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**A PSYCHOANALYTIC FEMINIST ANALYSIS OF
POE'S SELECTED SHORT STORIES**

DUYGU YILDIRIM

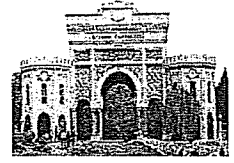
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ÖZ

POE’NUN SEÇİLİ KISA HİKAYELERİNİN PSİKANALİTİK VE FEMİNİST BİR ANALİZİ

DUYGU YILDIRIM

Bu tezin amacı, Edgar Allan Poe’nun hikayelerindeki kadın karakterler ve Poe’nun birey olarak özneliği arasındaki ilişkiyi irdelemektir. Bu çerçevede, Lacancı arzu kavramının anne-öteki bağlamındaki dinamiği öznenin bilinçaltını yansıtmaktadır. Dahası, Poe’nun edilgin kadın karakterlerinin tasviri Sembolik Düzendeki cinsiyet politikalarına dair imalar içermektedir. Erkek anlatıcılar tarafından betimlenmiş ölü kadın tasvirleri, erkek merkezli dil aracılığıyla, kadınlar üzerinde uygulanan baskıyı ortaya koyar. Bu noktadan hareketle, Poe’nun erkek anlatıcıları ataerkil düzene uyum içinde görünmekle beraber, kadın kastratörleri öldürerek, yani “öteki”ni yok ederek, kendi var olma isteklerini ortaya koyarlar. Diğer taraftan, Poe’nun kadın anlatıcısının anlatılarında yıkıcı bir üslup vardır. Ancak dildeki bu tahrip edici unsur bütün anlatıya hakim değildir, aralıklarla ortaya çıkar. Sembolik düzenden bu kopma, Kristevacı “Semiyotik”e denk gelen “oluş halindeki özne”den kaynaklanır. Bu yüzden, bu anlatılardaki zıtlık, Poe’nun birey olarak özneliğinin de altında yatan, “oluş halindeki özne” ile yakından ilgilidir.

ABSTRACT

A PSYCHOANALYTIC FEMINIST ANALYSIS OF POE'S SELECTED SHORT STORIES

DUYGU YILDIRIM

This thesis aims to interrogate the interrelation between Edgar Allan Poe's subjectivity and the female figures in his fiction. Firstly, Lacanian dynamics of desire related to m(other) reflects the subjects's unconscious. Secondly, Poe's depiction of passive female figures entails implications about gender politics that pertains to Symbolic Order. The depiction of dead females by male narrators highlights the repression exerted over women through male oriented language. Thus, Poe's male narrators seems to be subservient to patriarchal order yet, their killing of the female castrator promulgates their desire to be alive by annihilating the other. Lastly, Poe's female narrator has a transient subversive tone in her narrations. This dissidence with Symbolic Order stems from subject-on-trail which corresponds to Kristevan Semiotic Chora. Thereby, the discrepancy between these narrations is closely associated with subject in process which is also buried in Poe's subjectivity.

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INTRODUCTION

This study intends to promulgate how the female figures in Edgar Allan Poe's selected stories are depicted in terms of psychoanalytic feminist criticism. Whereas the females portrayed by Poe's male narrators undergo a collaboration with the male dominated order, Poe's only female narrator Signora Psyche Zenobia attains a language which subverts the predefined gender roles. Likewise, Poe's own inconsistent voice as a speaking subject emerges through these narrations. Hence, these stories tend to reflect Poe's subjectivity from different points of view such as: his problematic relations with the women in his own life, Poe as the spokesman of patriarchal order and his split identity.

In order to examine these stages effectively, the vital constituents of both psychoanalytic and feminist criticisms should be mentioned. Also, the relationship between the gothic fiction and psychoanalysis should be marked as pschoanalysis plays a fundamental role in analyzing these stories.

Gothic can be defined as "a writing of excess" (Botting, 1996: 1). Gothic writing since eighteenth century has been haunted by irrational, negative elements, and behavioural abnormalities. Gothic excesses, along with passion and excitement imbued in these narratives have a tendency to "transgress social proprieties and moral laws" (*ibid.* 3). Since uncertainty has been one of the integral parts of gothic fiction, it involves a variety of connotations rather than one meaning (*ibid.* 3). This uncertainty within language corresponds to the unconscious in psychoanalysis. As Freud stresses "[t]he repressed is the prototype of the unconscious" (2005: 441), whereas "consciousness is the *surface* of mental apparatus" (*ibid.* 445). Thereby, the conscious resonates the dominant ideology, yet the unconscious pertains to the private self.

It is also difficult to isolate desire from gothic narratives as they both embody and mask it. What gothic fiction covertly reminds is “something like a return to the confusion and loss of identity in being half-inside and half-outside the mother” (Hogle, 2002: 5). As desire comes up through language, the way of talking becomes crucial. Therefore, in order to analyze the speaking subject, the focus should be on subject’s self-referential language rather than what he tells. What language addresses, in Lacanian sense, is the Symbolic Order and this order “would condemn the subject to derelict inarticulacy, to being a muted emissary of his language rather than its master, an agent of the letter rather than its signatory” (Burke, 1992: 97).

The abnormal manners of the characters in Gothic fiction arise from the unfulfilled desires. The primal lack, in other words, the desire for the union with the mother is impossible to fulfill. However, as the subject craves to satisfy his desires, he becomes restricted by them. Therefore, these same features highlighted in Edgar Allan Poe’s fiction “eventually became a basis for Sigmund Freud’s *fin de siècle* sense of the unconscious as a deep repository of very old, infantile, and repressed memories or impulses, the archaic underworld of the self” (Hogle, 2002: 3). In other words, Freudian thought asserts that psychoanalysis aims to unmask the author’s unconscious. Nonetheless, this approach makes the text confined to a fixed code. On the other hand, for Lacan, the relationship between the signifiers and the signifieds hinges on convention. Consequently, the unconscious lies in the arbitrariness and uncertainty of language. Hence, the intended meaning becomes so elusive that it cannot be totally contained or explicated through language. As Roland Barthes avows “[o]ur goal is not to find *the* meaning, nor even *a* meaning of the text [...]. Our goal is ultimately to conceive, to imagine, to experience the plurality of the text, the open-endedness of its *signifying process*” (1994: 262).

Since Edgar Allan Poe’s fiction reflects behavioural abnormalities and repressed desires, it has provided an immense ground for criticism from both historical-biographical framework and psychoanalytic point of view. Thus, it is no surprise that

Poe “has been repeatedly singled out psychoanalytical research, has persistently attracted the attention of psychoanalytic critics” (Felman, 1988: 137).

Lacan emphasizes the fundamental aspect of the monster in a work of gothic fiction as it becomes the embodiment of the return of the repressed. Likewise, Poe’s male narrator’s excessive usage of the females as haunting spirits can be seen as symptoms of his unconscious. Obviously, they are the signifiers to the repressed one. The dead female body which is constantly repeating itself is welcomed in Poe’s short stories. The emphasis on the repetition of the same signifiers assumes Freud’s accounts about “repetition automatism”. The mutilation of the female body through the usage of a pen(is) by a male narrator/author reflects the fear related to losing his masculinity. The male one’s fear about the concept of “woman as castrator” emanates from her genitals:

According to Freud, the sight of woman’s genitalia horrifies the young boy because he sees as an absence. Mark that he does not see what is there, he sees the absence of a phallus. Nothing to see, nothing that looks like a phallus, nothing of like measure (*summetros*), no coherent visual representation in a familiar form. Nothing to see becomes nothing of worth. (Gallop, 1982: 58)

In this sense, the countless times of repetition of the fetishized female body functions as a resistance against castration anxiety. Apparently, this also amplifies the idea that suggests the female body must be annihilated so that the male one can exist. Likewise, the usage of dead female body exemplifies the appropriation of self and the other. The presence of such an opposition between genders is rooted in the thought underlying that “death and femininity have formed two possible axes of negation and enigma in relation to masculine subjectivity and culture” (Goodwin and Bronfen, 1993: 15). The notion of gender identity converges to the patriarchal discourse which renders treacherousness natural and immutable part of femininity. Similarly, weakness, vulnerability, powerlessness and passivity that are attributed to the female archetype internalize the authority of the male figure. The fact that the

male associates the female with the negative of his reflection alludes to man's meaning to himself:

Women's social inferiority is reinforced and complicated by the fact that woman does not have access to language, except through recourse to "masculine" systems of representation which disappropriate her from her relation to herself and to other women. The "feminine" is never to be identified except by and for the masculine, the reciprocal proposition not being "true". (Irigaray, 1985: 85)

Since women are depicted as the suppressed figures in Poe's stories narrated by males, these depictions are impossible to be dissociated from Lacanian Symbolic Order. On the contrary, for Kristeva, the female at the level of the Semiotic is asexual. Actually, this view of feminine does not refer to biological sex. On the other hand, the Semiotic Chora is characterized by the prevalence of subject in process rather than static subject initiated with Symbolic Order. Therefore, the Symbolic "is the structure or grammar that governs the ways in which symbols can refer" (Oliver, 2003: 38). In contradiction to this, the Semiotic "is the organisation of drives in language" (*ibid.* 38). To wit, it reflects "rhythms and tones that are meaningful parts of language and yet do not represent or signify something" (*ibid.* 38).

On the whole, in this thesis the female figures in Poe's selected short stories are the center of attention. However, these females are examined through their depictions both by male narrators and the female narrator, Signora Psyche Zenobia. The study consists of three parts, each with an introductory chapter to the related psychoanalytic concept.

Part I is dedicated to the concept of desire. In this part, the notion of desire as the backbone of the very first chapter is elucidated in terms of psychoanalysis. It aims to explain how the sublimation of feminine beauty in Edgar Allan Poe's literary theory reflects many of Freud's and Lacan's arguments. The selected story here is **Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym of Nantucket**. Even though there is no female character in this story, it has many connotations that are inevitably associated with

maternal body. Thus, Poe's longest story is haunted by psyche, or the unconscious as the narrative represses hidden desires. Furthermore, the inability to satisfy the desire always leads to surplus. Also, in **The Purloined Letter**, the reoccurring motifs proliferate throughout the narrative. The persist in the attainment of the desired object is obvious in the text.

Part II concerns gender along with feminist approach that forms the framework of the analysis. This part tries to promulgate the gender politics and asks if Poe's public voice reflects the patriarchal ideology of his time or not. Indeed, the standardizations of the female figures forged through a male writing subject address that the established norms that perpetually bound them to the domestic sphere are circumscribed in the selected stories for this part. The first chapter of Part II explicates Poe's idealized female figures in **Ligeia** and **The Oval Portrait**. Whereas the idealization of the mother figures is commonly exercised throughout these narratives, there is no inclination to anything that reflects heterosexual relationship. Most of the time, Poe ultimately subsumes his male characters under an image which does not comprise any sexual desire. Owing to the fact that the femininity and masculinity signify two non-complimentary structures, Lacan states that there is no such thing as a sexual relationship.

For Poe, a beautiful dead woman functions as an inner force in order to arrange "the most poetical topic". The dead female body has become the embodiment of Western cultural thought and "representations of death bring into play the binary tensions of gender constructs, as life/death engages permutations with masculinity/femininity and with fantasies of power" (Goodwin and Bronfen, 1993: 20).

In the second chapter of Part II, the unconscious fears and insoluble strifes related to the other in **Berenice**, **The Black Cat**, **Morella** and **The Fall of The House of Usher** chart Poe's own trauma as a gendered individual. In fact, it is the horror of the

other explored in his fiction that illustrates the male character's world which is haunted by the darkness of the female presence. The dreadfulness of the female other stems from her body, especially the female genitals. Freud points out that the awfulness of woman comes from the fact that she is castrated. However, the idea of **vagina dentata** also illustrates the female one's power to castrate:

We know, too, to what a degree depreciation of women, horror of women, and a disposition to homosexuality are derived from the final conviction that women have no penis. Ferenczi (1923) has recently, with complete justice, traced back the mythological symbol of horror - Medusa's head- to the impression of the female genitals devoid of a penis. (2005: 393)

Part III deals with uncertainty of language. The final part proffers an introduction to the theory of language through psychoanalytic perspective. Lacanian Symbolic Order concurs on the patriarchal ideology, yet, Kristeva's Semiotic gives way to the emergence of the repressed feminine through language. For this part, Kristeva's conception of Semiotic Chora is used as a key to deconstruct **How To Write A Blackwood Article** and **A Predicament**.

The abundant usage of bodily wastes in gothic fiction highlights Kristevan term of abjection. These images awaken disgust for the subject yet they also generate a separation between the maternal authority and the law of the father: "Bodily fluids associated with maternal law and maternal power are repressed so that paternal symbolic culture can legitimate its own authority by denying maternal authority" (Oliver, 2003: 48). Also, the feminine grotesque reflects the instability of the Symbolic Order. For the scope of the last part, it is also important to underline Mikhail Bakhtin's concept of grotesque on which Kristeva bases her argument of abjection.

In **How to Write A Blackwood Article** and **A Predicament**, Poe makes a change in the choice of narrator which leads to the sharing of the male authority with the female. The female voice of these stories also bring about Poe's diversion from the

Symbolic mediums of expression. What happens here demonstrates how Poe's writing subject addresses Kristeva's concept of subject-in-process. Moreover, this also illustrates that the subjectivity is not a fixed construction as it is in his tales by the male narrators.

All in all, this thesis is an attempt to elucidate Edgar Allan Poe's selected stories from a psychoanalytic feminist perspective. Owing to the fact that Poe's idealized female figures are prolific and they are mused by the women in Poe's own life, there are many studies analyzing these stories by psychoanalytic criticism. These stories, which are also examined in Part I and Part II of this thesis, mirror how the female figures are repressed in the Symbolic Order. On the other hand, Poe's only female narrator Zenobia has been generally excluded from critical studies on Poe. Nevertheless, an analytical approach to the stories narrated by Zenobia attests to Poe's subversion of Symbolic intentions, albeit unconsciously. Hence, to criticize both the stories narrated by males and the ones narrated by Zenobia necessitates a comparative perspective. Therefore, the aim of this thesis is to make a modest contribution to Poe's subjectivity as a gendered individual.

1. DESIRE

The concept of desire which dates back to early times of humankind has been one of the indispensable aspects of humanity. First by Plato and later by the Christian tenets of the Middle Ages and finally through Hegel, the conceptualization of desire has functioned as a step to attain **Ideas**, God and reason respectively. Since classical antiquity the desire in narratives has revolved around the binary oppositions such as lack and excess. Due to the fact that desire is confined by a lack, it urges the subject to search for completeness in order to remove that absence. As such a perfectness can never be fulfilled, it is impossible for the subject to give up desiring. This unceasing aspiration leads to the hazard of being excessive.

Owing to the fact that Edgar Allan Poe's many short stories exemplify the exaltation of desire for an ideal, the analysis of these narratives cannot be done without reference to Sigmund Freud's and Jacques Lacan's theories. Desire, as the subject matter of psychoanalysis, is posited as an instrument which unravels hidden meanings in a narration. Based upon Freud's arguments, Lacanian psychoanalysis highlights the relationship between the notion of desire and the progress of the subject. In order to elucidate the construction of subjectivity, Lacan forms the tripartite model which consists of Real, Imaginary and Symbolic.

The Real is a place where the infant has an unmediated bond between itself and the objects which suffice to fulfill its needs. Since the infant perceives no distinction between itself and the (m)other, it constitutes a syncretic unity with the external world. Besides, the Real is all wholeness and there is no lack in this original unity. This completeness makes the Real unrepresentable within the language. It is merely at the mirror stage when the infant begins to realize its separate self and therefore establishes "an ideal unity, a salutary *imago*" (Lacan, 1977: 19). Hence the mirror stage provides "a compensation for the child's acceptance of lack" (Grosz, 1990: 32). The mirror stage, which is founded upon Freud's notion of primary narcissism,

“occur[s] between the sixth and eighteenth month of life, is thus the time when the infant anticipates mastery of his bodily unity through identification with the image of a fellow being and through perceiving his own image in a mirror” (Roudinesco, 2003: 30). More importantly, even though the infant conceives itself as a unified body in the mirror, this does not assuage its perceiving itself as fragmented. That pivotal moment in the Imaginary order necessitates becoming both itself and its own reflection in order to construct a unified self. This aspect alludes to Lacan’s term of **split subject**.

