poems. But a couple years into their marriage, Virginia would also become the target of tuberculosis. As her health progressively deteriorated, Poe drowned himself in alcohol and depression. The economic situation of the family was not good either: despite Poe's publications - he worked for

several magazines and joined the staff of the *New York Mirror* newspaper, which published *The Raven* in 1845, bringing him to fame -, they remained quite poor. In January 1847, she ultimately passed away.

Poe died in 1849 and his decease remains somewhat surrounded by a mysterious halo until this day since, a few days prior, he had been found wandering the streets of Baltimore in a frenzy.

Throughout his life, Poe endured a deep suffering caused by the realization of the inevitability of death and the emptiness it leaves behind. Consumed by these sentiments, he was driven into anxiety, heavy drinking, and madness. Echoing the misfortunes he experienced from a young age, it is no surprise then to find sick, despairing women who through death abandon their loved ones as the focuses of his poignant, at times gruesome work.

0.2. The Passive Muse: a Catalyst for Inspiration

In the same fashion as many other prior and contemporary writers did, Poe exhibited a fascination with idealizing female “fragility” in his writing. This pattern can be situated in short stories such as *Morella*, *Berenice*, *Ligeia*, *The Fall of the House of Usher*, and poems like *Annabel Lee*, *Ulalume*, *The Raven*, and *Lenore*, only to name a few. In these works, women are portrayed as passive muses: cataleptic, voiceless, helpless, and dependent characters. In many cases, they have mysteriously fallen ill, and behave as lifeless creatures as they await their decease - for they are doomed -; in others, they are already placed inside a tomb. Sometimes they return from their graves as phantoms. As Martens argues in his thesis, *The Representation of Women in the Works of Edgar Allan Poe* (2013):

Discussing women in the works of Edgar Allan Poe, one cannot help but notice how often they are completely ignored (...) Moreover, when women do appear in his stories, they are often placed in the role of helpless victims. (...) This image is the one that is best known among Poe readers and therefore constitutes the prototypical Poesque woman. (19)

Many are the scholars (Karen Weekes, Jessica Akiona, Joan Dayan, Brenna Mulhall) who have defended Poe's representation of women as somehow misogynistic and disappointing. Similarly, they have stressed the fact that they - Poesque women - lack a fully developed identity and are rarely given speaking roles. They have affirmed they are used solely as a plot mechanism.

One of the critics that has sustained these ideas, Karen Weekes, exposes in *Poe's feminine ideal* (2002): "I join other critics in arguing that Poe never truly wrote about women at all, writing instead about a female object and ignoring dimensions of character that add depth or believability to these repeated stereotypes of the beautiful damsel." (150)

Nevertheless, Poe is far from being the first who idolized women's death; indeed, this phenomenon constituted one of the hallmarks of arts in the nineteenth century, particularly cultivated during the Victorian Age. This interest has been observed in literary and visual artists such as Charles Baudelaire, Lord Alfred Tennyson, William Butler Yeats, Oscar Wilde, and Dante Gabriel Rossetti¹.

One of the most significant examples that illustrates this fixation implicates a magnanimous name in literature: William Shakespeare himself. The Shakespearean description of the drowning of Ophelia in the masterpiece *Hamlet* has strongly appealed to the popular imagination to this day.

¹ Dante Gabriel Rossetti, (born May 12, 1828, London, England—died April 9, 1882, Birchington-on-Sea, Kent), English painter and poet who was also a member of the PreRaphaelite Brotherhood, a group of painters treating religious, moral, and medieval subjects nonacademically. ("Dante Gabriel Rossetti")

This passage is exquisitely formulated, presenting her death in such a divine manner; that it evokes serenity, delicacy and beauty rather than panic and distress. Artists unceasingly recreated Ophelia's death scene during the Victorian period: one of the most famous examples is the painter John Everett Millais²'s interpretation.

Several scholars (Brenna Mulhall, Valerie Meessen, Alba Trashorras) have argued that there is an inherent relationship between the account of Ophelia's demise and the feminine death scene ideal rooted in the patriarchal Victorian system. They consider her a precursor of the Victorian iconography of idealized dying females.

Hence, the belief that there's something beautiful in a woman's last sigh largely proliferated, leading to numerous male artists to exploit the death of female characters in their work. Dead female bodies were made poetical by giving them a "calm expression", almost of ecstasy, on their faces; introducing erotic insinuations, emphasizing features like their paleness, the immobility of their bodies, their rosy cheeks, and red lips, etc. These latter traits were largely in fashion in the nineteenth century, where a culture of death had been born out of the spread of the deadly tuberculosis (also known as "consumption"). As difficult as it may be to imagine such thing, the physical image of the disease transformed into a popular look for women. Consequently, the dominant ideal of feminine beauty during the Victorian era consisted in displaying the outward symptoms of tuberculosis. The women who did not suffer from it attempted to emulate its characteristics through makeup and starvation diets which made them appear fragile, thin, pale, and have flushed cheeks and ruby-red lips. (Wilsey 5)

² Sir John Everett Millais, 1st Baronet, (born June 8, 1829, Southampton, Hampshire, Eng.—died Aug. 13, 1896, London), English painter and illustrator, and another of the members of the artistic movement known as the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood. ("John Everett Millais")

From the previous examination, one can derive the conclusion that Poe's muses are born in a silenced state: they are absorbed by men's emotions and objectified, even fetishized, in death. "The less obtrusive the better" (Weekes 150), their function is that of "enhancing the male experience of melancholy Beauty". (Weekes 160) Furthermore, "Once a woman steps out of the narrow boundaries of the stereotypical feminine role, she is reviled rather than revered", Weekes explains (154). For Weekes, the Poesque representation of women consists in females being a resource for an ultimate male purpose. Besides that, she insists on how behaviors that do not fit this frame of passivity are usually presented in a negative light by Poe.