The acquisition of language occurs simultaneously with the Oedipal drama. Just as the infant’s entry into language is accomplished, the Symbolic emerges. The Law/Name of the Father in the Oedipal situation irremediably ruptures the unmediated dyad between the infant and the mother. The father image as a threat of castration likens to Freud’s **dead father** in **Totem and Taboo** who implies the prohibition against incest. Freud’s **primal myth** which is reflected by the father-jouisseur is in contrast with the Symbolic father of the Name of the Father. The father-jouisseur in **Totem and Taboo** is unheeding to the prohibitions and is in an act of enjoyment by indulging in excessive sexual relations. Besides, he also obstructs his sons lest they become engulfed by **jouissance**. Nevertheless such a hindrance actualizes his murder by his sons, which is also an indication of affirmation of prohibition. In this sense, “[t]he dead father [...] founds an inexorable law, more powerful and effective than his supervising presence” (Grosz, 1990: 68). It seems abundantly clear that the sons’ pact in order to prevent the reiteration of the same event reinforces the prohibition rather than eradicating it.

The Symbolic stage comes hand in hand with language. The infant submits to what the Name of the Father urges. Henceforth, upon internalizing the laws and restrictions, the infant is introduced to social intercourse. The significant emphasis on lack which is felt by the separation of the infant from its mother’s womb at the moment of birth is a crucial aspect founded upon Lacanian theory. Such a ceaseless

lack which displays the impossibility of the mother-infant dyad in the ideal state paves the way for desire:

Lack and desire are coextensive for Lacan. The child devotes considerable effort to filling up the whole of the mother's lack, her whole space of desire; the child wants to be everything to her. Children set themselves the task of excavating the site of their mother's desire, aligning themselves with her every whim and fancy. Her wish is their command, her desire their demand. (Fink, 1956: 54)

Thereby the use of language stems from the motive to express what is desired. However, as the meaning is always ambiguous, language cannot provide a permanent satisfaction (*ibid.* 67). When the words are uttered, the message of the subject's desire does not appertain to himself anymore but it adheres to the others. Viewed from this perspective, "[w]hat I seek in speech is the response of the other" which signifies that "the function of language is not to inform but to evoke" (Lacan, 1977: 86).

The infant is imbued with the desire in order to return to the blissful relationship with the mother. Taking into consideration that the cause of desire and the object of desire are two separate things, it is important to distinguish them. Whereas object of desire is merely the desired object, **l'objet petit a**, in other words, the cause of desire is "the feature on whose account we desire the object, some detail or tic of which we are usually unaware" (Žižek, 2006: 67), that is why it is unknown to the subject. Accordingly, the cause of desire prompts the subject to get satisfaction through external objects. As Lacan mapped it out, that kind of orientation follows three effects: need, demand and desire.

Need is natural, it embodies the infant's dependence on tangible objects that are fundamental for its survival. To illustrate, milk enables to satisfy the infant's hunger. Gradually, it becomes saddled with form of meanings and significances which conduce to demand and desire. The infant addresses its demands through language. This aspect portends the establishment of the social intercourse with the **other**. The vital point is that:

[D]emand always has two objects, one spoken, the other unspoken: the object or thing demanded (this or that object), and the other to whom the demand is ostensibly addressed. The thing demanded – food, attention, a “cure” from the analyst, the undying love of another – are all relatively insignificant, or rather, they function as excuses for access to the second object, the (m)other. (Grosz, 1990: 61)

Thus demand functions an affirmation of the (m)other’s love for the infant. Despite of the fact that the infant obtains the peculiar object demanded, the infant’s actual purpose is to have everything, which is also envisaged by its objective to recapture the completeness in the Real. Nonetheless, the unceasing demands are not in a position to be omnipotent and all inclusive. This misconception of the (m)other as the pre – Oedipal mother points up the plight of the infant who is not cognizant of her being **castrated**.

According to Lacan’s dictum, desire reflects the basic features of need and demand. Although its orientation focuses on an external object, desire remains in unconscious. As the very first lack belongs to the Real, the language of the Symbolic Order is not sufficient to express what is desired. In this sense, the objects of desire which bring about temporary satisfaction, actually supersede the cause of desire. As it can be understood from this factor, the subject either changes his objects of desire or extols the substitute for the cause of desire so that it can reach the position of the Thing (**das Ding**). Due to the fact that the Thing is the embodiment of illusion and an everyday object which is magnified as something sublime, it actually becomes the form of nothingness. If the Thing is mere illusion then it moves Lacanian concept of desire one step further through stressing its insatiability. **Das Ding** as the desired object always brings about frustration as it hinges on the illusory wholeness. As a result of dissatisfaction, the subject attempts to replace it with another desired object. So it can be asserted that the Thing is allied with the **other**: “[d]esire is thus a movement, an energy that is always transpersonal, directed to others” (Grosz, 1990: 65).

Another important term of Lacanian psychoanalysis is **jouissance** which is translated as enjoyment. However as it has various connotations that are uncontainable in English, it is more convenient to leave the French form. Even though there is not enough explanation related to **jouissance** in Lacan's works, it "appears not purely and simply as the satisfaction of a drive" (Braunstein, 2003: 104). Lacan's statement that desire comes from the other, remarks Hegelian insights about it:

Whosoever seeks pleasure merely seeks his own self according to its accidental side. Whosoever is busied with great works and interests strives only to bring about the realization of the object itself. He directs his attention to the *substantial and does not think of himself but forgets himself in the object.* (in Braunstein, 2003: 107)

Just as **jouissance** stands in the Real and its remnants are posited in the Symbolic, it functions as a bridge between them. **Jouissance** is closely associated with the law and thereby it can exist only through the transgression of it. Also, as Braunstein states: "The drive does not aim at a visible, sensitive goal, but at the effect produced in its return, after having missed and gone around the target, after confronting the real, that is, the impossibility of full satisfaction" (*ibid.* 108). This situation indicates how the Real of **jouissance** remains impossible.

According to Lacan, as with Freud, **jouissance** and sexuality are interrelated. From a more panoramic view, when the subject realizes its lineaments as a sexed being, that recognition also envisions confusion towards the demarcation of thoughts of immortality. So the realization seems to overcome the features of the imaginary which are bound up with the sense of completeness. Likewise, what a subject looks for in a sexual affair is not the **other**, but a longing to grasp the pre-Symbolic characteristic of being whole. It is exactly this unconscious desire that is manipulated as a response to being mortal so as to acquire a temporal feeling of eternity. Thus sexuality as Lacan suggests, encompasses a declaration of life.

In consequence, desire is an ultimately privileged concept of psychoanalysis. It can be also asserted that the unconscious leaves an imprint on the subject's fulfillment of his desires. However as desire is intrinsically impossible to achieve, it can be perpetuated all the time. Also, Edgar Allan Poe's characters in his selected short stories for this chapter demonstrate how their desires function in the narratives. Henceforth, in accordance with Poe's own ideal about literature, the characters of the mentioned stories echo their unconscious as well as their repressed desires.

1.1. POE'S LITERARY THEORY AND THE CONCEPT OF DESIRE IN NARRATIVE OF ARTHUR GORDON PYM

Before analysing Poe's short stories, it is fundamental to point out the relationship between his literary theory and the concept of desire. To begin with, the Platonic idealism that reflects the necessity of the soul to yearn for ideal beauty can be read in relation to Poe's critical thought which also entails sublimation (Alterton, 1925: 123). Actually the dominant discourses that have founded Western thought emerged with idealism. Throughout the centuries, philosophical thinking has based upon the search for the external world. This objective was initially amplified by Plato who considered that there is reality beyond the physical one. According to his metaphysical theory, the experiential world is comprised of the copies of the absolute, ideal **Forms**:

There is two subdivisions, in the lower of which the soul uses the figures given by the former division as images; the enquiry can only be hypothetical, and instead of going upwards to a principle descends to the other end; in the higher of the two, the soul passes out of hypotheses, and goes up to a principle which is above hypotheses, making no use of images as in the former case, but proceeding only in and through the ideas themselves. (Plato, 1988: 13)

He also believes that the desire to attain **ideas** can be explained by **eros**. What is noteworthy in his **Symposium** is the different features of **eros**. While he devalues physical love which always changes its direction to another beautiful bodies, he extols love of wisdom that is superior. Thus, love of a beautiful body functions as an

orientation towards the love of all the beauties which finally lumps with beauty itself. As he explains in **Phaedrus**, before the self gets a bodily form, he catches sight of the ideas. That blissful state is similar to Lacan's Real which beholds wholeness. In order to recapture it, one should follow reality that is resistant to bodily existences. If the soul indulges in ugliness and ignorance, it begins to decay whereas the presence of beauty and wisdom feed it. In this sense, the mind is made central so as to obtain permanent absolutes. Plato's imbuing the mind with a chief position prepared a background for mind / body dualism.

Similar to Plato, Poe also gives importance to absolute beauty as it bears craving for immortality. An ideal object can be taken as the core element to reach the good. The desire to get perpetual possession of it is located in human being's longing for eternity. For Poe, the desire to create occurs when the yearning for immortality becomes profound. Poets, then, "struggle to invent novel combinations among those forms of beauty which already exist, or by novel combinations of those combinations which our predecessors, toiling in chase of the same phantom, have already set in order" (in Alterton, 1925: 125).

Likewise, Poe identifies beauty as the ultimate goal for the soul. As earthly beauties recall the true beauty, they inspire the self to search for absolute beauty. These are nothing "but a wild effort to reach the Beauty above" (1966: 803). With the sublimation of the physical beauties in order to reach the transcendental ideal, the incomplete human being attempts to attain a feeling of perfection. So, the soul, which parallels Lacanian Thing, brings the subject on the verge of pursuit of an impossible wholeness. This factor is also immanent in Poe's statement in which he indicates that "this longing to be attended by dissatisfaction, even by depression and sadness" (Alterton, 1925: 123). As a matter of fact, the principle of poetry is also a longing for a superior beauty and:

... the manifestation of this principle is in an enthusiasm, an excitation of the soul – an enthusiasm altogether independent of passion which is

the intoxication of the heart, and of truth which is the food of reason. For passion is *natural*, too natural not to introduce an offensive, discordant tone into the domain of pure beauty, too familiar and too violent not to scandalize the pure Desires, the gracious Melancholies and the noble Despairs which inhabit the supernatural regions of poetry. (Baudelaire, 1969: 57)

Poe's idea of imagination as a vital element in poetic creation is also held by many Romantic poets. This aspect is mainly prevalent in Coleridge who employs Plato's ideas. In **Biographia Literaria**, Coleridge defines imagination with its primary and secondary parts. Relying on Biblical and Hebrew understanding, he distinguishes God as the primary imagination whereas human imagination is posited as secondary imagination. As Altermton stresses, such understanding is also applied by Poe for whom "[i]magination is, possibly, in man, a lesser degree of the creative power in God" (in Altermton, 1925: 104).

The impact of Christian philosophy is also observable in Poe's literary theory. Relying on idealism of Platonism, Christian philosophical tradition distinguishes mind from the body. The soul which is superior to the latter functions as an instrument in order to reach the sublime object of desire that is God. The basis that leads to God's love poses the necessity of love of knowledge. Such an established norm is also mould in Poe's thought: "Not to worship beauty, not to regard poetic knowledge as divine, would be to turn one's back on God and fall from grace" (Wilbur, 1985: 53). The notion of the Supreme Being is deemed to create the unchanging law and therefore "each law of Nature is dependent at all points upon all other laws, and that all are but consequences of one primary exercise of the divine volition" (Poe, 2002: 59).

In **Tales of Love**, Kristeva argues that God has given up His son as a result of His love for human beings. Hence, the idea of resurrection takes shape to reach God. The fact that the process of psychological identification is the crucial part of religion gives way to "an accepted death" which embodies "negative narcissism" (1987: 145).

Therefore, denying body becomes the precursor of identification with God, the prime ideal.

As this is the case in **Eureka**, it can be asserted that Poe also claims that all the beings, inanimate or alive, crave for self destruction. This aspect “expresses the soul’s longing to return the unity and primal simplicity from which it came” (Hoffman, 1972: 297). The union in death as well as the union in love also addresses the Oedipal Son who is renewed and begets the Father, God (Bonaparte, 1949: 634). Bonaparte notes that supreme identification alludes to “the Christian dogma of the consubstantiality of Father and Son” (*ibid.* 633). Since the son is not only posited as the rebellious one in the Oedipus Complex, “he is equally attached and submissive to the father through the homosexual forces of love” (*ibid.* 633).

As Edgar Allan Poe’s longest fiction, **Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym of Nantucket** has been generally regarded as one of the least thriving works of his. Even though there are plentiful mistakes in the story, it has been studied by various critics through different aspects. Each approach adds much to reevaluation of it. **Arthur Gordon Pym** is not simply a story of adventure, but it at the same time permeates the human imagination. Since each person embraces dualities in their identities, one is the conscious and the other is the unconscious, human nature is always split. However, the way of talking rather than what is told about displays the desire in a clandestine way. Therefore, in order to uncover the split identity of the narrator, Pym’s self-referential language becomes important.

An important exegesis of the story is shaped by Bonaparte who claims that the work unearths Poe’s hidden desires. The correspondence between his life and the story adduces that **Arthur Gordon Pym** is a palimpsestic narration. The psychoanalysis deployed in literature is overtly used as a tool for the elaboration of the characters’s desires and their repressed thoughts. The reoccurring motifs, the gaps and the unspoken parts in the narrative lead us to ponder upon Freudian term of

psyche, the unconscious. Although Quinn alleges that “Poe’s ideas for the book were so meagrely developed that he had no goal in mind” (1957: 202), Pym’s story of quest is caused by the desire for the mother.

In **Arthur Gordon Pym**, the narrator “desperately tries to control what is almost beyond control” (Hoffman, 1972: 266), thereby trying to impede any transgression against rational thinking. And unconsciously he rejects that all the adventure is an illusion. Despite the fact that the unconscious nevertheless appears from whatever crack within the narration, “that struggle to master the uncontrollable is the very theme of Pym’s *Narrative*” (*ibid.* 266).

The very first chapter of **Arthur Gordon Pym** begins with Pym’s and his friend Augustus Bernard’s desire to sail out on Ariel which recalls the name of the sloop in which Shelley was deluged (Hoffman, 1972: 267). Due to the fact that Augustus “the respectable New Englander with a weakness for drink” (*ibid.* 267) is drunk, it is up to inexperienced Pym to manipulate the boat. However, his first escapade at sea ends in failure. The two youngsters are rescued by the Penguin. The significance of this aspect lies in the fact that Pym is “*born to sea*” (Bonaparte, 1949: 299). Hence, sea as the symbol of the mother is always present, but it is at the same time nowhere to be found.

Addressing that their rescue becomes possible only after the captain of the Penguin has been opposed by his crew, Quinn argues that the novel “involves an incident of revolt” (1957: 176). The challenge to the Father’s authority has a direct reference to Freud’s concept of Oedipus Complex. Furthermore, the two boys’s decision to hide their adventure from their parents appears as the introductory accounts of “the theme of deception” (*ibid.* 176).

Apparently, Pym’s unavoidable desire to sail out is not postponed even after that deadly incident. Besides, his ambition becomes more profound:

My father made no direct opposition; but my mother went into hysterics at the bare mention of the design; and, more than all, my grandfather, from whom I expected much, vowed to cut off with a shilling if I should ever broach the subject to him again. These difficulties, however, so far from abating my desire, only added fuel to the flame. (**Gordon Pym** 683)

As the novel opens, Pym tells the reader about his maternal father who “was an attorney in good practice” (**Gordon Pym** 676). The father figure is the representative of the Law of the Father as prescribed by Lacan. Nevertheless, Pym’s readiness to keep abreast of his aspiration is against the decorum the Law of the Father sustains. Pym and his alter ego, Augustus act as accomplices in order to deceive Pym’s family. By writing a letter in which he signs as a relative of the Pym’s in New Bedford, Augustus makes the family believe that Pym is going to visit this kinsman. With this cunning plan, Pym manages to take part on the *Grampus* over which Augustus’s father has authority. When Pym and Augustus come to the dock to board the vessel, they bump into Pym’s grandfather. Just as Pym introduces himself as a drunken sailor, the old man thinks that he is not Pym. Hence, “the circumvention of parental authority is implemented by two acts of deceit, the letter forged by Augustus and the impersonation carried off by Pym” (Quinn, 1957: 177).