Poe constantly give his speakers and narrators the same qualities: those of the bereaved man, who is very eloquent about the beauty of his deceased lover, obsessive over some aspects (physical or not) of her, like her decay - more characteristic of the prose -, her eyes, youthfulness, and her heavenly or ethereal emanations. In the tales, he is more likely to perform macabre activities, whereas the poetic speaker remains in a state of passive grief, and refusal of the loss. (Weekes 152)

1.1. Analysis of the Poems

1.2. *The Sleeper*: An Ode to Eternal Rest

The Sleeper is a poem first published as *Irene* in 1831. It was revised exhaustively in the following years and republished. The last version was published in *The Broadway Journal*, in May 1845. The poem celebrates the (super)natural manifestations that concern the passage from death to the peaceful state of eternal rest, a higher form of existence – a recurring topic in Poe's poetry. The tone of this elegiac poem is ominous, somber, and melancholic. The first stanza reveals the grieving speaker beholding the moon from a valley at midnight, in June. [1, 2] A lake and a cemetery complete the mystical scene. [9

-15] Abruptly, thoughts of where the beautiful Irene may rest come to the speaker's mind. "All Beauty sleeps! — and lo! where lies / Irene, with her Destinies!" [16, 17] The whole atmosphere in this stanza is dream-like, almost psychedelic. The words "opiate" [3], "dripping" [5], "drowsily", "musically" [7], "universal" [8], "slumber" [14] reinforce this idea. The poem retains these mystical, otherworldly sensations along its lines, until its very end.

On the other hand, in the same stanza, the terms "Lethe" [13] and "Destinies" [17] underline Poe's interest in Greek mythology. Lethe is the daughter of Eris³, and the personification of oblivion. It is also the name of a river in the infernal regions of Hades ("Lethe"). The Destinies are the three Moirai or Fates: the incarnations of destiny, whose powers presided over human life, and dictated its circumstances and duration

Moreover, Poe presents the classical image of flowers adorning the graveyard's crypts: rosemary [9] as a symbol of remembrance and lilies [10] as a token of femininity, virginity, but also grief. Victorian tradition had in fact generated a full array of symbolic meanings for flowers, herbs and other plants; an interest Poe exhibits in these verses. Moving onto the second stanza, Poe then wonders whether a tomb in particular belongs to Irene [18, 19]. For the first time, Poe speaks directly to her, as if she could hear him and asks her several questions: "Oh, lady dear, hast *thou* no fear? / Why and what art *thou* dreaming here?." [30, 31 my italics] Subsequently, he proceeds to evoke her former magnificent beauty, corroborating the breach with her current state [32 – 36], which strikes him as strange: her "pallor" [34], her "dress" [34], her "length of tress" [35], and her "solemn silentness" [36] – he recounts, as if he could see her through the stonewalls. All of these elements allude to the decay of death embracing the body of the lovely Irene,

³ Eris is the Greek goddess of strife and discord. ("Eris")

an image that terrorizes the speaker. In turn, the words “wizard rout” [22] continue to summon notions of a fantasyland.

Throughout this stanza, Poe articulates a rhetoric figure known as “apostrophe”, when he talks to the deceased woman. According to the definition of the Merriam-Webster dictionary of English: “As a literary device, “apostrophe” refers to a speech or address to a person who is not present or to a personified object, such as Yorick's skull in *Hamlet*”. (“Apostrophe”) “Oh, lady dear, hast *thou* no fear? / Why and what art *thou* dreaming here? / Sure *thou* art come o’er far-off seas, / A wonder to these garden trees! / Strange is *thy* pallor! strange *thy* dress! / Strange, above all, *thy* length of tress, / And this all solemn silentness!” [30 – 36 my italics]

In the third and fourth stanzas, Poe wishes for Irene to be put in such a blissful sleep, that neither earthly - worms [47] - nor unearthly beings - “pale-sheeted ghosts” [44] - could disturb her peace. Poe does not hide the grotesque side of death in his representation of the dead Irene: the larvae creeping about her body, consuming her flesh, are also embedded in the depiction. Through his prayers to God, Poe requests that she be placed in the holiest of burial chambers, to rest in eternal peace. “The lady sleeps! Oh, may her sleep, / Which is enduring, so be deep! / Heaven have her in its sacred keep! / This chamber changed for one more holy, / This bed for one more melancholy, / I pray to God that she may lie / Forever with unopened eye, / While the pale sheeted ghosts go by!” [37 – 44]

Poe’s claims are intertwined with some further morbid insinuations, e.g. “tall vault” [49], “dim” and “old” [48], “crested palls” [52], “grand funerals” [53]. In the end, he expresses hope that a vault will emerge in the middle of the forest and receive Irene’s

corpse to forever treasure it. “My love, she sleeps! Oh, may her sleep, / As it is lasting, so be deep! / Soft may the worms about her creep! / Far in the forest, dim and old, / For her may some tall vault unfold — / Some vault that oft hath flung its black / And wingèd pannels fluttering back, / Triumphant, o’er the crested palls / Of her grand family funerals-” [45 – 53]

Finally, in the last stanza, the speaker retrospectively asserts that a child Irene probably bumped into this vault in the woods and threw a stone at its door, clueless of what it was. The stone would have awoken the groaning echoes of the dead within the tomb. The speaker expects that she will find perpetual rest inside such sepulchre that she had outraged as a youngster. “Some sepulchre, remote, alone, / Against whose portals she hath thrown, / In childhood, many an idle stone — / Some tomb from out whose sounding door / She ne’er shall force an echo more, / Thrilling to think, poor child of sin! / It was the dead who groaned within.” [54 – 60]

1.3. The Tearless Funerals of *Lenore*

In *Lenore*, a poem that first appeared in 1831, Poe returns to the sentiment of his previous poetry: the sorrowful state of loss after a fair maiden’s demise. However, some shifts in the tone and the final approach of its speaker separate it from the rest of Poe’s early poetry. The name of *Lenore* is later reused in another poem, *The Raven*, which will be studied in this dissertation. Both poems are dedicated to his late dear wife, Virginia.

One of the distinctively new stylistic features of *Lenore* is the presence of more than one speaker. Indeed, the poem is arranged as a dialogue. It must be said that the indication of who is speaking is null beyond, again, the change in the tone and attitude of each speaker.

The first (and third) stanza introduces an unknown speaker - clearly different from the one that utters its speech in the second and fourth ones, which are enclosed in quotation marks -, interpreted as a priest or a member of the family of the deceased by most scholars. Through poetically embellished language, he pronounces the death of Lenore, defined as “the queenliest dead that ever died so young” [6]. He places her floating on the currents of the Stygian river [1, 2], which comes from “Styx”, the name of the principal river in Hades, the underworld of the dead in Greek mythology. The legendary Charon, the boatman, used to ferry the spirits of the dead across this river’s currents; the Greeks and Romans would place a coin in the mouth or hand of the deceased to serve as fare. (“Styx”)

Next, he questions the veracity of Guy de Vere’s - Lenore’s lover - affliction, prompting him to show his sorrow with tears. “And, Guy De Vere, hast thou no tear? -- weep now or never more! / See! on yon drear and rigid bier low lies thy love, Lenore! / Come! Let the burial rite be read -- the funeral song be sung!” [3 – 6]

The allusions to the “broken” bowl (of youth, maybe) [1], the tolling of the “bell”, the “saintly soul” [2], the “drear and rigid bier” where she lies [4], the “burial rite”, “funeral song” [5], and “dirge” [7], create the perfect array of ceremonial elements orchestrated to commemorate the death of Lenore. Additionally, there is an insistence on that calamitous luck of hers, since she died at such a young age, and for which she is “doubly dead” [7]. Treating it almost as the death of a child, the premature nature of the woman’s passing, or her youthfulness - a persistent motif in Poe’s work - is strengthened in the following lines: “An anthem for the queenliest dead that ever died so young- / A dirge for her the doubly dead in that she died so young.” [6, 7]

In the following stanza, Guy de Vere's monologue of defense begins. His speech is not typical of that of other speakers, who focus on their grief. On the contrary, this one focuses on rage. [8 – 12]. He addresses the question he is being asked: "hast thou no tear?" – that is, why he is not crying. [3] He accuses the person or people that doubted him in the first stanza of hypocritical, dishonest behavior, and blames them for having caused Lenore's death. He supports that they only "loved her for her wealth" and "hated her for her pride" [8]. What is more, he insinuates that when Lenore fell ill, these people wished her death. He does not think they deserve to carry out her funerals. Guy's insulting language calls them "wretches" [8] and expresses their "evil eye" and their "slanderous tongue" [11] sent Lenore into the fauces of death. Expressions such as "feeble health" [9] and "the requiem" [10] continue to underline the dominant perception of death prevailing in Poe's poetry. "Wretches! ye loved her for her wealth and hated her for her pride; / And, when she fell in *feeble health*, ye blessed her -- that she *died*: -- / How shall the ritual, then, be read? -- *the requiem* how be sung / By you -- by yours, the evil eye, -- by yours, the slanderous tongue / That did to *death* the innocent that *died*, and died so young?" [8 – 12 my italics]

Afterwards, the third stanza displays the word "Peccavimus" [13] at its very beginning, borrowed from Latin and bearing a strong religious connotation. It is "used to acknowledge guilt or responsibility for an error", translating into "we have done wrong", "we have sinned" ("Peccavimus"). Another religion term - "Sabbath" -, appears within the same verse. It makes reference to "the seventh day of the week observed from Friday evening to Saturday evening as a day of rest and worship by Jews and some Christians" ("Sabbath"). The person speaking, conciliatory, replies to De Vere's accusations by confessing sin and counselling Guy to calm down, because nothing could be done to keep

Lenore alive: death had already stolen her. “The life upon her yellow hair but not within her eyes -- / The life still there, upon her hair -- the death upon her eyes.” [18, 19]. He asserts that Guy is merely angry and desperate after losing “the dear child” [16] that should have become his wife. “The sweet Lenore hath gone before, with Hope that flew beside, / Leaving thee wild for the dear child that should have been thy bride--” [15, 16]. Here, all over again, we can find evidence of Poe’s obsession with the motif of the young woman, the “child bride”. This expression infantilizes Lenore and accentuates the regret over her loss, victim of a death that froze her fairness and youth in the minute of its peak blossoming.

The adjectives “sweet” [15], “fair” and “debonair” [17], help Poe represent the inner and outer beauty of Lenore. She was a woman that embodied his archetypal ideal of perfection: an aesthetically pleasing physique - which usually implied slender, pale, blonde women; youth, gentle manners, spiritual purity, and innocence.