Since Pym’s presence on the ship has to remain secret, he hides in a coffin – like iron box in Augustus’s cabin. Pym’s position in the hold resembles “a foetus in the womb” (Bonaparte, 1949: 313). Until the convenient time comes, it is up to Augustus to supply food and water for him. However, as a result of a rebellion, Augustus is captured which leads to Pym’s fatal plight. As Bonaparte explains “[t]he trap-door by which he entered is closed and he seems doomed to external darkness and death, that death which is yet another phantasy of return to the womb and even more so when the mother is dead” (*ibid.* 313). Plotwise, the recurrent theme of rebellion against the father is posited in the mutiny scene:

Although neither Pym nor Augustus take part in the mutiny on the *Grampus*, we have here the classical “Oedipal” revolt, as indeed is every revolution, since the dethroned king, to his rebellious subjects, is

always the father they dispossess; the father, in fact, we knew as children and from whom we wished to seize the mother. It is that same old, tyrannical and cruel father whom, in the dawn of humanity, the brothers of the primal horde conspired to kill that, as we are told by Freud in *Totem and Taboo*, they might seize his wives and so the mother. Here the vessel, a mother-symbol, becomes the conspirators' prize. (*ibid.* 313)

When Pym is finally released, most of the sailors are already dead and the rest in which Augustus's father is, has left the ship. Augustus is one of these survivors. This is done by becoming close to Dirk Peters who bewails his position in the revolt. So, Augustus, Pym and Peters devise a plan so as to regain the authority. Once again, deception forms the basis of their scheme. Since Pym's existence is unrevealed to the others, he is the one who has to adopt a disguise as a newly dead seaman. His ghostly semblance paves the way for bewilderment among them. As a sequel of the false outward show, they seize the control of the *Grampus*. Actually all of the mutineers except Richard Parker are annihilated. On the other hand, the ship's utility is exhausted and therefore they discard to kill Parker whose help, they think, can be necessary.

Owing to everlasting storm, the practical difficulties involved in supplying the essentials of the basic needs, such as food and water get harder for them. Despite their painstaking and laborious efforts, they cannot escape from the torments of famine. "Then in adventures similar to those of Coleridge's **Ancient Mariner**, they drift through tropical seas aboard her helpless hulk" (Hoffman, 1972: 268). When their hopes of deliverance come to a halt, they rejoice with the appearance of approaching Dutch ship. As soon as they realize that seemingly buoyant sailor is actually a rotting corpse whose "eyes were gone, and the whole flesh around the mouth, leaving the teeth utterly naked" (**Gordon Pym** 731), their cheerful emotions turn into fear.

In succeeding parts, the way to attain food and water becomes impracticable: "The gnawing hunger which I know experienced was nearly insupportable, and I felt myself capable of going to any lengths in order to appease it" (**Gordon Pym** 733).

Pym's cutting the leather trunk of the ship with a knife in order to chew and swallow is "part and parcel of the mother complex" (Bonaparte, 1949: 321). Hence, this scene is the indicator of **oral anxiety**:

This *oral erotic* stage is the first phase in libido development. The babe not only loves its milk and the mother's breast for the nourishment they offer, but for the sucking pleasure given the mucous membranes of the mouth. [...] Soon, however, with the first teeth, appears the instinct to bite. While the first oral erotic phase is characterized by sucking pleasure, the second, marked by the appearance of the first teeth – not that sucking pleasure is abandoned – is characterized by new pleasure of biting. It is this phase of libido development which Abraham has so aptly termed the *cannibalistic* phase. Many a mother who has suckled her child into this period, will have felt the proof on her breasts; it is only the child's helplessness which prevents it fulfilling its cannibal wishes to bite and eat the breast. (*ibid.* 321)

Line after line, starvation gets unbearable. Thus, Parker promotes the idea of sacrifice "to preserve the existence of the others" (**Gordon Pym** 736). They decide to draw straws to determine who is going to be killed. The completion of the dreadful task is concluded with the murder of Parker who "made no resistance whatever, and was stabbed in the back by Peters" (**Gordon Pym** 739). According to Bonaparte, the ceremony "recalls the killing and communal eating of the totem object practised by primitive peoples, which reenacts the murder and eating of the father of the primal horde" (1949: 324).

This ritual in the narration also functions as a valorization of Lacan's statements related to the oral drive. According to Lacan, whereas oral and anal drives are related to the demand; the scopic and invocatory drives pertain to the desire. The desire to be the subject who performs the act of the motive emerges as a complement in every drive. Parker's subservient behaviour can be observed at the unconscious level in which the main ambition is being eaten, not eating. Being immersed by the other means being one with it. Hence, becoming one is the unconscious approach to the realm beyond the Symbolic, that is the Real.

In the aforementioned storm, Augustus has had unimproved wounds. However, as the time passes, his condition gets worse. Eventually he dies. The final gesture of lifting his dead body brings on coming off his entire leg. As Bonaparte says, that occurrence serves the purpose of “the punishment of symbolic castration” (*ibid.* 326). After the price of the Oedipus crime is paid by Augustus, “a change for the better may occur” (*ibid.* 327). As Bonaparte continues, “Peters and Pym are alone, still tormented by hunger and thirst, but the hulk overturns and the sea-mother becomes once more kind and nurturing” (*ibid.* 327).

Indeed, the death of Augustus gives rise to another alteration within the narration which is in compliance with the theme of **Doppelgänger** (Quinn, 1957: 196). As a consequence of his demise, Dirk Peters takes after his role “as the alter ego of Pym” (Hoffman, 1972: 269). Peters is “a more atavistic alter ego” than Augustus whose name denotes the similarity between the association of mind with “the Age of Reason and with C. Auguste Dupin” (*ibid.* 269). No matter how strong Peters is “to help Pym survive the unspeakable dangers which yet await him”, he is actually “a part of those dangers” (*ibid.* 269).

Subsequently, Pym and Peters are rescued by the Jane Guy of whose crew they take part afterwards. As Pym goes up, the captain is convinced to sail farther towards the Antarctic regions. Nevertheless, the temperature rises while they come near to the South Pole. They come across a bizarre white animal and it is killed by Peters. “The animal seems in sort totemic for, barely is it sacrificed when land appears” (Bonaparte, 1949: 328). The story continues with the accession to the island of Tsalel which is housed by a black race for whom the color white is strange. Hence, “*white* had all the qualities of a *taboo* to the natives of this isle” (*ibid.* 330). Actually the only words that they utter are “Anamoo-moo”, “Lama-lama” which “remind us of infant babble and so correspond to the primary phase” (*ibid.* 338). So, the identification of the self in the mirror has a noteworthy meaning:

There were two large mirrors in the cabin, and here was the acme of their amazement. Too-wit was the first to approach them, and he had got in the middle of the cabin, with his face to one and his back to the other, before he fairly perceived them. Upon raising his eyes and seeing his reflected self in the glass, I thought the savage would go mad; but, upon turning short round to make a retreat, and beholding himself a second time in the opposite direction. I was afraid he would expire upon the spot. No persuasion could prevail upon him to take another look; but, throwing himself upon the floor, with his face buried in his hands, he remained thus until we were obliged to drag him upon deck. (**Gordon Pym** 766)

As for the women of the tribe, Pym says that they “were straight, tall and well formed”, however their lips, “like those of the men, were thick and clumsy, so that even when laughing, the teeth were never disclosed” (**Gordon Pym** 770). Bonaparte infers from the statement that their mouths, in fact, signify “a displacement upwards to the mouth of qualities appropriate to the real, or, rather, *cloacal* vagina as, for instance, its darkness and absence of *teeth*” (1949: 333).

Despite the natives’s amiable attitudes, this reputedly friendliness is actually a means of façade for their fraud aims. Before they can realize that ruse, each sailor of the crew is murdered but Pym and Peters. Because of the fact that Jane Guy is also overrun, there is no way except hiding in the mountains. Their condition in the labyrinth of passages stands for “a phantasy of return to the mother, expressed in anal or intestinal terms” (*ibid.* 341). Likewise, blackness of the island functions as the mother’s body that “appears as imagined *from within*” (*ibid.* 333). Finally, Pym and Peters with a prisoner find a small boat and sail away. The color of the water turns into milky white as the temperature increases. However, the novel suddenly ends here. Whereas some critics assert that it is an unfinished tale, Bonaparte heralds that it “properly ends on the question mark of mysteries unplumbed and dazzling vision of the mother veiled in symbolic white” (*ibid.* 351).

Indeed, what happens in **Gordon Pym** is the reiteration of the same scenario. For Hoffman, “in this tale everything that happens is repeated, is *itself* a repetition of what has gone before *and* a precursor of that which is to come” (1972: 277). Even though

“the imaginary voyage of Gordon Pym has no definite goal in terms of conscious human life” (Quinn, 1957: 191), the significance of the unconscious is ulterior. Nonetheless, the implicit desire can be grasp through its language:

It is the longing of the living body to die, of the organic to become inorganic, of the differentiated consciousness in the agony of its separateness to experience the frightening ecstasy of its reintegration into the unity from which it has been exiled – the unity of personal annihilation. (Hoffman, 1972: 273)

This statement ties in with what is insinuated within the narration. The overt content can be thought to have only one meaning or no sense at all, yet any tendency of an act of quest reveals the clandestine desire. Although the end of the story is an intriguing blank, this aspect recounts the privileged concept of lack in psychoanalysis.

1.2. THE PURLOINED LETTER

Edgar Allan Poe’s introduction of detective fiction into literature is successively displayed through his three stories: **The Murders in the Rue Morgue**, **The Mystery of Marie Rogêt** and **The Purloined Letter**. The amateur detective C. Auguste Dupin “whose name reflects his acts of duping” (Thoms, 2002: 135), bursts into these stories. The presentation of Dupin as an unprejudiced observer is also contingent on his remoteness from society. However, this ostensible aloofness does not encumber Dupin to connect with the Prefect of Police or Minister D- (*ibid.* 137). Moreover, the unbiased behaviour of the detective is also questioned by “subverting the opposition between detective and criminal” (*ibid.* 133). As Thoms continues:

To consider the detective as a force of surveillance is to glimpse how much supervisory acts of control help to produce the transgressive behavior of those seeking to elude control. To examine Dupin’s authorial management of his case and its characters is both to sense his oppressive power and to perceive how this apparent agent of order privileges narrative moments of disorder, shock, and disorienting sensation. At the end of each story, the criminal responsible for the ostensible mystery may be exposed and thus metaphorically

vanquished, but the shadowy Dupin, an even more powerful and manipulative figure, remains. (*ibid.* 133-134)

Being examined by lots of critics, the Dupin stories purport that their features are common as they are both reflective and repetitious. Admittedly, they vague the boundaries (*ibid.* 142). Besides, in **The Purloined Letter** for instance, the criminal details are previously known. Hence, emotions of the reader such as suspense are swept under a carpet.

As Poe's fiction is surrounded mainly by researches affiliated with psychoanalysis, the immense emphasis on the Dupin stories also creates dispute among the critics. Especially **The Purloined Letter**, which is famously interpreted by Lacan, attracts the attention most. The story, which is told by a first-person narrator, actually consists of repetitive scenes. In the very first scene, the Prefect of the Parisian police comes in order to talk about an important case. The dialogue in which The Prefect G- narrates "the Queen's eyewitness account of the Minister's theft of a letter addressed to her" (Johnson, 1988: 215), is literally reported by the unnamed narrator. What is fundamental here is "the robber's knowledge of the loser's knowledge of the robber" (**The Purloined Letter** 188). The Prefect states that their efforts to obtain the letter in the hotel where the Minister stays have been in vain.

As the narrator indicates the Prefect returns "[i]n about a month afterward" (**The Purloined Letter** 191), the second scene inaugurates. Owing to the fact that the Prefect guarantees that he will pay 50.000 francs in case the letter is found, Dupin asks him to sign a check so that he can hand him the letter. Even though the Prefect is astounded, he keeps his promise. Now "it is Dupin who narrates his own theft of the same letter from the Minister, who had meanwhile readdressed it to himself" (Johnson, 1988: 215). Nonetheless the reoccurring motif does not finish here:

In a paragraph placed between these two "crime" stories, the narrator himself narrates a wordless scene in which the letter changes hands again before his eyes, passing from Dupin – not without the latter's having addressed not the letter but a check to himself – to the Prefect

(who will pocket the remainder of the reward) and thence, presumably, back to the Queen. (*ibid.* 215)

The Purloined Letter under psychoanalytic scrutiny becomes influential in handling with other critical theories. Before going any further, it is essential to articulate Bonaparte's comments on the story. To put it plainly, for Bonaparte the letter embodies the maternal penis. As it hangs over the fireplace, this position recalls the female penis. Due to the fact that the story highlights the desire, the "partial love" of the mother at the phallic level, what Dupin and the Minister scramble for is her penis (Bonaparte, 1988: 130). Therefore, the struggle between them refers to the oedipal rivalry. The reconstruction of the missing penis can be merely accomplished by a check of 50.000 francs which is given by "the mother in exchange for the penis he restores" (*ibid.* 131).

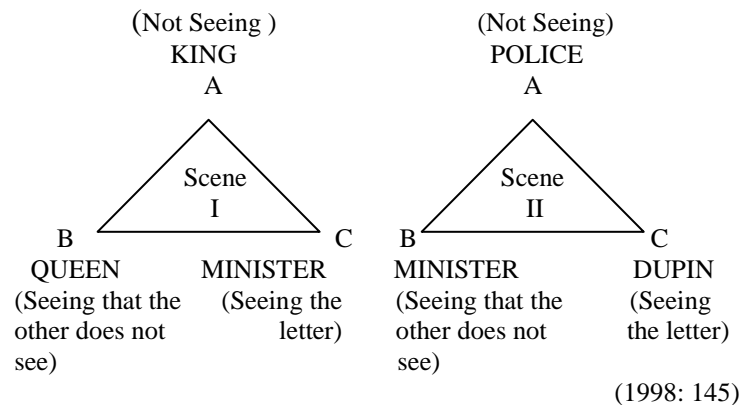
Lacan's analysis of **The Purloined Letter** leaves its impact on the history of criticism. Regardless of meanings and interpretations that can be deduced from the text, Lacan's initial emphasis is not on the meaning, but on the absence of meaning; therefore, "the signifier can be analyzed in its effects without its signified being known" (Felman, 1988: 149). In order to illuminate the differences between Lacan's reading of the text and Bonaparte's, it can be asserted that Bonaparte's aim is to unravel the content of the letter whereas Lacan's task is "to situate the superficial indication of its textual movement" (*ibid.* 148). Although Bonaparte notes that the repeated actions in the narration actually mirror Poe's unconscious fantasy which is inflicted with the desire for his dead mother, Lacan concerns with "the symbolic displacement of a signifier through the insistence of a signifying chain" (*ibid.* 147). That is to say that the reoccurring structure within the narrative only occurs through **difference**. Hence, though Bonaparte persistently argues that repetition functions as a confirmation of subjectivity, according to Lacan it is "the insistence of the indelibility of a difference" (*ibid.* 148).

Lacan's seminar which commences with the statement expressing that "the repetition automatism (*Wiederholungszwang*) finds its basis in what we have called the *insistence* of the signifying chain" (1988: 28), concentrates on two main subjects, one is the unusual nature of the letter and the latter is the intersubjective affairs within the story (Muller and Richardson, 1988: 57). What can be interpreted from the problem of "repetition automatism" in Freud's **Beyond The Pleasure Principle** is the fact that many patients are prone to automatically reiterate the unpleasant mental events. Accordingly, Lacan's effort here is to elucidate the problematics of Freud's text and to show "how the subject is determined by the course of a signifier" (*ibid.* 77).