In the last stanza, one witnesses Guy de Vere saying Lenore has ascended into Heaven, where she can sit alongside God himself and enjoy superior divinity. “Avaunt! – avaunt!” [20], he encourages her (Go away! Depart!) (“Avaunt”). A bit further into the stanza, he sanctifies her again when he mentions her soul’s “hallowed mirth” [23].

In the verses “From Hell unto a high estate within the utmost Heaven -- / From moan and groan to a golden throne beside the King of Heaven: --” [21, 22], Poe establishes an interesting dichotomy of opposite states or circumstances, one being the worst possible - Hell; the “moan” and “groan” - whereas the other is idyllic - Heaven; the “golden throne beside” God.

Later on, Guy finally discovers the right answer to the ethical debate of how to properly honor his lover’s passing. He resolves that the only way to dignify her death is

not to mourn her. Bells won't toll and he will not cry. "*Let no bell toll*, then, lest her soul,
amid its hallowed mirth, / Should catch the note as it doth float up from the damnèd Earth!
/ And I – *tonight my heart is light: -- no dirge will I upraise*, / But waft the angel on her
flight with a Pæan of old days!" [23 – 26 my italics] He argues that he is happy that
Lenore escaped the turmoil and chaos on Earth ("damnèd" Earth) [24] to be at peace in
Heaven, and to be safe from her friends who in reality are "fiends" [20] in disguise.
"Avaunt! – avaunt! To friends from fiends the indignant ghost is riven –" [20]

Another significant motif detected in Poe's poetry, that of weightlessness, flows
throughout the whole poem and dominates the last stanza, that describes Lenore's
ascension into Heaven by means of expressions such as "doth float up" [24] and "waft the
angel on her flight" [26].

He is convinced that they will reunite sooner or later, yet meanwhile, he beholds
"the angel on her flight" (Lenore) whilst a "Pæan of old days" [26] – a hymn of triumph
and enthusiasm ("Pæan") –, showing nostalgia over the past, and not a depressive "dirge"
[25]; plays for her. This image concludes the poem, and constitutes a turning point respect
to other poems of Poe: it unveils a ray of optimism in the assessment of death by the
widowed one, a new vision of hope in it.

1.4. *To One in Paradise: Despair in Eden*

In 1833, the poem *To One in Paradise* was published without a title as part of
Poe's short story *The Visionary*. It slowly evolved into *To One in Paradise* in the year
1843. The title of the poem is *per se* incredibly suggestive. The four words already
advance its elegiac tone: they unveil that a loved one has passed on and moved to paradise.

This poem, one of Poe's earliest, deals with the torment of loss and a subsequent
alienation from the world. Longing for an idyllic past, the speaker finds no reason to move

forward now that he has lost the source of light in his life. Regardless, he attains a bittersweet victory, as he is able to preserve the object of his love through his wild reveries.

The psychological portrait of the poetic persona is, yet again, labyrinthine. We are confronted with a speaker that exhibits signs of emotional dependency to the point of obsession. He amplifies his experience of pain and makes it so critical, that he simultaneously proclaims his own spiritual death. Owing to his episodes of daydream, his mental sanity is questionable.

The speaker opens up the first stanza by declaring that his deceased lover was everything to him. He speaks directly to her, revealing how he is in a state of languor because she owned his spirit and took it away with her passing. “Thou wast that all to me, love, / For which my soul did pine--.” [1, 2]

The speaker recalls a paradisiac place - an isle filled with flowers and fruit - that once served him and his fair lady as a refuge, a sacred site where they could escape the hostile truths of life. This is a regular theme in Poe’s lyric: a fantasyland of beauty and abundance as an alternative to reality. “A green isle in the sea, love, / A fountain and a shrine, / All wreathed with fairy fruits and flowers, / And all the flowers were mine.” [3 – 6] In fact, Furrow details in *Psyche and Setting: Poe’s Picturesque Landscapes* (1973): “When one examines the various instances of landscape description in Poe’s writings, a general pattern becomes evident. Poe uses imaginary landscapes to depict man’s alienation from his external environment, either as metaphors for an ideal paradise or as allegories of interior journeys into the psyche”. (16) This critic thus contributes to prove the argument of Poe’s continuous hinting of Edenic Gardens. The words “green isle in the

sea” [3], “fountain” [4], “fairy fruits and flowers” [5], “dream” [7], reinforce this notion in the first stanza.

As the poem progresses and we get to the second stanza, one can conclude that he is no longer committed with life for he has been left devoid of all hope since the tragedy [7 – 13]. The interesting contrast of symbols of light and darkness stands out in the verses: “Ah, dream too **bright** to last! / Ah, **starry** Hope! that didst **arise** / But to be **overcast!**” [7 – 9]. The references to a promising (promises of clear, sunny, starry skies) sky are obscured by the shadows of death. “Bright” [7], “starry”, and “arise” [8] convey light in the heights of the skies, that is, an optimistic scenery; whereas “overcast” [9] involves gloom. At this point, the speaker seems to be complaining because he was deceived by the dream: he flew so high yet only to fall into the void. A voice from the future urges him to carry on with his life but his nostalgia for a past that has gone by rends him immobile. “A voice from out the Future cries, / “On! on!”— but o’er the Past / (Dim gulf!) my spirit hovering lies / Mute, motionless, aghast!” [10 – 13]

He once more explains the degree of his irrevocable depression by means of the adjectives “mute, motionless, aghast” [13]. The “dim gulf” [12] represents a dark abyss of his mind, in which he sinks further and further with every thought he devotes to the one in paradise.

In the third stanza, the speaker diagnoses his own mourning as chronic. “For, alas! alas! with me / The light of Life is o’er!” [14, 15] The waves of the ocean - personified - bring to the sands ashore a message of hopelessness for him. “No more—no more—no more— / (Such language holds the *solemn sea* / To the sands upon the shore) / Shall *bloom* the *thunder-blasted tree*, / Or the *stricken eagle* soar!” [16 – 20 my italics] The repetition of “no more – no more – no more” [16] intensifies the impression of a death sentence. He draws a metaphor between his condition and that of other organic creatures, which have

undergone an ill fate and will never recover. The speaker cannot come back from the depths of his doom, just as the “thunder-blasted tree” [19] shall not resuscitate and the “stricken eagle” [20] shall not take off from the ground again due to its injuries.

One of the most remarkable aspects in this stanza is the use of an antithesis that intends to oppose life and death, two contradicting realms, in some pairs of terms. The nouns “sea”, “tree”, and “eagle”, and the verbs “bloom” [19] and “soar” [20] induce biological elements and natural processes that are sabotaged by the claws of death surviving in the adjectives “solemn” [17] (a saddened, silent sea), “thunder-blasted” [19], and “stricken” [20].

The closing stanza offers the speaker a portal to obtain his redemption. We are talking about the sensations he experiences through day and night while he is estranged from everything but his own cyclical thoughts. During the day, he finds himself in a self-induced hypnosis, inertia state. These professed “trances” [21] he mentions cloud his consciousness and submerge him into numbness. In turn, his “dreams” [22] make his nights more exciting. In them, he is able to meet his beloved one, described as a mysterious grey-eyed woman [23]. Her footsteps are weightless and bright since she is an “ethereal” being [24 – 26]. The emphasis on light, eternity, levitation and flow indicates not only that she’s a sort of fairy-like creature, but also that the place where they reunite is a happy, luminous, harmonious one, such as Heaven. There, they are welcomed to rest eternally in supreme bliss. “And all my days are trances, / And all my nightly dreams / Are where thy grey eye glances, / And where thy footstep gleams — / In what ethereal dances, / By what eternal streams.” [21 – 26]

Eve Célia Morisi summarizes *To One in Paradise*’s sublime attributes in the following paragraph of her article *Poe’s To One in Paradise* (2005):

With its tone epitomizing the lyrical tradition and its ending announcing the formal freedom inherent in modernist writing, *To One in Paradise* emerges as one of Poe's finest early poems. Its intensity, served by an effective pace and arrangement as well as forceful symbolism, sublimates the conventional theme of amorous torment. Moreover, and more important, the composition transports us into a poetic site where a melodious incantation, whose echo ranges from the description of bliss to that of chaos, absorbs the elegiac narrative. Poe's chiseled music, thus both demonstrative and self-referential, transcends individuality to reflect the vicissitudes common to all human affectivity. (144)

1.5. *The Raven*: the Guest Becomes the Resident

The Raven, first published in January 1845 in *The Evening Mirror*, was met with praise by critics for its unique rhyming pattern and the power of its psychological study of human emotions. Translated into several languages, this poem is, perhaps, the most representative of Poe's alchemy of the gothic: the work of a perfectionist where the duality of reason and feeling governs, with an undertone of dark pessimism. His raven was originally meant to be a parrot, but the final choice of the ebony-colored bird, so often associated with death rituals and ill omens, accentuates the perverse cycle of loss and grief in Poe's life and poetry. (Kopley and Hayes 192)

The first stanza presents the structure of the poem: a versed narrative written in the first person, telling the story of a melancholy-stricken man who receives an unusual guest. This disturbing presence - the raven - seems to prophesize a hopeless existence with every utterance of the phrase "Nevermore", a fact that deeply upsets the speaker.

The poem opens up at midnight, while the speaker is in the middle of a reflection. He describes himself as "weak" and "weary" [1], and the atmosphere as "dreary" [1], which advances a state of mental exhaustion, deriving from compulsive thoughts of remorse. He is suddenly interrupted by subtle tapings on his chamber door and deduces it must be some late visitor. [2 - 6]

In the second stanza, the speaker, by the fire, recalls it is the month of December [7, 8] and insists on how he longs for the “morrow” [9], that is, for a brighter future that might bring some respite to his tormented soul. Once again named Lenore, the description of the deceased woman here is, as per usual, reminiscent of Poe’s feminine ideal of the perfect female: “For the rare and radiant maiden whom the angles name Lenore--” [11]. In the last verse, Poe states that she is “nameless” [12] forever, in an apparent attempt to minimize the importance of her identity. In *Poe's "Raven": The Word That Is An Answer "Nevermore"* (1998), William Freedman discusses a pair of interpretations conceded to this “nameless”, remarking its paradoxical sense, since the “nameless” is actually named repeatedly by the speaker of the poem:

Nameless here for evermore - only to be named twice more but three stanzas later and yet again twice more in the rest of the poem. That which will be nameless here for evermore, in other words, will be repeatedly named - a paradox that lends itself to several interpretive possibilities. For J. Gerald Kennedy, it is because "Lenore 'signifies' the absence which afflicts him" that the speaker perversely and self-punishingly cannot resist naming her. For Blasing, Lenore may not be the actual name of his beloved at all, but a "generic name for... the male speaker's animamuse"; hence her real name does remain unspoken. (Kennedy and Blasing, 1987, quoted in Freedman 25)

As the speaker finds enough courage, he prepares to open the door in the fourth stanza [19 - 23]. He opens it, but there is only darkness outside [24]. He explores the scene, which remains still until, out of the blue, a voice echoes back the word he shyly whispers: “(...) and an echo murmured back the word “Lenore!” [25 - 29]