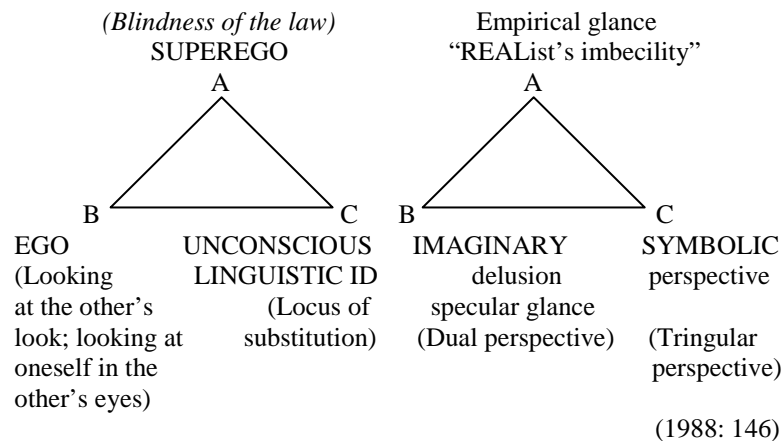
For Lacan, Poe's story consists of two scenes: the primal scene and the repetition of it. The first scene is performed in "the royal *boudoir*" and this aspect becomes the valorization of the presence of "the person of the highest rank", the King (1988: 30):

This feeling is confirmed by the embarrassment into which she [the Queen] is plunged by the entry of the exalted personage, of whom we have already been told prior to this account that the knowledge he might have of the letter in question would jeopardize for the lady nothing less than her honor and safety. And doubt that he is in fact the King is promptly dissipated in the course of the scene which begins with the entry of the Minister D-. At that moment, in fact, the Queen can do no better than to play on the King's inattentiveness by leaving the letter on the table "face down, address uppermost". It does not, however, escape the Minister's lynx eye, nor does he fail to notice the Queen's distress and thus to fathom her secret. (*ibid.* 30)

In the second scene, it is Dupin who takes on the act of perspicacious robber and leaves behind a surrogate. While the role of the "blind" is now played by the Police, the unaware "seer" becomes the Minister. This exchange of the glances is also schematized by Felman:



The displacement of the subjects does not only warrant Freud’s concept of repetition automatism but also marks the fact that “their displacement is determined by the place which a pure signifier – the purloined letter – comes to occupy in their trio” (Lacan, 1988: 32). This quality can be incorporated into the psychoanalytic process. This positions of the “blind”, the “seer”, and the “robber” are respectively subordinate to the stages of Real, Imaginary, and the Symbolic. Due to the fact that the notion of “real” is blatantly ambiguous here, a more usual use of the term demonstrates “a naively empiricist objectivism that is oblivious of the role of the symbolic structures in the organization of “reality” (Muller and Richardson, 1988: 63). The narcissism embedded into the correlation between the second position and the imaginary can be observed by the fact that the subject sees without being cognizant of being seen. What is paradoxical about the relationship between the third position and the Symbolic is the fact that this position “tends to catch the subject up in the dynamics of the repetition that drag him into the second position” (*ibid.* 63). Likewise, the Minister’s inactivity stems from the power of the letter whose ascendancy emerges from its non-usage. Thus, in fact “it is a position of absolute weakness” (Lacan, 1988: 47). As a result of this, the Minister is urged to “don the role of the Queen, and even the attributes of femininity and shadow” which are convenient for hiding (*ibid.* 44). This structure is also thematized by Felman as it can be seen below:



The proliferation of the subjects can be closely monitored through the perspective which indicates that “*the unconscious is the discourse of the Other*” (Lacan, 1988: 32). Furthermore, the two scenes are posited as the complementary dramas. The first dialogue manifests itself between the Prefect and Dupin yet it is carried out without words. In Lacan’s words, it is performed “as between a deaf man and one who hears” (*ibid.* 34). As this scene is oozed through sundry narrators, it creates an effect of exactitude yet, at the same time, it highlights “the real complexity of what is ordinarily simplified” in the concept of communication (*ibid.* 34).

The main reason for the difficulty in finding the letter is that the relationship between it and the place is odd. Therefore, when Dupin says “simple and odd”, it is implied that the complexity of the condition stems from its simplicity (**The Purloined Letter** 186). Even though the Police have searched “*everywhere*”, the letter is nowhere to be found (**The Purloined Letter** 189). Since the letter is a symbol of an absence, “it will be *and* not be where it is, wherever it goes” (Lacan, 1988: 39). Moreover, the hidden “*is missing from its place*” (*ibid.* 40) and this fact emanates from the function of the Symbolic. In other words, the letter is placed within the Symbolic Order which can merely be conceived in its impressions and those impressions “are perceived as repetition” (Johnson, 1988: 245). Hence, the clue for Dupin lies not in the fact that he knows where to search, “but because he knows *what to repeat*” (*ibid.* 245).

The oddity exerted over the purloined letter emerges from multiple points. It is not even known to whom the letter pertains and also its content is not given. The only acquaintance for the reader is restricted to the fact that the Queen has to preserve the letter from the King's knowledge. Furthermore, As Lacan points out, the word "purloin" is derived from the combination of the Old French word "loigner" and the prefix "pur-" (1988: 43). Therefore, "we are quite simply dealing with a letter which has been diverted from its path; one whose course has been *prolonged* (etymologically, the word of the title), or, to revert to the language of the post Office, a *letter in sufferance*" (*ibid.* 43). As a result, Lacan accuses Baudelaire of his translation as "la lettre volée" (the stolen letter) on the ground that the etymology of the word is more important than its usage.

Apart from that, Lacan conceives the position of the letter as a colossal female body. Thereby, Dupin's green spectacles function as an instrument "to undress that huge body" (*ibid.* 48):

At length my eyes, in going the circuit of the room, fell upon a trumpery filigree card-rack of pasteboard, that hung dangling by a dirty blue ribbon, from a little brass knob just beneath the middle of the mantelpiece. In this rack, which had three or four compartments, were five or six visiting cards and a solitary letter. This last was much soiled and crumpled. It was torn nearly in two, across the middle – as if a design, in the first instance, to tear it entirely up as worthless, had been altered, or stayed, in the second. It had a large black seal, bearing the D-cipher *very* conspicuously, and was addressed in a diminutive female hand, to M-, the minister, himself. It was thrust carelessly, and even, as it seemed, contemptuously, into one of the uppermost divisions of the rack. (**The Purloined Letter** 197)

The description of the fireplace and the letter hanging at the center of the mantelpiece seem to bear some affinities to the notion of phallus. Whereas the desire marks a motive for the continuous possession of the mother inherent in the ideal state, the demand is "a request for the unconditional presence or absence not of an organ but of the Other in answer to the question asked by the subject from the place of the Other" (Johnson, 1988: 244). Likewise, what the subject pursues in language does not occupy this absence diametrically. Hence, language is oriented towards desire, as it is

triggered by the pursuit of **objet a**. In this sense, “the letter as a signifier is thus not a thing or the absence of a word, not an organ or the absence of an organ, but a *knot* in a structure where words, things, and organs can neither be definably separated nor compatibly combined” (*ibid.* 244 - 245).

Apart from the scenes explained above, there is also the third scene in which the blind is actualized by the Minister, the seer by Dupin and the robber by psychoanalyst Lacan. As can be seen, the Minister dons the role of the blind personage who is unable to see. Dupin encounters with imaginary situation in which he acts as the seer yet, fails to recognize being seen by Lacan. And, it is Lacan who assumes the role of the robber and “to discern for us the symbolic structure of the entire tale and to reveal its import for psychoanalysis” (Muller and Richardson, 1988: 62) become the analyst’s aim. Therefore, as Felman illustrates, Lacan’s reading of **The Purloined Letter** connotes “an *allegory of psychoanalysis*” (1988: 147):

The intervention of Dupin, who restores the letter to the Queen, is thus compared, in Lacan’s interpretation, to the intervention of the analyst, who rids the patient of the symptom. The analyst’s effectiveness however, does not spring from his intellectual strength but – insists Lacan – from his position in the (repetitive) structure. By virtue of his occupying the third position – that is, the *locus* of the unconscious of the subject as a place of substitution of letter for letter (of signifier for signifier) – the analyst, through transference, allows at once for a repetition of the trauma, and for a symbolic substitution, and thus effects the drama’s denouement. (*ibid.* 147)

It is no wonder that it is Jacques Derrida’s “The Purveyor of Truth” that comes to the foreground as the most crucial challenge to Lacan’s text. Muller and Richardson explain that the argument between them is noteworthy, “partly because it serves to differentiate them, partly because the differentiation itself helps clarify the meaning of deconstruction not only for literary criticism but for psychoanalysis itself” (1988: 159). Nevertheless, continuing the same line of thought; Poe’s **The Purloined Letter**, Lacan’s “Seminar on *The Purloined Letter*” and Derrida’s “The Purveyor of Truth” are posited as repetitious elements as the “*act of analysis*” constitutes centrality in

these texts (Johnson, 1988: 213). Indeed, that centrality is displayed to be disrupted en route from the “*act of analysis of the act of analysis*” (*ibid.* 213).

The criticism Derrida raises about Lacan’s Seminar emphasizes its interest in the content, “not the narration itself” (1988: 179). Hence, Lacan’s reading of Poe’s text necessitates the paraphrase which brings about plot summary. However, what is paraphrased is only about the description of the letter. This reveals that the use of paraphrase here is in contrast with its initial function which omits the speech so as to divulge merely its content. Obviously, this aspect reaches its entirety within Derrida’s critique of Lacan as he “chooses to quote Lacan’s paraphrase, we can combine all the tactics involved by, in our turn, quoting Derrida’s quotation of Lacan’s paraphrase of Poe’s quoted narrations” (Johnson, 1988: 216).

Derrida’s attempts to undo Lacan’s text revolve around two main concepts; one is what Lacan places into the letter, and the other one is what Lacan strips off from the text. According to Derrida, Lacan makes “lack” the meaning of the letter as he states that its meaning is lacking. Additionally, he infers that “what Lacan means by that lack is the truth of lack-as-castration-as-truth”, even though the word “castration” is nowhere to be seen in Lacan’s text (*ibid.* 217). Another objection marks what Lacan omits. To illustrate, **The Purloined Letter** is one of the stories called “Dupin Trilogy” and Lacan neglects that aspect.

What Derrida argues in what he calls “the scene of writing” asserts that, since **The Purloined Letter** begins in a library, actually nothing begins. Also, “an explicit reference is made in the direction of two other narratives onto which “this one” is grafted” (1988: 198). Likewise, the name “Dupin” is an effect of Poe’s previous readings: “from the pages of a volume called *Sketches of Conspicuous Living Characters of France* (Philadelphia: Lea and Blanchard, 1841), which Poe reviewed for *Graham’s Magazine* during the same month his first Dupin story appeared”

(Johnson, 1988: 235). It is also obvious that Dupin's last words are a quotation. "This reminder is (again) still (from) literature" (Derrida, 1988: 206).

From the outset, this vicious circle within the texts hints at a repetition. Even the last word in the story does not pertain to Poe, it belongs to Crébillon. His **Atrée** is remarkable in that:

A queen betraying a king, a letter representing that betrayal being purloined for purposes of power, an eventual return of that letter to its addressee, accompanied by an act of revenge which duplicates the original crime – "The Purloined Letter" as a story of repetition is itself a repetition of the story from which it purloins its last words. The Freudian "truth" of the repetition compulsion is not simply illustrated *in* the story; it is illustrated *by* the story. The story obeys the very law it conveys; it is framed by its own content. And thus "The Purloined Letter" no longer simply repeats its own "primal scene": what it repeats is nothing less than a previous story of repetition. The "last word" names the place where the "nonfirstness" of the "first word" repeats itself. (Johnson, 1988: 236)

At one point in Derrida's text, Derrida deduces the fact that the letter becomes a symbol of the phallus embedded in the Seminar. Firstly, the letter pertains to the Queen and as a result of her deprivation of the phallus, it is posited as a substitute. Since it has a castrating effect, it feminizes those who hold the letter. Therefore, "[t]he phallus, thanks to castration, always remains in its place" (Derrida, 1988: 185). Clearly, the position of the letter between the legs of woman contributes to the statement of Derrida's attitude towards Lacan's text: That description signifies that the phallus is missing (Johnson, 1988: 225).

According to Lacan, the letter is indivisible; and for Derrida, this forms the basis for the idealization of the phallus. The destruction of the singularity of the letter can only staved off through it. The very same idea is in compliance with "the system of the ideality of the signifier" (Derrida, 1988: 194). Derrida explains that this "is a structural effect of *signification* in general, to whatever transformations or adjustments one subjects the space of *semiosis*" (*ibid.* 194). Thus, Derrida concludes,

“this letter does not only escape partition, it escapes movement, it does not change its place” (*ibid.* 194).

Just as **The Purloined Letter** is associated with the “truth”, the last statement in the Seminar, “a letter always arrives at its destination” (Lacan, 1988: 53), becomes a reaffirmation of it. If the “truth” in Poe’s story musters elements such as phallus and castration, then, for Derrida, Lacan’s text ends in a way that implies “both the absolute truth of psychoanalytical theories and the absolute decipherability of the literary text” (Johnson, 1988: 225). Nevertheless, for Johnson this last statement is either “pleonastic” or “paradoxical” in that “[t]he message I am reading may be either my own (narcissistic) message backward or the way in which that message is always traversed by its own otherness to itself or by the narcissistic message of the other” (*ibid.* 249). Hence, what it illustrates becomes the presence of death.

Derrida also explores that in Bonaparte’s reading of Poe’s text, the castration of the mother is placed in the centre of **The Purloined Letter**. According to her, the relationship between the fireplace and the female body leads to a conceptualization of the phallus. That is why Derrida points out the fact that Lacan has read Bonaparte’s text yet, he is shunned to allude to her. Thereby, Derrida argues that “[t]he interpretation of the letter (as the phallus that must be returned to the mother) must itself be returned to the “mother” from whom it has been purloined – Marie Bonaparte” (*ibid.* 238).

No matter how blatantly Derrida tries to display his objections to Lacan’s Seminar, he repeats what he accuses. Although whether Lacan and Derrida insinuate the very same thing or they classify “their own differences from themselves” (*ibid.* 250) is hard to conclude, all the mentioned texts above share a common point reflecting that “it is no longer “The Purloined Letter” that repeats the story of Oedipus, but the story of Oedipus that repeats all the letters purloined from “The Purloined Letter’s” abyssal interior” (*ibid.* 237).

2. GENDER

Throughout history, the perception of gender has behooved to be a part of identity. Even a brief review of the religious doctrines as well as the ideological discourses and political theories demonstrates the gender roles imposed upon the subject. It is also known that the plight of the female within the patriarchal norms is closely linked to the position of the other. The dominant masculine society constructs stereotypical codes for woman and bolsters her into the margins of culturally accepted norms.

Arguing the definitions of sexual difference in terms of biological hierarchy, Kate Millett, in her **Sexual Politics**, recognizes the fact that biological sex is culturally posited through oppressive ideologies which are constructed with masculine superiority. Also, according to Laplanche and Pontalis, Freud's definition of masculine and feminine is founded on three registers: "the biological, the sociological, and the psychosexual" (Weed, 2006: 267):

The realm of the biological for Freud offers a certain scientific clarity in the delineation of primary and secondary sex characteristics but cannot account for psychosexual behavior. The sociological domain comprises both the real and the symbolic functions of the male and female in a given culture. And the psychosexual register connects with both, but primarily with the sociological. (*ibid.* 267)

The subordinate position of women in the patriarchal system brings about stereotypes symbolized by the figures of Virgin Mary and Eve. The polarization between pure Mary and the treacherous Eve is in accordance with the gender distinctive policies of Western discourse. Thus, this paradoxical situation binds woman to a dilemma of being good or evil. There is no room for other choices apart from being a virgin or a whore. Furthermore, as Luce Irigaray brilliantly emphasizes, mother, virgin and prostitute are the social roles that bar women's own desires about feminine sexuality (1985: 186). In Irigaray's words, women's sexuality can be summarized through "the valorization of reproduction and nursing, faithfulness; modesty, ignorance of and even lack of interest in sexual pleasure; a passive

acceptance of men's "activity"; seductiveness, in order to arouse the consumers' desire while offering herself as its material support without getting pleasure herself" (*ibid.* 186-187).

Mary, as the representative of virginity, reflects the ideal feminine as she is also good and helpless. Moreover, she is asexual but also productive in order to fulfill her maternal duties. Since she serves according to patriarchal systems, her sexuality does not function as a threat to masculinity. She has no claim over her own body which renders her the fulcrum of submissive femininity. Her silenced figure is also glorified through her representations: "Under a full blue dress, the maternal, virginal body allowed only the breast to show, while the face, with the stiffness of Byzantine icons gradually softened, was covered with tears" (Kristeva, 1986: 173). Kristeva also reveals that there is a translation error within the cult of Virgin Mary:

One might read into this the Indo-European fascination [...] with the virgin daughter as guardian of paternal power; one might also detect an ambivalent conspiracy, through excessive spiritualization, of the mother-goddess and the underlying matriarchy with which Greek culture and Jewish monotheism kept struggling. The fact remains that Western Christianity has organized that 'translation error', projected its own fantasies into it and produced one of the most powerful imaginary constructs known in the history of civilization. (*ibid.* 163)

The standards forged through religious discourses are empowered by binary oppositions. In this sense, Eve, as the opposite of Virgin Mary embodies seductive and dangerous side of femininity. The reason of such a strict division is very clear: to curb women so as to protect the patriarchal order. To do so, Eve is perceived as the other through the male gaze. The psychological reverberations stemming from man's fear towards the female find their fullest expression in the figuration of Eve. Examples of attributes such as negative and chaotic are to be found throughout the story in which Eve eats the apple that leads to the knowledge of mortality. Therefore, whereas Mary acts as the agent of eternal life through her symbolization of the soul, Eve's culturally accumulated aspects such as disobedience and being prone to pleasure echo the bodily existence of human nature. Such a fixation in the portraits of

women reinforces the male authority and rationalized the fact that “the feminine occurs only within models and laws devised by male subjects” (Irigaray, 1985: 86).

All through the Western philosophy, women have been presented as the inseparable ingredient of disorder. Actually, the gendered dichotomies controlled and orchestrated by men render woman as the undesirable other. With Plato and his ideal forms, the attainment of the Good becomes synonymous with beauty. Nonetheless, since the body functions as an impediment on the way to reach real knowledge, one should be indulged in reason and mind. Also, as Plato keeps woman away from the orientation to the process of reasoning, the dominance of the masculine leads to misogyny. Likewise, Aristotle defines femininity as a deformity. In his **The Generation of Animals**, he assumes that there is abstinence of rational thinking in woman, that is why she is considered as inferior (462).

It is no wonder, then, the inferior situation of woman comes to the foreground in the dominant discourses of Western tradition. As Chodorow notes, “[e]ach person’s gender identity is also an inextricable intertwining, virtually a fusion, of personal and cultural meaning” (1999: 70). Likewise, in terms of psychoanalysis, the relationship between the penis and phallus emerges from the socially constructed norms. Furthermore, “[i]t is motivated by the already existing structure of patriarchal power, and its effects guarantee the reproduction of this particular form of social organization and no other” (Grosz: 1990: 124). Hence, the distinction between female and male bodies gives the privilege of power to penis, “naturalizing male dominance” (*ibid.* 123).

Similarly, the tenets of Freud are evocative of misogyny. Owing to the fact that Freud considers that female bodies are castrated due to the absence of a penis, this conflation of superiority of man poses a problem for feminist critics. As Juliet Mitchell devotes attention, “psychoanalysis is essential to the understanding of the

ways in which patriarchal ideology is internalized and lived by men and women” (*ibid.* 20).

In **Medusa’s Head**, Freud claims that Medusa’s head with snakes illustrates both female genitals and arousal: “The terror of Medusa is thus a terror of castration that is linked to the sight of something” (1963: 212). And he explains:

The hair upon Medusa’s head is frequently represented in works of art in the form of snakes, and these once again are derived from castration complex. It is a remarkable fact that, however frightening they may be in themselves, they nevertheless serve actually as a mitigation of the horror, for they replace the penis, the absence of which is the cause of the horror. This is a confirmation of the technical rule according to which a multiplication of penis symbols signifies castration. (*ibid.* 212)

As it is known from the Greek mythology, one cannot look at Medusa directly as the result is a paralysis. However, as Jonte-Pace points out, this petrification has another aspect in Freud’s text: “the stiffening of death is transformed into a different stiffening, a stiffening signaling male sexual desire: the erection” (2001: 52).

Medusa’s head bears some affinities to the “horrifying” concepts such as “maternal genitals, female deities, and death” (*ibid.* 53). Nevertheless, Freud “concluded his argument with an insistent return to the safety of the “erect male organ” (The Oedipal masterplot)” (*ibid.* 53). As Freud comments briefly on the display of the penis, this means that “I am not afraid of you. I defy you. I have a penis” (1963: 213). This brings us to perhaps the most significant aspect of the female genitals: the female genitalia as a black hole becomes a castrator with its **vagina dentata**. That can precisely be linked to man’s fear of female genitals.

Likewise Lacan, who borrows the core of his assumptions from Freud and Ferdinand De Saussure, asserts that both gender and gender-related desire emerge within language. As Fink maintains the sexual difference “stems from men and women’s divergent relations to the signifier” (1995: 118). Also, the “phallic

function”, as Lacan names it, is posited as an anchorage “*that institutes lack*, that is, the alienating function of language” (*ibid.* 103). This term is also aligned with the definition of masculine and feminine structures in which the female one is identified by that loss.

Due to the fact that the phallus as a signifier is associated with the penis, woman is systematically tucked away and presented with the letter, which alludes “to a return to the old form and matter metaphor dating back to at least Plato” (*ibid.* 119). The primary aim for the subject is to fulfill the mother’s desire. Such a subject under the impact of the unconscious desire attempts to satisfy it through being a phallus for the mother:

If, in effect, the man finds satisfaction for his demand for love in the relation with the woman, in as much as the signifier of the phallus constitutes her as giving in love what she does not have – conversely, his own desire for the phallus will make its signifier emerge in its persistent divergence towards ‘another woman’ who may signify this phallus in various ways, either as a virgin or as a prostitute. (Lacan, 1977: 290).

According to Lacan, woman is not castrated in terms of anatomy. However, her powerlessness becomes obvious for the child when he or she acknowledges the relationship between the mother and father. The mother’s desire to be the object of desire for man, the father, puts her in a masquerade in which she pretends that she is the phallus. Thereby, even though man searches the phallus through a woman, his disappointment only leads to the delay of the realization of his elusive desire.

Lacan terms the mirror stage “*as an identification*” because it functions as “the transformation that takes place in the subject when he assumes an image” (*ibid.* 2). When the subject sees his reflection in the mirror, he perceives it as a whole and perfect. On the other hand, he experiences himself as a fragmented body in front of the mirror, so, he conceives the Other reflected in the mirror as an alien. Hence, the self-definition inaugurates when the subject realizes itself through the Other. This

phenomenon paves the way for a rivalry with the Other in which the subject craves to annihilate the Other in order to exist. After the mirror stage, it is the mother who supersedes as the Other reminding how the subject is split.

What is understood from Lacan's famous statement "woman does not exist" is that "there is no signifier for, or essence of, woman as such" (Fink, 1995: 115). It is also the reflection of this logic that patriarchal manifestations bolster the subjectless position of women. Whereas man is posited as the measure in the social order, woman is forced to a negative position. Even though a number of feminists have challenged the status of women determined by patriarchal norms, many pertinent issues still remain unanswered.

2.1. THE MOST "POE" TIC IDEALIZATION: **LIGEIA** and **THE OVAL PORTRAIT**

It is undeniable that the women figures in Edgar Allan Poe's poetry and his short stories have occasioned a debate among feminist critics. The obvious misogyny inherent in Poe's fiction causes a plethora of ideas regarding both Poe as a writer and Poe as a man. All in all, the fact that the male associates the female with the negative of his reflection alludes to man's meaning to himself. Likewise, weakness, vulnerability, powerlessness and passivity that are attributed to the female archetype internalize the authority of the male figure.

Addressing Poe's own problematic relationships with the women in his life, some critics, such as Marie Bonaparte, point out the similarities with his works which also function as the unintentional signs of his subjectivity. In fact, throughout his life, Poe suffered from the losses of the women in his life especially his mother's and his wife Virginia's. Besides, Poe lost the other women whom he loved: "the death of surrogate mother Jane Stith Stonard in 1824, the termination of his romance with young Elmira Royster in 1826, the death of foster mother Frances Allan in 1829" (Kopley and

Hayes, 2002: 194). Thereby, it would be more apt to interpret his female figures in his fiction along with his own life.

In addition to this, the cultural norms of nineteenth-century America are significant in that, through the main ideology, the gender boundaries are conveyed. As Person notes “The Jacksonian mystique exaggerated ideological and psychological conflicts in American culture and, in particular, polarized American thinking along gender lines” (1988: 7). Apart from that, Poe wanted to behave in accordance with “genteel patriarchy” so as to be a “Southern gentleman” (Person, 2001: 130). “Caught between domestic expectations of gentility that he would associate with a dying Angel in the House and market expectations that emphasized self – and money – making”, Poe adopted a gendered perspective style in his fiction (*ibid.* 130).

The idealization of a female figure and her death recall Gilbert and Gubar’s statement “killing women into art” as a must for artistic creativity. Asserting that death is a culturally constructed signifier of lack, Bronfen highlights its association with “the other unrepresentable aspect of human existence”: the feminine body (1992: 72). Accordingly, “Poe’s seemingly antithetical coupling of death and femininity emerges as significantly logical for Western cultural mythology” (*ibid.* 72).

Needless to say, the conjunction of death with female body illustrates the associations related to the female other. “As the mother, “woman” is original prenatal dwelling place; as the beloved, she draws fantasies of desire and otherness; and as mother Earth, she is the anticipated final resting place” (Goodwin and Bronfen, 1993: 13):

Freud has made this much clear: femininity and death are Western culture’s two major tropes for the enigma. At the same time, our culture posits death and the feminine as what is radically other to the norm, the living or surviving masculine subject; they represent the disruption and difference that ground a narcissistic sense of self and stability in a

cultural system. But the system must also eliminate them or posit them as limit in order to survive. (*ibid.* 13-14)

For Bronfen, the interrelation between death and femininity, and their representations through narrative and visual devices can serve as a clue to unravel the symptoms of Western culture. In fact, the depiction of the dead female body through art divulges the unconscious acquaintance with death, yet, at the same time, it represses that knowledge which cannot be directly articulated. Bronfen adds, however, the interstice between femininity and death in representations is a misrepresentation. In this sense, these representations mask and repress the things intended to be elucidated, whereas they are also used as means of revealing what is aimed to be hidden.

According to Bronfen, Gabriel Von Max's painting **Der Anatom** is important in that it depicts beauty through its comparison with destruction. The painting, in which the dead feminine body just before its decomposition is posited as a perfect form, demonstrates the anatomist as the one who will destroy that aesthetic body. Bronfen also points out the anatomist's hand gestures and arrangement of the dead and living objects:

[M]uch like the figure of the moth, which pierces the 'metaphoric' triangulation of corpse-author-text, the hand punctures any stabilising allegorical image of narcissistic purity to be figured over the feminine body, by introducing the moment of real temporality. As the only point of tension in the painting, as the moment of juncture between the metaphorical and the allegorical axes, the hand introduces the excluded reality of death by pointing to the future; as the destruction of the illusion of aesthetic wholeness; as the end of this interval of the unified, secured corpse. (1992: 11)

Obviously, the idea that the dead body of the feminine functions as a muse for the alive man to write about what is rooted in the painting. Bronfen differentiates between "a thematic meaning" which alludes to "the painting as a dialectic between positivist and spiritualist approaches to death" and "a rhetorical reading" of the

painting “as the dialectic between a metaphorical and allegorical figuration of death” (*ibid.* 13).



Figure I: **Der Anatom**

Edgar Allan Poe’s well-known statement in his essay **The Philosophy of Composition**, “the death of a beautiful woman is, unquestionably, the most poetical topic in the world” is prolific for the analysis of the relationship between death and female body. The essay on the creation process of **The Raven** associates the composition of the poem with a mathematical poem. According to Poe, a poem should be read in one setting. Therefore, the exact length of the poem is to be “a hundred and eight” so as to create unique effect (*ibid.* 1537). Poe also states beauty as the proper theme for the poem “merely because it is an obvious rule of Art that effects should be made to spring from direct causes” (*ibid.* 1537). After that, Poe chooses sadness as the “highest manifestation” of beauty. As he considers “melancholy is thus the most legitimate of all the poetic tones” (*ibid.* 1537).

Interestingly enough, Bronfen points out the usage of the superlative “the most poetical” in Poe’s essay. She indicates that “the superlative in conjunction with beauty and femininity serves as a figure for an uncanny contradictory relation to death”, in other words “the translation of anxiety into desire” (1992: 62). However, a question arises related to a surrogate for the subject’s own death: “the death of the other, or for a dead other?” (*ibid.* 63). Moreover, this ambivalence functions as a structure in which two contrasting connotations are confirmed. Thus, when the subject gazes at the feminine beauty, he simultaneously recognises and misrecognises it as the beauty of woman who is posited as a disguise for death (*ibid.* 63).

In his psychoanalysis, Freud employs a triad model to render coherence to desired objects: the mother, the beloved one as a substitute figure for the mother, and the mother earth. This equation can be explained in relation to the fact that man’s object of desire dwells particularly on woman. It is necessary to clarify here that, according to Freud, as with Lacan, death has implications that are akin to sex. As Lacan examines, when the subject realizes its mortality, it also attains the discovery of the self as a sexed being. Since the recognition which divulges the fact that the self is initially a product of sex, the sense of wholeness and immortality is ruptured. Therefore, only through sexuality, one can recapture the feeling of completeness, albeit temporarily.

The conceptualization of woman within the limitations of “death-womb-tomb” is by no means an indication of the fact that birth also brings about death. Thus, womb as the signifier of mother is directly relevant to tomb which embodies “the sense of a return to an inanimate stasis” (*ibid.* 67). Likewise, in Western culture woman is considered to serve “as signifier for an originary, paradisaical wholeness of the body and for the unity of signifier and signified before a disruptive fall to earth, birth (womb), body (soma), and language (sema)” (*ibid.* 69).

Just like the anatomist in **Der Anatom**, the mourners in Poe's fiction are male. Provision of such a discrepancy confirms the masculine as the survivor whereas it also addresses the female in relation to death. Thereby, "[h]orror at the sight of death turns into satisfaction, since the survivor is not himself dead" (*ibid.* 65). Also, Elias Canetti asserts that the dead one is accepted as passive whereas the survivor stands erect in the moment of victory (*ibid.* 65). Consequently, this implies that the corpse signifies femininity while the masculine survivor embodies superiority.

Poe's poetics render dying woman a muse for the creation of a work of art. However, her dead body can also be transformed into an art object:

Because of her dying figures as an analogy to the creation of an art work, and the depicted death serves as a double of its formal condition, the "death of a beautiful woman" marks the *mise en abyme* of a text, the moment of self-reflexivity, where the text seems to comment on itself and its own process of composition, and so decomposes itself. Poe's choice of the superlative indicates that the literary depiction of feminine death is not limited to the thematic dimension of a representation. Rather it includes a reference to a text's poetic effectiveness, as this is contingent on self-referentiality. (*ibid.* 71)

Similarly, Ligeia, who gives her name to one of the most well known stories of Poe, is portrayed by an unnamed narrator. Even though he cannot remember how they have met, he recollects well "her rare learning, her singular yet placid cast of beauty, and the thrilling and enthralling eloquence of her low musical language" (**Ligeia** 590). After an ambiguous period of time, Ligeia gets sick. Although she struggles to survive, she dies. Succeedingly, Lady Rowena Trevanion, of Tremaine intrudes into the narrative. However, in his second marriage with her, the narrator experiences the same plight of Rowena like Ligeia's: "The Lady Rowena was attacked with sudden illness, from which her recovery was slow" (**Ligeia** 597). As her condition worsens, she dies too. A few days after her death, the narrator realizes vivid colors on Rowena's body. When his mind is full of the memories of Ligeia, he sees the revival of the corpse and notices that the mysterious changes of the body have transformed it

into Ligeia: “can I never – can I never be mistaken – these are the full, and the black, and the wild eyes – of my lost love – of the Lady – of the Lady Ligeia” (**Ligeia** 600).