In the sixth stanza, the speaker returns inside the chamber with an agitated spirit. The enigma is reinforced once the tappings start all over again, even louder than before. [31 – 32] He wants to blame the strange episode on the wind blowing against the window’s lattice but feels compelled to solve the mystery [33 – 36]. At this point, in stanza seven, he unwraps the shutter and a large bird - a raven - rushes inside flying until he perches on a bust of Pallas - Pallas Athena, the Greek goddess of wisdom (Kopley and

Hayes 194) - that watches the room from above. "Open here I flung the shutter, when, with many a flirt and flutter, / In there stepped a stately Raven of the saintly days of yore; / Not the least obeisance made he; not a minute stopped or stayed he; / But, with mien of lord or lady, perched above my chamber door— / Perched upon a bust of Pallas just above my chamber door— / Perched, and sat, and nothing more." [37 – 42]

Freedman maintains the theory of the raven being a metaphor for the lost Lenore: "The visitor who eventually brings nothingness in its wake is also Lenore: a vacancy equated with darkness and the raven but also with the woman and the perpetuation of utter absence and uncertainty." (26)

The speaker expresses admiration towards the ebony creature in the pair of stanzas seven and eight, painting him as a symbol of honor and respect. Nonetheless, when he demands the bird: "Tell me what thy lordly name is on the Night's Plutonian shore!", the answer is a plain "Nevermore" [47, 48]. "Plutonian" is a wink to mythology, particularly to Pluto, feared Greek god of the underworld. ("Hades")

The speaker later states his conviction that the raven will abandon him with the dawn, similarly to his Hope, that had left him long ago. To such words, the bird, once again, replies "Nevermore" [58 – 60]. This statement represents the speaker's lack of faith in life, of which he had already lost the course when his lover, Lenore, was torn away from him by death. He does not have any expectations or trust in the future anymore but is consumed by an interior void that pierces his sanity and finds no meaningful purpose in life. "But the Raven, sitting lonely on the placid bust, spoke only / That one word, as if his soul in that one word he did outpour. / Nothing farther then he uttered -- not a feather then he fluttered-- / Till I scarcely more than muttered, "Other friends have flown before-

/ On the morrow he will leave me, as my Hopes have flown before.” / Then the bird said,
"Nevermore." [55 – 60]

Consecutively, in the verses of the eleventh stanza, he speculates the raven might have belonged to an unfortunate master from whom he must have learnt such a disconsolate phrase [61 – 66]. Next, in the twelfth stanza, he has become so fascinated that he cannot help but wanting to know what the reason behind this disquieting repetition is. He pulls a seat and sits in front of the raven, looking at him absorbedly. As he is scrutinizing the bird, his company becomes more and more intimidating – “grim, ungainly, ghastly, gaunt, and ominous bird of yore” [71]; [67 – 72]. He then comes to the realization that he is reclining on the “cushion’s velvet lining” which *She* (Lenore) will never press again with her body. Yet again, he feels saddened, filled with sorrow [73 – 78].

In the opening of the fourteenth stanza, the speaker suddenly experiments new sensations in the air, communicating it has grown denser with perfume from a censer swung by a Seraphim “whose foot-falls tinkled on the tufted floor” [79, 80]. A Biblical character, a Seraphim is one of the six-winged angels guarding God’s throne, associated with “life, ardour and purity” (“Seraph”). He begins asking the raven irrational questions, such as whether God had sent him there to offer him some respite after Lenore’s demise. He yearns for “nepenthe” as a resource that might free him from his painful memories. Nepenthe - also known as the elixir of oblivion - is a fictional antisorrow medicine referred to in Greek literature, most notably in Homer’s *The Odyssey* (“Nepenthe”). The raven instantaneously answers: “Nevermore”. [81 – 84]

In the following stanza, he accuses the raven of being “a thing of evil”, “a devil” [85]. He starts to suspect the “Tempter” - that is, Satan - sent him there to prolong his

misery [86]. Entitling him a “prophet” [85], he implores to know whether there is a true Balm in Gilead [88, 89]. With this, he makes yet another Biblical allusion: to the Balm of Gilead, mentioned in *The Bible* and produced from a plant in the region of the same name (“Balm of Gilead”). This mythical healing substance used for those heartbroken, denotes something of great value and very difficult to obtain in the poem, a remedy for the poet’s despair.

In the succeeding stanza, he demands to be told if once arrived in Aidenn, he shall be able to grasp “(...) a sainted maiden whom the angels name Lenore --.” [93 - 95]. Aidenn is an Arabic word for Eden or Paradise (“Aidenn”), chosen by the poet for the sake of rhyme. However, he gets the only possible answer one more time [96].