Ligeia is told in an retrospective style by a male narrator whose name is unknown to the reader. In the beginning, he confesses that “I have never *known* the paternal name of her who was my friend and my betrothed” (**Ligeia** 590). Moreover, he can hardly recall any facts related to his first wife. This addresses that she is merely presented as an image without any historical background. Hence, she is explicitly absent in the social order. “This reduction of a woman to a signifier is another artistic rendition of woman’s non-existence in the symbolic order” (Bronfen, 1992: 331).

The idea that **Ligeia** reveals Poe’s own desire for the reincarnation of his dead mother is introduced by Bonaparte (1949: 227). Thereupon, she asserts that each figure in the tale represents real characters in Poe’s own life: the narrator is Poe, Ligeia is Elizabeth Arnold and Rowena is both Virginia Clemm and Frances Allen. Since Bonaparte accepts the description of Ligeia as the portrait of Poe’s own mother, the language that depicts Ligeia reveals her as a mother figure: “I was sufficiently aware of her infinite supremacy to resign myself, with a child-like confidence, to her guidance through the chaotic world of metaphysical investigation” (**Ligeia** 593).

In the Symbolic Order, the name of the father embodies law, order and authority for the child, therefore, the conception of father functions as a potential castrator as a result of the child’s affections towards his mother. As the advent of the father figure appoints a rivalry between the son and the father; by rejecting to give Ligeia’s family name, the narrator, in a sense, legitimizes his desire related to the mother. In other words, the challenge to the father is put forth through excluding him from the narrative.

Ligeia also embodies spiritual perfection. She epistomizes “ideality, or spirit, a quality imparted to Husband by the haunting expression of her eyes” (Hoffman, 1972:

249). The narrative emphasizes Ligeia's eyes: "I derived, from many existences in the material world, a sentiment such as I felt always around, within me, by her large and luminous orbs" (**Ligeia** 592). According to Hoffman, Ligeia is presented both as a muse and "sacred mother" (1972: 250). Her immense knowledge is to be directed to the parameters of "a Beloved Woman, Forbidden Knowledge, an irresistible compulsion to possess the latter by possessing the former" (*ibid.* 248). This fact brings about two aspects: "her readings can render the mysteries of the world transparent to him even as her body literally functions as the site at which a fundamental enigma could be solved" (Bronfen, 1992: 332).

According to Karen Weekes, Ligeia represents "the quintessential 'Dark Lady'", however, "her black hair and eyes, low voice, and quiet step are all described in surreal and ethereal terms that differentiate her from the rest of Poe's heroines" (2002: 158). It can be asserted that she oscillates between life and death. In her poem **The Conqueror Worm**, Ligeia articulates the paucity of humankind in relation to death. Nevertheless, the challenge to death is only possible through virtue:

Out – out are the lights – out all!
And over each quivering form,
The curtain, a funeral pall
Comes down with the rush of a storm-
And the angels, all pallied and wan,
Uprising, unveiling, affirm
That the play is the tragedy, "Man,"
An ist hero, the conqueror Worm.
(**Ligeia** 594)

The narrator occupies an analytic position with regard to Ligeia's body. Thus, with this male gaze, her whole body becomes fragmented. He breaks up the female body in an illusory way so as to "gain access to the answer her strangeness poses" (Bronfen, 1992: 331). Likewise, for Lawrence, Ligeia is posited as the narrator's "*machine a plaisir*" (1977: 74). Hence, by his instrument, the narrator thinks that he can reach the extreme knowledge. Also, the male narrator as the representative of the Symbolic Order, yields the power of language so as to mirror upon the linkage between the

authorship and female corpse. Within the masculine position coalescing the language with male based authority, the male narrator can allay Ligeia “to a meaning from which she is alineated”:

[H]er death not only liberates him from his dependency on her but proves to become the successful test for the omnipotence of his thoughts. Once he recollects the absent Ligeia in memory by virtue of the power of *his* will he is no longer ‘a child groping benighted’ when deprived of her intellectual tutelage. Rather he now fully possesses the knowledge she had. (Bronfen, 1992: 332)

It is not surprising to declare that Ligeia as an image represents German idealism. For Griffith, she embodies “the very incarnation of German idealism, German Transcendentalism provided with an allegorical form” (1985: 74). It is important to note here that, Hegel’s vision of Romantic art manifests itself after experiencing two previous forms: the symbolic one and the classical one. The symbolic stage, which is furnished by the pyramids of Egyptian art, is presented by architecture. On the other hand, the classical stage concerns itself with the representation of Greek gods so as to show how the divine is symbolized within human form. As for Romantic art, Hegel documents that its intent is for something superior. Nonetheless, since there are two worlds in Romantic art, the former is spiritual and the latter is external, a bifurcation occurs (Hegel, 1975: 90).

Poe’s thoughts on love give a similar perspective on the characteristics of Romantic art. The concept of erotic love defined by Hegel is dismissive. Likewise, in **Ligeia**, the sexual relationship between the narrator and Ligeia who functions as the classical ideal is cursory. This also recalls the theme of courtly love which “obstructs the sight of the absence of a relation between the sexes” (Gallop, 1982: 44). Courtly love, as Lacan explains “is a totally refined way of supplementing the absence of sexual relations, by pretending that it is we who put the obstacle there” (Lacan q. In Gallop, 1982: 44).

When the narrator loses Ligeia to death, now he becomes the one who possesses the knowledge that she has had. Besides, as the narrator considers Ligeia's existence as his own, through the separation, he experiences a threat to his integrity. In his **Mourning and Melancholia**, Freud articulates that after the loss of object of desire, the mourner withdraws from physical world, and he becomes embedded into a stage which likens to death (2005: 452). Due to the fact that there is a narcissistic tie between the ego and his object of love, death of the ideal also means losing a part of himself. When the mourner retires from his grief, he can attempt to search for a new love-object. Similarly, the narrator in **Ligeia** projects his desire directly to a new ideal object: “ - as the successor of the unforgotten Ligeia – the fair-haired and blue-eyed lady Rowena Trevanion, of Tremaine” (**Ligeia** 595).

The depiction of the bridal chamber arranged for Rowena is a foreshadowing for “her death chamber” (Hoffman, 1972: 257). The way the narrator furnishes the rooms blurs any distinction between the real and the illusion. The wind behind the draperies also strengthens this feeling: “The phantasmagoric effect was vastly heightened by the artificial introduction of a strong continual current of wind behind the draperies – giving a hideous and uneasy animation to the whole” (**Ligeia** 596).

However, the refinding of the dead wife through the narrator's mind marks “an uncanny representations” (Bronfen, 1992: 335). Even though he desires to challenge death through the repetition of Ligeia with her opposite, it only leads to re-emergence of death which is repressed. It is in the narrator's dead body, the image of Ligeia revives:

The doubling of one wife by another, by virtue of metempsychosis, is meant to prove a continued existence of the “soul” after bodily decay and serves to soothe the mourner about his own fear of mortality. The resurrection assures the repossession of a lost love object, implicitly a repetition of the maternal body, which promised infinite knowledge and at which the child first experienced a sense of unity and wholeness. This doubled corpse – the dead Rowena / the resurrected Ligeia – also functions as a conglomerate of real and figural death, in that Rowena's

actual demise also signifies the death of her two predecessors, the maternal body and the “first” wife. (*ibid.* 334)

In other words, what the resurrected dead body points out is death itself. Aside from that, she also signifies the split nature within the self, “the primary castration by death that grounds life even as she is used to re-present the narcissistic wholeness of the mother-infant dyad” (*ibid.* 334). Hence, the oversameness by repetition acquires an existence between model and copy which also denies alterity. Therefore, what the male mourner insists is to veil the first castrative attack against narcissism. His reaction to the loss of his love object is a way to repress the interstice of the real and through second death, he gets an illusion of the occlusion of the incision. “The position of the mourner is also the one in which images are born and materialised” (*ibid.* 346). In this sense, it is posited as the convalescence of the mirror stage in which “the child experienced its first jubilation at recognising its own integrity over the images it psychically formed” (*ibid.* 346).

In **The Oval Portrait**, an injured narrator searches for a shelter in a forlorn mansion. During his stay in a house located in the Apennines, the paintings bring him to the verge of feeling of admiration. His astonishment, cause of extreme realism of a peculiar work of art, gives way to his consultation of a book. The book explains that the painting is the portrait of the artist’s young wife. Since the artist is infuriated by his art, he ignores the woman he depicts:

And he *would* not see that the tints which he spread upon the canvas were drawn from the cheeks of her who sat beside him. And when many weeks had passed, and but little remained to do, save one brush upon the mouth and one tint upon the eye, the spirit of the lady again flickered up as the flame within the socket of the lamp. And then the brush was given, and then the tint was placed; and, for one moment, the painter stood entranced before the work which he had wrought; but in the next, while he yet gazed, he grew tremulous and very pallid, and aghast, and crying with a loud voice, “This is indeed *Life* itself!” turned suddenly to regard his beloved: - *She was dead!*” (**The Oval Portrait** 263)

Maria Bonaparte's psychobiographical approach lets her conceive the woman in the story as Elizabeth Arnold. Maintaining the relation between the woman's dead body and the male artist, Bonaparte highlights that a woman's death is the precondition of man's creation. Thus, the artist transfers the female body onto an object he tends to use both for "his pleasure and profit" (1949: 260).

According to Person, **The Oval Portrait** is modeled on the Pygmalion myth and it "illustrates the cost to male and female alike of the male artist's penchant for objectifying a woman's character in art" (1988: 41). Since the opposition between the woman body and masculine creation is projected through the narration, the woman becomes the archetype of "female vitality" whereas her husband indulging in his creative practice of art "robs her of all energy and life" (*ibid.* 44).

In fact, the narratives in which the portraits of dead women come up are triggered by the motive to mark the material existence of body and its inessential representation through art. However, as Bronfen asserts, the maternal hovers between "a lost maternal body, which in its real material absence is disruptive of any sense of self-stability and the imaginary maternal body of plenitude" which functions as an image of narcissism (1992: 111). Actually, Freud's concept of **das Unheimliche** should be touched upon here. As Freud explains, "the uncanny is that species of the frightening that goes back to what was once well known and had long been familiar" (2003: 124). Nevertheless, everything that is unknown and unfamiliar is not necessarily uncanny. Rather, the intellectual uncertainty is the provision for its emergence (*ibid.* 125). Likewise, the painter in Poe's story is indifferent to his wife's literal body, he just focuses on the image depicted on the canvas. This renders him oscillate between life and death. Thereby, **The Oval Portrait** "is precisely the staging of an uncanny subversion of life by death" (Bronfen, 1992: 114).

As Ariés indicates, to portray the realistic representation of someone succeeding death emerged in the sixteenth century. The underlying reason of such depictions is to

preserve the living features of the body even after death. However, Poe's artist purged of that kind of aims notates another cultural norm, namely "man is a maker and woman made" (Warner, q. in Bronfen, 1992: 112). Moreover, this convention necessitates "the decorporalisation" of the artist's wife who is posited as a muse (*ibid.* 112). In fact, she is his second bride and also the double of the portrait. Hence, the risk that her living body embodies should be removed by the masculine artist.

The anxiety related to portraits engenders an ambivalent confusion between imaginary and the real. Therefore, if a misunderstanding of the portrait occurs, "its perfect execution denies the self-referential dimension and evokes a scandalous return to the literal; reintroduces an uncertainty about the distinction between a body and its image" (*ibid.* 115).

Just like the painter in the story, the narrator also suffers from "blindness" as he cannot initially perceive **unheimlich**. This deprivation of distinction bars them to see their own mortality:

The irony of Poe's tale is that the narrative meant to afford a final explanation for the deeply agitating phenomenon only repeats the uncanny gesture. It thematises the narrator's experience of a diffusion or exchange between life and art, yet offers no distinct answer. Much as the frame of the portrait fails clearly to mark the "absence of life, and the presence of artifice," the story's frame stabilises an impression only to destabilise again. (*ibid.* 117)

The position of "double castration" finds its acme in such narratives where the poignant distinction between the living masculine and dead feminine is set. In that kind of representations, dead body of the female one is not only discarded, but also conserved (*ibid.* 138). Moreover, male subject builds his identity by projecting his opposition on the feminine. Since his subjectivity is dependent on the narration of "double castration", "it is forced to incorporate precisely that split of which and against which it narrates" (*ibid.* 139).

2.2. THE MONSTROUS WOMEN IN **BERENICE**, **THE BLACK CAT**, **MORELLA**, AND **THE FALL OF THE HOUSE OF USHER**

The incessant centrality of females in Poe's fiction poses various explanations by different scholars. Together with the extant texts written by Poe, some critics address Poe's own maternal complex. Also, many scholars claim that this plight of women in Poe's stories and poetry is a sign of indulgence in cultural norms of Poe's time. However, this raises another problem: "Poe suffers delusions of masculine strength while inadvertently exposing the psychic femininity he hides from himself" (Richards, 2004: 35).

The beautiful women in Poe's fiction do not only function as the epistomes of inspiration, but also the masculine creativity is built upon their evacuation constructed on the amalgamation of sublime and beauty. Allegedly, Poe's poetic conceptualization echoes Burke's account of the sublime is "implicitly associated with a strong masculine presence" whereas beauty hints at "a decorous feminine presence" (Smith, 2007: 11). Central to this aspect:

The sublime was associated with grand feelings stimulated by obscuring and highly dramatic encounters with the world in which a sense of awe was paradoxically inspired by a feeling of incomprehension. Beauty was of a different order, and was linked to notions of decorum and feelings for society. (*ibid.* 11)

Burke's explanation of the sublime is a confluence of many things. According to him, the sublime is allied with absence. Owing to the fact that the sublime fortifies "feelings of transience (our passing) and insignificance (our smallness)", it bases on negative experience (*ibid.* 12). Burke's ideas concerning language assert that it cannot reflect the world and also the sublime. Hence, "language is an essentially empty medium" (Smith, 2000: 21). In this case, language that can reflect obscurity, "can thus represent the sublime" (*ibid.* 21).

Burke also believes in “terror sublime” which juxtaposes both fear and wonderment. Likewise, this concoction of seemingly incongruous parts embodies the treacherous inconsistencies “including irrational desire and the immanence of death” in the unconscious (Hogle, 2002: 15). Even though the unexplainable fears remain unpleasant, they beget curiosity in mind. Terror occurs whilst the subject comes across a sense of horror. However, this confrontation leads to feeling of curiosity. Hence, unreasonable fears that rely on obscurity usher to the generation of the sublime (Burduck, 1992: 35). Similarly, Freudian notion of uncanny can be allied to Burke’s conception of terror. While Burke notes that the anxieties arising from external conditions can unravel the inner plight of the subject’s mind, for Freud, the uncanny or **unheimlich**, “may represent repressed Oedipal anxieties which are revealed in disturbing ways” (Smith, 2007: 14).

Some critics consider that, as a pivotal element of fear in Poe’s fiction, dead woman is posited as “a product and a sign of a psyche shattered by the repeated early loss of significant female figures” (Richards, 2004: 30). Parallel to this chief position of the female characters, Poe’s own life also reflects “a maternal complex, an oral fixation, a female-dependency syndrome” (*ibid.* 30-31). Actually, the death drive emerging through dead female bodies embodies a desire to turn back Real. However, its force to fragment the ego is refueled by a traumatic experience (Savoy, 2002: 184). Moreover, the reminiscence of the trauma which is a concept of separation brings about “retaliation against the ego and its strictures” (Boothby, q. in Savoy, 2002: 184). The same traumatic involvement is also manifested in Poe’s related stories:

Poe’s narratives frequently stage this kind of encounter between the protagonist and a corpse, the emblem of the Real, but the unrequited melancholia that prompts this encounter does not inevitably require that the two be identical. Rather, Poe’s Gothic effect is empowered by the confounding figure of *chiasmus* – the symbolism of crossing over, whereby the qualities of one object uncannily imbue the other (as life is invaded by death) – to situate the literally dead in relation to the traumatic shattering of the protagonist’s ego, all within a death drive that is now clearly bound up with the process of narration. (*ibid.* 184)

Enormously associated with female body, the concept of fear in Poe's fiction stands in close bond with psychoanalysis. As for this relationship, Schor underlines the fact that female theorizing comes up with an account that is based on the body (1981: 205). Kristeva's theory of abjection which she examines broadly in **Powers of Horror** postulates the fact that "the subject's inability to accept its own corporeal limits" (Grosz, 1990: 153). Starting with an overview of abjection as a ritual of "defilement and pollution in the paganism" (1982: 17), Kristeva dwells on **narcissistic crisis** which is an illustrative of "a return to a self-contemplative, conservative, self-sufficient haven" (*ibid.* 14).