When we get to the seventeenth stanza, the speaker, irritated, exclaims he and the raven have come to the end of their relationship [97, 98]. He is offended by the raven’s repetitive answer, which he considers nothing but a vile lie [99]. He expels him from his home, ordering him to leave the bust where he was sitting and go back into the tempestuous night. He commands him to “take his beak from out” his “heart”, asking him to remove all the pain he has caused him to be in. In the same way, he begs him to leave his “loneliness unbroken” [100, 101]. In the concluding stanza; however, it is known how the raven has disobeyed him and stayed permanently inside his chamber [103, 104]. Compared to a “demon” [105], his winged companion has now become a burden he cannot tolerate: he is doomed for as long as the bird does not leave him alone. The image of the raven, which represents the recurring shadow of mad thoughts, perched perpetually on top of the bust of Pallas, symbolizing wisdom, can be construed as a metaphor proclaiming the victory of psychosis over sanity and common sense. The speaker cannot oppose the coercion of his visitor. In the words of Freedman, the identity of the student

“has just been usurped by the raven” (30). The last three lines of the poem resound as an epitaph, as a recited damnation: there is no salvation for his grieving soul. “And the lamp-light o’er him streaming throws his shadow on the floor; / And my soul from out that shadow that lies floating on the floor / Shall be lifted— nevermore!” [106 – 108] Freedman concludes, establishing the thin line dividing mind and reality, madness and sanity, in Poe’s poetry and in the spectrum of human psychology in general:

On one level, of course, this is the absorption of reality into the subjective intelligence, the subordination of both language and the world to the creative mind. The raven that begins as the voice of the other, the irrevocable truth of reality or fact, becomes but an expression of the haunted projective imagination. Narrowly, the fateful word "Nevermore" acquires the despairing meanings attributed to it by the speaker's tortured memory; (...) More broadly, reality itself has no meaning but that which the imagination assigns it or projects upon it. The fundamental question about the relationship between reality and mind, the outer and the inner worlds, is answered in the latter's favor. The world is darkness, a blackened bird that utters but a single word, barren until we provide a context in which to read it. Indeed, even the word may come from within, for the raven may be our own despair. (Freedman 29)

1.6. *Ulalume*: The Suppressed Memory of Grief

Considered one of Poe’s best-achieved poems, it does not mask the outline that we have been analyzing so far throughout this paper. A grieving speaker, in a misty region, fluctuates between irrationality and reason as he ultimately comes to knowledge that he is back at the place where he once had buried his precious *Ulalume* – probably an allusion to the deceased Virginia.

Nevertheless, *Ulalume* (1847) discloses a poetic persona who is unusually naïve in contrast to other poetry. He seems to ignore all the signs of the distant episode that once caused him so much pain. Furthermore, *Ulalume* exhibits an emphasis in the picture of a “poetic geography”, verging on impressionism through its enchanting symbolism of astronomy and mythology, and its deperate sonorous pattern. (Carlson 29)

The first stanza opens up by revealing the setting: an eerie landscape where everything resembles death, in the “lonesome” [4] month of October. The words “ashen”, “sober” [1], “crisped”, “sere” [2], “withering” [3], support the perception of decay that loads the poem. In turn, the adjectives “dim” [6], “misty” [7], “dank” [8], and “ghoulhaunted” [9] help to introduce the notion of an enigmatic and frightening land from an otherworld. It is the archetypal image of the dark forest (Carlson 30) so present in Romantic poetry. As Eric W. Carlson comments in *Symbol and Sense in Poe’s Ulalume* (1963): “In the opening scene, he notes, symbols of death abound: ashen skies, leaves that are crisped and sere, October, the traditional month of nature's dying, the cypress tree, and the adjectives dim, misty, dank, and ghoul-haunted. Some of these suggest death by excessive heat (...)” (Miller, 1958, quoted in Carlson 27) Indeed, death is present from the opening lines of the poem, and heat is an interesting new element of the landscape that will intervene in succeeding verses.

Also, the fact that the speaker refers to his “most immemorial year” [5] is highly connotative. Such expression may indicate that he has - purposely or unconsciously - erased all memory of the tragic events he had lived during that year. Carlson remarks: “By “my most immemorial year” the speaker seems to refer to the year of tragedy (the death of Ulalume) which cannot be forgotten, but the memory of which has been suppressed below conscious, ordinary memory (im-as negative) because too painful to be recalled”. (30) This observation translates into the idea that the speaker’s past feels very distant, because of an unconscious self-inflicted oblivion.

The second stanza shows a second character: Psyche, the Greek personification of the soul and, in modern psychology, the “whole of human emotional and mental state”

(Greenberg). It is not by chance that Poe has chosen Psyche: she embodies his mental and emotional condition. They wander together the confines of the magical land [11, 12].

The speaker then describes his mood at that time: his heart was impregnated with feelings of great vigor. He might be about to explode in rivers of the grief he has so effectively concealed. There are allusions that reflect a contrast between heat and coldness. This dichotomy is illustrated by means of the words “volcanic” [13], “scoriac rivers” [14], “lavas” [15], “sulphurous currents” [16], which diverge from the coldness in the “ultimate climes (...) in the realms of the Boreal Pole” [17 – 19].

Psyche and the speaker had engaged in conversation, not noticing they were transiting a place they had visited before. Looking back in hindsight, he admits their “memories were treacherous and sere”, since they did not identify the familiar date and landscape. [23 – 29] In relation to this passage, Kopley and Hayes observe:

His inability to recognize where he is or what day of the year it is reinforces the difficulty he has distinguishing between external reality and his interior mental state. The fact that the action of the poem takes place on Halloween, a time when spirits of the dead were free to roam the earth, reinforces the body / soul dichotomy. Only with the appearance of a rising crescent, which has been alternately interpreted as either the moon or Venus, does he become cognizant of something external to him. His interpretation of this heavenly body as Astarte, the Phoenician goddess of fertility, indicates that his understanding of the environment is still highly subjective. (201)

In the next stanza, the arch of a planet forms in the sky, referred to as “Astarte”, the Queen of Heaven or Moon. Subsequently, in the fifth stanza, the speaker goes on to speak about Astarte. This deity was worshipped by ancient Semitic⁴ religions, which associated her with sexuality and fertility - and sometimes with a female demon of lust. She was also identified with Aphrodite in the Greek pantheon and Venus in Roman tradition (Wright 448).