In her analysis, Kristeva pinpoints some characteristics of humankind such as blood, death, female body, bodily wastes which are denigrated by the subject. In fact, Kristeva yields Lacan's ideas as a prelude for her theory of abject. In the pre-linguistic realm which is named as the Semiotic Order by Kristeva, the child feels oneness as he cannot perceive any borders with mother. Nevertheless, when the child steps into the Symbolic realm, his selfhood is challenged by the elements that trigger abjection. Since these abject defilements disrupt subjectivity, they must be annihilated.

According to Kristeva, the corpse is posited as the supreme abjection. When the subject faces a corpse, he conceives his own life's mortality. This situation stems from the fact that, the sight of the cadaver crumbles the boundaries between the subject and the object. As Kristeva states: "The corpse, seen without God and outside of science, is the utmost of abjection. It is death infecting life. Abject" (*ibid.* 4).

In Edgar Allan Poe's fiction, the utilization of female body as abject cannot be dodged. For example, in **Berenice**, the narrator's obsession with his fiancée's teeth forms the centre of the tale. The narrator whose name is Egaeus, articulates his preoccupation in an insane way: "The teeth! – the teeth! – they were here, and there, any everywhere, and visibly and palpably before me" (**Berenice** 583). He also

confesses his hunger for them: “For these I longed with a frenzied desire” (**Berenice** 583):

They – they alone were present to the mental eye, and they, in their sole individuality, became the essence of my mental life. I held them in every light. I turned them in every attitude. I surveyed their characteristic. I dwelt upon their peculiarities. I pondered upon their conformation. I mused upon the alteration in their nature. (**Berenice** 583)

Even though he states that Berenice is remarkably beautiful, Egaeus says that he has never loved her. He visualizes her “not as a being of the earth, earthly, but as the abstraction of such a being; not as a thing to admire, but to analyze” (**Berenice** 582).

Owing to the fact that Berenice suffers from a disease, her physical appearance begins to decay. According to Leland S. Person, “As verbal constructs, Poe’s female characters typically decompose; their diseases reflect their creators’ dis-ease with their embodied beings” (2001: 139). In this sense, Egaeus’s fear “becomes unbearable as her physical condition deteriorates” (Weekes, 2002: 155). For some critics, the narrator’s horror is about Berenice’s sexuality. Weekes notes that Berenice’s grin symbolizes carnal desire which is very difficult for the “cerebral narrator to defeat” (*ibid.* 156). In order to get rid of his anxiety, Egaeus removes the teeth as he thinks that Berenice is already dead.

According to Bonaparte, the teeth of Berenice are “vaginalized” or “genitalized in the unconscious” as they recall the fear of being bitten, in this aspect, castration (1949: 219). Therefore, Bonaparte considers the mouth and the vagina as identical in the unconscious. The fact that the narrator’s fear related to the concept of woman as castrator emanates from her genitals can be linked to the concept of **vagina dentata**. This notion which stresses the destructive side of the female one can be seen in many African, Aztec and Indian myths. In those myths, the male hero beats the monstrous mother through breaking the teeth out of her vagina so as to render her a woman (Neumann, 1991: 168). Likewise, in **Berenice**, the narrator’s act of removing the

teeth functions as an attempt to remove this dreadfulness which distrubs his male identity. It also reflects “a sort of retributive castration inflicted on the mother whom he loves, and yet hates, because obdurate to his sex-love for her in infancy” (Bonaparte, 1949: 218). Another implication focalizes the teeth to fetish:

The indetermination of the fetish is such that it can signify that the woman is castrated / dead, or that she is not castrated / dead, or even allow the proposition that the viewing man is castrated / inscribed by death. In Freud’s terms, the fetish as a token of triumph over the threat of castration, as the safeguard against it, contains a superlative moment. (Bronfen, 1992: 97)

The pattern of annihilation of the female other also emerges as a reoccurring motif in **The Black Cat**. The stereotypically gendered perspective of the male gaze towards the females becomes evident in this narrative. Not surprisingly, this unchanging element illustrates the endeavours to annihilate the female other.

The narrator of the story begins his narration by claiming that he is sane, even though the story does not seem so: “Yet, mad am I not – and very surely do I not dream” (**Black Cat** 200). He asserts that he loves animals, and he and his wife have lots of animals. However, a black cat whose name alludes to god of the underworld Pluto is not trusted for the narrator and he also points out the belief “which regarded all black cats as witches in disguise” (**Black Cat** 200). Even though he loves Pluto, the black cat is affected by the narrator’s abnormal behaviours as he suffers from alcohol.

One night, when he is drunk, he thinks that Pluto is avoiding him. As he vehemently attempts to grasp the cat, it bites his hand. Then he cuts out the cat’s eye using a pen-knife. Next morning, the narrator begins to feel remorse. Nevertheless, after a while, his regret changes into irritation and he proclaims that he is under “the spirit of PERVERSENESS” (**Black Cat** 201):

Of this spirit philosophy takes no account. Yet I am not more sure that my soul lives, than I am that perverseness is one of the primitive impulses of the human heart – one of the indivisible primary faculties, or sentiments, which give direction to the character of Man. (**Black Cat** 201)

Succeeding this, he hangs the black cat from a tree. On the very same day, a mysterious fire burns his house, therefore the narrator and his wife leave the house. On the day after the fire, the narrator visits the ruins of his house and sees “as if graven in *bas-relief* upon the white surface, the figure of a gigantic cat” on the single wall (**Black Cat** 202). Although he is overwhelmed by terror due to this impression, he seeks for rational explanations for it. Nonetheless, as he admits “I could not rid myself of the phantasm of the cat” (**Black Cat** 202). Later, he comes across another cat which resembles Pluto, but the only difference between them is the large white patch on its chest. So, the narrator takes it to his house and it becomes “a great favourite” (**Black Cat** 203). One day, when he and his wife descend into the cellar of their new house, the narrator is about to fall over the cat. As he gets infuriated, he tries to attack it. However, he is shunned by his wife and he kills her with an axe. In order to hide the dead body, he makes a hole in the plaster wall. When he turns his rage against the cat, he cannot see it. A few days after the assassination, the police come and investigate the narrator’s house. Even though the police are about to leave without any suspicion, the narrator wants to be sure and says “I may say an *excellently* well-constructed house. These walls – are you going gentlemen? – these walls are solidly put together” (**Black Cat** 206). However, when an unexpected voice is heard behind the wall, the police pull down it and find a corpse upon whose head a black cat is sitting:

The corpse, already greatly decayed and clotted with gore, stood erect before the eyes of spectators. Upon its head, with red extended mouth and solitary eye of fire, sat the hideous beast whose craft had seduced me into murder, and whose informing voice had consigned me to the hangman. I had walled the monster up within the tomb. (**Black Cat** 206)

According to Bonaparte, Pluto symbolized “the mother in the child’s anal-sadistic and phallic stage” (1949: 473). Hence, her analysis of **Black Cat** resolves around the representation of the mother through a totem guise (*ibid.* 465). No matter how hard the narrator tries to repress his desire related to the mother, it is transgressed both by his language and his ferocious behaviours. For Bonaparte, this attitude is “never other than erotised aggression, whether directed outwards against others or inwards against himself: it is always sadism or masochism” (*ibid.* 463).

Pluto’s bite of the narrator’s hand, is in fact, recalls the idea of “cloaca dentata” (*ibid.* 468). Hence, the hand exactly corresponds to the phallic symbol and biting it alludes to the dangerous sexuality of feminine. Gripping his pen-knife, the narrator cuts out one of cat’s eyes. As he tells: “I took from my waistcoat-pocket a penknife, opened it, grasped the poor beast by the throat, and deliberately cut one of its eyes from the socket!” (**Black Cat** 201). In the framework of Lacan’s theory, what happens here is that the narrator becomes a Symbolic subject by eradicating the female other and consequently has a right to exist as a male self. The similarity between the two words, “I” and “eye” can be noticed at first sight. Hence, cutting out the eye also remarks the male one’s efforts to erase female subjectivity both in language and Symbolic Order. This incident which makes the female recede to the position of the other, in fact, proves to fit into the notion of the priority of the male self over the other both in language and in Symbolic Order. The instrument used for the annihilation of the female is of course, a phallic image: a penknife. Such a gendered presentation might well hint to the male writer without the text and his symbolic attributes performed through his pen(is). As Lacan asserts, woman “is not at all”, therefore extricating the eye / I from the narrative refers to the position of the female one in the Symbolic Order. As Bonaparte interprets:

By degrees, Pluto’s wound heals, but the socket of the lost eye presents “a frightful appearance”. No less frightful and repulsive, to certain men, Poe doubtless among them, is the appearance or idea of the vulva which, unconsciously, is likened to some frightful wound, left from the severed penis. [...] Also, whereas in the tale the injured cat flees from

its tormentor, in fact, it was Poe who fled, terrified, from mutilated woman, who could mutilate him. (1949: 468)

When the cat's wound heals, the narrator's hatred for it deepens. As a result of that, he hangs it, which is an overt symbol for the "*rephalisation* of the victim, both because hanging is thought to determine ejaculation in *extremis* and because the suspended body, as *hanging* object, is equated with the penis" (*ibid.* 470). Likewise, following this, the appearance of the second cat on the head of the narrator's dead wife with the insinuation of the uncanny "that has been repressed and then reappears" is obvious in relation to the fear of castration (Freud, 2003: 153). Some critics infer from the narrator's encounter with the cat in the cellar that it refers to "the erotic connotations of steep stairs in dreams to feel that this man finds intimacy intolerable" (Benfey, 1993: 41). For Bonaparte:

[T]he grim and horrible mockery, so evident in this tale, determines that the wife's body, in its entirety – as earlier, that of her double Pluto – is represented, not as hanged but as "erect", in her tomb-chimney. This erect posture in which the murderer buries his wife, after splitting her skull with an axe – equivalent to castration and counterpart to the pen-knife excision of the cat's eye – is also a sort of counterpart to the hanging of Pluto; yet another mockery in the form of rephalisation. (1949: 481)

Similarly, **Morella** also resolves around a morbid figure. The story is inaugurated as the narrator describes his marriage to Morella whose knowledge is immense. As a result of that, the narrator embarks on "the intricacies of her studies" (**Morella** 601). Having proclaimed Morella's indulgence in the black arts, the narrator limns how her physical appearance is getting worse: "the crimson spot settled steadily upon the cheek, and the blue veins upon the pale forehead became prominent" (**Morella** 602). As she gives birth, she dies, however; her soul becomes adhered to her newborn child. Subsequently, the narrator realizes "new points of resemblance in the child to her mother, the melancholy and the dead" (**Morella** 603). As the semblance becomes petrifying, the narrator concocts to make the child baptized in order to protect her from her own mother's grim soul. Just as the priest asks for the name of the daughter, the narrator answers "Morella". At the same time, the narrator's dark soul regains

control of her daughter's soul and she cries "I am here" and dies (**Morella** 604). When the narrator goes to bury his daughter's dead body, he comes across an unexpected circumstance: "I laughed with a long and bitter laugh as I found no traces of the first, in the charnel where I laid the second, **Morella**" (**Morella** 604).

Actually, it would be more apt to read the frightening mother image in **Morella** as a consignment of mother's body to dissolution of subjectivity. In fact, the concept of terrible mother does not only stem from her reproductive function, but also her being the generator of chaos. Likewise, **Morella** encloses these elements and "the undercurrents of sexual anxiety are muted and transformed into supernatural fear" (Wuletich-Brinberg, 1988: 135).

Bonaparte emphasizes the term of "transference" in the story which "comes about by feelings properly attached to one being, being displaced upon another" (1949: 221). Bonaparte continues her argument by pointing out the indication of "*repetition-compulsion*" "which dominates our instinctual life, and impels us always to seek the same emotions in the same forms, whatever the object" (*ibid.* 222). In psychoanalytical term, **repetition automatism** functions as a sign of resistance against castration anxiety. Along with the other stories mentioned above, **Morella** is posited as a total immersion into the anxiety related to the feminine.

This theme is reiterated in **The Fall of The House of Usher**. The story auspicates when the unnamed narrator arrives at the house of his friend on "a dull, dark, and soundless day" (**House of Usher** 207). The reason for his arrival is Roderick Usher's need for his friend's companion. As Roderick suffers from an illness, the narrator accepts his request. The narrator explains his first impressions when he gazes at the house for the very first time:

I know not how it was – but, with the first glimpse of the building, a sense of insufferable gloom pervaded my spirit. I say insufferable; for the feeling was unrelieved by any of that half-pleasurable, because poetic, sentiment with which the mind usually receives even the

sternest natural images of the desolate or terrible. (**House of Usher**
207)

Just like Roderick, Roderick's sister Madeline is in a death-like condition because of her mysterious illness. No matter how hard the narrator attempts to cheer up Roderick, his plight does not change. Even though he reads him stories and listens to Roderick's playing the guitar, it seems unachievable to ameliorate Roderick's ailment. After all, Roderick concludes that it is due to the unhealthy house in which they live that he cannot come around.

Later, on pointing Madeline's death out to the narrator, Roderick insists on entombing her impermanently below the house. So, they put her dead body into the tomb together and at the same time, the narrator realizes her rosy cheeks. In the forthcoming days, they feel uneasy. So as to calm down Roderick, the narrator reads "Mad Trist" by Sir Launcelot Canning. While he reads, the noises that are narrated in the romance are heard. Roderick estimates that these voices are adhered to Madeline whom they have buried alive. When the bedroom door is open, they can see Madeline standing there. Thus, Roderick's crooked reasoning becomes justified and he dies of horror. The astonished narrator runs away and the house of Usher collapses.

On a psychological level, the house of Usher seems to embody precisely what was identified by Freud as "uncanny". As one of the leitmotives of Gothic tradition, the haunted house evokes uncanny perturbation: "its apparent domesticity, its residue of family history and nostalgia, its role as the last and most intimate shelter of private comfort sharpened by contrast the terror of invasion by alien spirits" (Vidler, 1992: 17). On the other hand, the depiction of the house leads to a sense of unfamiliarity even though it is obviously familiar (*ibid.* 18):

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. (**House of Usher** 207)

In its aspiration to embrace the past, the house is kept as a mark of “repository of centuries of memory and tradition, embodied in its walls and objects” (**House of Usher** 207). To this might be added the uncanny propensity to repeat history. Thereby explained in terms of psychoanalysis, the uncanny draws both similarities and differences between **heimlich** and **unheimlich** within the scope of transformation from the former to the latter.

Obviously, the house of Usher is also an embodiment of Roderick Usher. It is impossible not to realize that both Roderick’s depiction and the portrait of the house engender a sense of putrescence. And therein also is the mirrored image of the house in the water. The narrator’s pondering over this reflection throughout the opening pages of the story, in fact, originates the house (Bieganowski, 1988: 183). Furthermore, “to relieve the insufferable gloom he attempts to goad his imagination into something of the sublime” (*ibid.* 183). Since “the submerged being of Usher” is reverberated by the reflected image of the house, the narrator is appalled not by the concrete structure but by its mirrored image (Quinn, 1957: 240).

Another resemblance in the story is between Roderick and Madeline Usher. The narrator discerns “a striking similitude between the brother and sister” (**House of Usher** 215). Hoffman announces that Madeline Usher is the double of Roderick (1972: 316). Nonetheless, for Roderick, conceived as a muse for his art, Madeline must die so as to create art. This precondition is intimately linked to Poe’s concept of death as graceful woman. Thus, this condition does not nullify the fact that “to love one’s twin sister is but a double displacement for the ultimate narcissism, self-love, and the ultimate incestuous desire, possession of one’s mother’s body” (*ibid.* 317).