For Poe, Astarte is symbolic of sexual love and desire (Carlson 32). This notion of carnality would also represent a sort of relief from pain, a consolation prize. He compares her to the Roman goddess of the Moon Dian, connected with virginity, chastity and ethical sexual behavior (“Diana”) [39]. He believes she has seen the agony in his life and has come this far, “past the stars of the Lion” [44], that is, the constellation of Leo (Carlson 32), to release him from his burden. He assumes this rising star is a good omen

⁴ Semitic relates “to the peoples who speak Semitic languages, especially Hebrew and Arabic.” (“Semitic”)

that is going to signal “the path to the skies - to the Lethean peace of the skies --” [45 – 46]. The adjective Lethean is connected with Lethe (cited in *The Sleeper*),

“a river in Hades whose waters cause drinkers to forget their past” (“Lethe”). The speaker also mentions the goddess’ “bright eyes” [48] and the “love in her luminous eyes” [50], a fact that is consistent with Poe’s obsession with sparkly eyes.

In the following and sixth stanza, Psyche expresses her concern about Astarte’s intentions [51 – 55], for which she urges the speaker to leave. She does not trust “her pallor” [53]. Some words induce the state of horror in which she is, and a sense of weakening: “terror” [56], “agony” [58] and “sorrowfully” [60] recall interior misery, whereas “sink” [56] and “dust” [57, 59, 60] convey a sentiment of doom. Additionally, the motif of weightlessness so often signaled along this paper, appears through the terms “uplifting” [51], “fly” [55], “wings” [57] and “plumes” [59].

The speaker seems eager to enjoy the dream before his eyes [61 – 63] believing it will subtract him from the bitter reality. He strengthens the fairness and radiance of Astarte: “Its Sibyllic splendor is beaming / With Hope and in Beauty to-night: -” [64, 65]. The word “Sibyllic” correlates to Sibyl, a prophetess in Greek legend, represented as an old woman uttering predictions in a delirium. (“Sibyl”)

In the following stanza, the fatal revelation takes place. Confirming Psyche’s suspicions of a catastrophe, they suddenly stumble upon the door of Ulalume’s tomb [75 – 81]. This was the terror for so long unspoken by the speaker of the poem. He was trying to dodge the somber truth of her absence, which brings him nothing but grief and regret. The words “tomb” [76, 77, 79], and “vault” [81] make their entrance in the stanza as they overflow in Poe’s imagery of death.

In the ninth stanza, he comes to full realization of what happened, as if woken up from an illusion. His heart grows dark for the loss is irrefutable [82]. The symbols of the first stanza return to depict the same gloomy atmosphere that now seems entirely justified in the speaker's sad remembrance [83, 84, 91, 92, 93, 94]. He reconstructs the events that he lived on that same night, a year before, when he brought the deceased body of his lover Ulalume, to be buried in the woods. He wonders what dark spell has led them there, to the exact spot where she lies dead. "It was surely October / On this very night of last year / That I journeyed – I journeyed down here! - / That I brought a dread burden down here - / On this night of all nights in the year, / Ah, what demon has tempted me here?" [85 – 90].

In the concluding stanza, Psyche and the speaker try to understand and explain these extremely rare incidences narrated in the poem [95 – 104]. They speak together, agreeing that the "merciful ghouls" [97] must have drawn their attention to the "scintillant" [103] silhouette of the planet in the sky to prevent them from seeing the tomb of Ulalume [98 – 100], which meant to poke the wound. They assert Astarte only appeared as a subconscious response to mourn, and her seduction invited them to sin to forget sorrow, at the risk of condemnation to Hell.

2. Conclusions and Further Research

The role of death and women in Poe's life and literary production proved to be dominant. The Poesque representation of death cannot be conceived without the mediation of female characters: the fair, virtuous, young maiden; whose absence magnifies the speaker's appalling experience of loss, has been a constant in all the poems we have evaluated in this paper. These two ingredients constitute the pinnacle of Poe's

poetic vision, depicting the scene of unfathomable pessimism, from which several masterpieces would emerge.

The completion of this dissertation has enabled the exposure and examination of the persistent motifs that integrate Poe's imagery of death in poetry. The following motifs have consistently stood out in it: on the one hand, the feelings of grief, melancholy, and nostalgia over the past, self-reflection and introspection, detachment from the world and insanity, in the speaker's voice; on the other, the idealization, marginalization and objectification of the female figure; in parallel, the emphasis on physical and psychological deterioration; the multiple allegories to Greek and Latin tradition – mainly in the fields of cosmology and mythology; the dichotomies of opposites, the incessant quest for a dreamland, and the allegories to biblical and Christian aspects like eternal bliss, access to Heaven through weightless ascensions, and Edenic Gardens. Throughout the corpus of this paper, the exhaustive study of such elements has unfolded not only the author's vast culture and knowledge, but his astonishing capacity to represent the nature of human emotion and psychology, and his belief in the supremacy of love over reason, and over death itself.

The application of this paper's methods could be transposed to other poems by the same author, with the aim of disclosing the above-mentioned patterns. Different authors (William Wordsworth, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, John Keats, Lord Byron, Percy Shelley, and Sir Walter Scott) and not only poetry, but also prose (short stories, novels), could be approached through the lens of a common ground of motifs. Identically, the subject of the fetishization of women's bodies in Poe's work could be looked at more in depth and further researched in the future. Last, a comparative study could be carried out in order to establish Poe's distinction from other writers whose poetry regularly manifested the same alignment of Romantic and Gothic topics.

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