Roderick’s incestuous desire to unite with Madeline is observable throughout the narration. Even though “by riddling himself of all earthly passion” he tries to dispel

his cogent desire, his art partly covers his longing “and in the end the Truth is out-revealed” (Kaplan, 1993: 63). Hence, Madeline’s return reflects “the return of Usher’s repudiated desires and the granting of his forbidden wishes” (*ibid.* 63).

Just as Bonaparte emphasizes **The Fall of The House of Usher** is one of the mother-as-landscape series of the tales. From this perception, the womb-like home is not trusted and becomes an uncanny element in which the tension that stems from the repressed desire of Roderick towards Madeline comes to the surface. Thus, his attempt to bury her “would be described as a phantasy of return to the mother’s womb” (Bonaparte, 1949: 245). This conception is precisely redolent of the Oedipus wish. Roderick thereby implies the oedipal child who yearns for merging with the mother, and the fall of the house alludes the reunification of the twins.

3. UNCERTAINTY WITHIN LANGUAGE

Theory of language is an integral aspect of Lacanian point of view. Lacan combines the theory of language with Freud's dictum on psyche. His thought resonates with Saussure's theories. Saussure who postulates his idea of language as a system of signs, synthesizes a signifier and a signified. Whereas the signifier is apropos the material, the signified is delineated as the image. According to Saussure, "the sign is not the attachment of a label or name to a pre-given concept" yet, it is "active in constituting its ingredients" (Grosz, 1990: 93). In Saussure's view, the signifier and the signified do not have an identity on their own as they can be defined only through what they are not. In other words, "the signifier is that element of the sign that is not the signified" (*ibid.* 93).

However, Lacan rejects one point of Saussure's thought as he claims that "the terms 'material' and 'conceptual' are only relative" (*ibid.* 93). Lacan focuses on an algorithm that is defined as "S/s" and explains it as "the signifier over the signified, 'over' corresponding to the bar separating the two stages" (1977: 149). Hence, the signifier is superior than the signified. This priority also "correlates with Lacan's subversion of the primacy of the subject in his accounts of the mirror phase" (Grosz, 1990: 97). Since the Lacanian subject couples neither the individual nor the conscious subject cannot be distinguished from the ego. Therefore, as Lacan puts it, the ego "arises as a crystallization or sedimentation of ideal images" which "may consist of those the child sees of him or herself in a mirror" (Fink, 1995: 36).

Inasmuch as Lacan asserts that the subject is defined within language, his theory of language inevitably involves an engagement with the unconscious. Likewise, Lacan announces that "the unconscious is structured like a language". That is to say that, the structure of language is just like the that of the unconscious as neither of them can be expressed. Owing to the fact that there is no metalanguage, the subject is

always in process. This stage involves **The Real, The Imaginary Order** and **The Symbolic**. As Fink explains:

The splitting of the I into ego (false self) and unconscious brings into being a surface, in a sense, with two sides: one that is exposed and one that is hidden. Though the two sides may not ultimately be made of radically different material -linguistic in nature- at any given point along the surface there is a front and a back, a visible face and an invisible one. (*ibid.* 45)

According to Lacan, the relationship between the signifiers and the signifieds depends on convention. As a result of that arbitrariness and uncertainty within language, the unconscious emerges. In the state of unconscious, the subject constantly experiences a sense of lack that cannot be fulfilled within language. It is merely in the Real that the subject feels completeness as this is a stage without language. Thus, as the location of no words, the Real conveys no gender-oriented desire. It is only when the subject participates in language that he or she begins to form subjectivity within the male based cultural systems. This proliferation is what Lacan labels the Symbolic Order, “the domain of the signifier which constitutes the subject and allows it entry into the systems of society and culture” (Burke, 1992: 96).

Lacan’s lingocentric discourse does not underpin the **sum res cogitans** of Descartes as “the Lacanian subject is a being whose proper essence is that it does not think” (*ibid.* 96). This profound contradiction thereby upholds “if the Lacanian subject exists at all, it exists where it does not think” (*ibid.* 96). Such a statement also bespeaks that in fact nobody speaks whilst it is the language that thinks and makes the subject speak.

The tenets of Lacan’s psychoanalytic approach and their application to literary texts are a kind of multilayered analysis. Theoretically, how the subject speaks rather than what is told is crucial. Due to the fact that there is no ultimate signified, to reach the final meaning through the signifiers is insurmountable. What this states, at base, is the self-referential language of the subject. The clustering elements such as the

repressed thoughts and desires of the subject are surely convenient to unravel the hidden split-personality. So, whereas the public voice of the subject blusters the pattern of the Symbolic authority, the inconsistent voice of the split subject reflects the nature of one's own subjectivity.

Hence, whereas the public voice of the subject is an advocate of dominant patriarchal norms, the private voice of the self reflects unconsciousness. However, in order to internalize the dominant ideology, a text which pertains to the public voice involves gaps and unspoken parts. These unobtrusive gaps can be interpreted as a line related to the unconscious, as Freud names it. According to Pierre Macherey "in order to say anything, there are other things *which must not be said*" (2006: 95). Indeed, only through this silenced language, the ideology can rationalize its dominant discourses:

What is important in the work is what it does not say. This is not the same as the careless notation 'what it refuses to say', although that would in itself be interesting: a method might be built on it, with the task of *measuring silences*, whether acknowledged or unacknowledged. But rather than this, what the work *cannot say* is important, because there the elaboration of the utterance is acted out, in a sort of journey to silence. (*ibid.* 97)

Also, Julia Kristeva's approach to language based on the premise that the speaking subject is heterogeneous should be pinpointed here. Her ideas which criticize the theories of prominent figures such as Saussure and Chomsky, recognize the speaking subject as a combination of two different elements: **The Semiotic** and **The Symbolic**. The term **Semiotic** is derived from a Greek word that means "distinctive mark, trace, index, precursory sign, proof, engraved or written sign, imprint, trace, figuration" (Kristeva, 1986: 93). Kristeva explains that the Semiotic as a process signifies the way through which the bodily drives and energy occur. For Kristeva "[d]iscrete quantities of energy move through the body of the subject who is not yet constituted as such and, in the course of his development, they are arranged according to the various constraints imposed on this body" (*ibid.* 93). To wit, the body undergoes a

splitting stage so as to disguise these drives. Just like Lacan's imaginary stage, the Semiotic is "the repressed condition of symbolically regulated, grammatical, and syntactically governed language" (Grosz, 1990: 152). What is pertinent to the Semiotic is the Pre-Oedipal phase which adumbrates the Pre-Oedipal mother. According to Kristeva, the Pre-Oedipal mother alloys femininity and masculinity, therefore, there is no difference between them.

On the other hand, the Symbolic which blossoms in the soil of the linguistic categories is associated with Lacan's Law of the Father. Thus, the Symbolic reflects the masculinist society while the Semiotic embodies both femininity and maternity. Moreover, the Symbolic "consists in the procedures which establish unities, whether at the level of the individual psychical experience, signifying and representational practices, or social institutions" (*ibid.* 151-152). Actually, despite of their seemingly different functions, the Semiotic is converged with the Symbolic in order to create the signifying process. As Kristeva elucidates:

These two modalities are inseparable within the *signifying process* that constitutes language, and the dialectic between them determines the type of discourse (narrative, metalanguage, theory, poetry, etc.) involved; in other words, so-called 'natural' language allows for different modes of articulation of the semiotic and the symbolic. [...] Because the subject is always *both* semiotic *and* symbolic, no signifying system he produces can be either 'exclusively' semiotic or 'exclusively' symbolic, and is instead necessarily marked by an indebtedness to both. (1986: 92-93)

Kristeva's understanding of language indicates that meanings are both mobile and multifarious. In this sense, the speaking subject is in a movable position as he oscillates between the Semiotic and the Symbolic. Even though it is the Symbolic that is dominated, the Semiotic has a subversive potential. Hence, Kristeva charges the Semiotic space with the **Semiotic Chora**. As Kristeva emphasizes "[t]he *chora* is a modality of signifiante in which the linguistic sign is not yet articulated as the absence of an object and as the distinction between real and symbolic" (*ibid.* 94).

Indeed, the Chora is posited as a place before the Law of the Father. The negativity committed to the Semiotic Chora enables the subject to be originated and negated, and it is the Chora in which “his unity succumbs before the process of charges and stases that produce him” (*ibid.* 95). The onus on the Semiotic Chora is the early language usage. As being one of the linchpins of the childhood language, laughter is salutary to recall here. The infant laughs when he tries to alleviate his tension. This is what Kristeva defines as the first sublimation. Also, the thetic phase comes up through splitting of the Chora. Therefore, “[a]ll enunciation, whether of a word or of a sentence, is thetic” (*ibid.* 98). What it requires is an identification, to wit, “the subject must separate from and through his image, from and through his objects” (*ibid.* 98). Following the thetic phase, the subject is introduced into the Symbolic. Therefore, the Chora is repressed within language, yet it also generates the disruptive aspect of it. The Semiotic fluxes at the symbolic level “represent transgressive breaches of symbolic coherence or, [...] the symbolization or representation of hitherto unspeakable or unintelligible phenomena” (Grosz, 1990: 153). It is also clear that,

[T]he symbolic/oedipal/social mode owes a debt of existence to an unspeakable and unrepresentable semiotic/maternal/feminine. The symbolic cannot even acknowledge, let alone repay, the debt that the oedipal and the conscious owe to the pre-oedipal and the unconscious. (*ibid.* 153)

In other words, the gaps or ruptures in a text function as a tool to subvert the dominant ideology. Kristeva maintains that poetic language proffers a way to the Semiotic. Moreover, in poetic language there is an ongoing process, to wit, “a *heterogeneousness* to meaning and signification” (Kristeva, 1980: 133). The concept of heterogeneity as a paragrammatic practice “is indispensable, for though articulate, precise, organized, and complying with constraints and rules [...], this signifying disposition is not that of meaning or signification” (*ibid.* 133). Thereby, Kristeva claims that poetic language is different from everyday language as it contains multiple connections. To illustrate, in poetic language, *I* embodies transgression since

there is nothing as an equivalence in it. Besides, poetic language unravels the infiniteness of everyday language. Therefore, what Kristeva purports is a signifying process between the ordinary language and poetic language. And, this process hinges on dynamism whereas it rejects formalism.

When poetic language is practised, the heterogeneous reality brings about a heterogeneous subject which is called “subject in process”. Kristeva also gives importance to the speaking body by asserting that “the logic of language is already operating at the material level of bodily processes and that bodily drives make their way into language” (Oliver, 2003: 38). Depending on the relationship between language and the body, Kristeva’s ideas dodge the traditional problems of representation (*ibid.* 39):

Traditional theories which postulate that language represents bodily experience fall into an impossible situation by presupposing that the body and language are distinct, even opposites. Some traditional theories purport that language is an instrument that captures, mirrors, or copies, bodily experience. The problem, then, becomes how to explain the connection between these two distinct realms of language, on the one hand, and material, on the other. (*ibid.* 39)

The male-authored texts which support the dominant ideology on the surface, can be used as good examples in order to show how the irruption within the Symbolic language occurs. The outbursts of the Semiotic give ways to the emergence of repressed thoughts. In the following parts, Edgar Allan Poe’s short stories **How To Write A Blackwood Article** and **A Predicament** will be studied to show how the maternal Semiotic shines over the male-authored language.

3.1. THE FEMALE GROTESQUE BODY

What male-oriented language does is not merely a means of control between genders, but is to create an absolute reality. In this reality, every social role is prearranged and the subjects are supposed to behave accordingly. Hence, while the

silenced females obey patriarchal norms, the grotesque females buffet with them, to wit, they represent nonconformist behavior.

Etymologically, the word grotesque means grotto-esque, or, cave-like (Russo, 1995: 1). When it is used as a bodily metaphor, it reflects “the cavernous anatomical female body” (*ibid.* 1). It is essential to recall Bakhtin’s ideas on the concept of grotesque here. In his **Rabelais and His World**, Bakhtin asserts that the notion of grotesque emphasizes “a peculiar crisis of splitting” (22), in other words, the binary oppositions such as body and mind, material and spiritual. Bakhtin also distinguishes between “upward” and “downward” explaining that the previous one is earth and the latter one is heaven: “Earth is an element that devours, swallows up (the grave, the womb) and at the same time an element of birth, of renascence (the maternal breasts)” (*ibid.* 21). Whereas the upper part corresponds to “the face or the head” as in the classical conception of body; the lower part is associated with “the genital organs, the belly and the buttocks” (*ibid.* 21) as it is reflected by feminine grotesque body. It is no surprise then, that it is the “perfect” male body that comes to the foreground in the classical representation of rationality while the grotesque is represented through the female:

The images of the grotesque body are precisely those which are abjected from the bodily canons of classical aesthetics. The classical body is transcendent and monumental, closed, static, self-contained, symmetrical, and sleek; it is identified with the “high” or official culture of the Renaissance and later, with rationalism, individualism and normalizing aspirations of the bourgeoisie. The grotesque body is open, protruding, irregular, secreting, multiple, and changing; it is identified with non-official “low” culture or the carnivalesque, and with social transformation. (Russo, 1995: 8)

In grotesque distortion, the emphasis is on the exaggeration of body parts such as nose, mouth and belly. Thus, it subverts the classical concept of beauty which is in compliance with Apollonian order. The classic canon is different from the Renaissance aesthetics in that it conceives the body as a finished product. Moreover, it is isolated from all other bodies and “[t]he ever unfinished nature of the body was

hidden, kept secret; conception, pregnancy, childbirth, death throes, were almost never shown” (Bakhtin, 1984: 29).

On the other hand, Bakhtin claims that in grotesque realism, “the bodily element is deeply positive”, yet it is not represented “in a private, egotistic form, severed from the other spheres of life, but as something universal, representing all the people” (*ibid.* 19). Since the grotesque realism is imbued with growing and renewed people, this explains “why all that is bodily becomes grandiose, exaggerated, immeasurable” (*ibid.* 19). As it exemplified with Kerch terracotta collection, the grotesque figures are in process due to their representation of death and birth at the same time. For Bakhtin, “[i]t is pregnant death, a death that gives birth. There is nothing completed, nothing calm and stable in the bodies of these old hags” (*ibid.* 25).

The notion of grotesque brings us to another fundamental aspect of Bakhtinian view: carnival. Bakhtin points out that all the forms of carnival have some affinities to the feasts of The Church (*ibid.* 8). Bakhtin expresses the view that “[t]he feast is always essentially related to time, either to the recurrence of an event in the natural (cosmic) cycle, or to biological or historic timeliness” (*ibid.* 9). Some changes in the life of society or man, such as death and revival, are needed as the integral parts for “a festive perception of the word” (*ibid.* 9).

Carnival creates an area that subverts the dominant doctrines and overturns hierarchic relations. Thereby, carnival refutes the grim atmosphere of the official doctrines and during carnival “there is a temporary suspension of all hierarchic distinctions and barriers among men and of certain norms and prohibitions of usual life” (*ibid.* 15). Thus, carnival time can be seen as a moment of change and transgression in society. As Russo explains:

Carnival and the carnivalesque suggest a redeployment or counterproduction of culture, knowledge, and pleasure. In its multivalent oppositional play, carnival refuses to surrender the critical and cultural tools of the dominant class, and in this sense, carnival can

be seen, above all, as a site of insurgency, and not merely withdrawal.
(1995: 62)

Julia Kristeva takes up Bakhtin's concept of grotesque and combines it with Lacan's "theory of subjectivity in her account of transgression and abjection" (*ibid.* 10). This place of transgression is where "I [the subject] am at the border of my [his] condition as a living being" (Kristeva, 1982: 3). Hence, as Russo suggests this privileged site for Kristeva "is the archaic, maternal version of the female grotesque" (1995: 10). Furthermore, the abject functions as a reminder of the subject's borders. Kristeva combines her theory of abjection with "the desirable and terrifying, nourishing and murderous, fascinating and abject inside of the maternal body" (Kristeva, 1982: 54). Due to her reproductive functions, the female is posited as the embodiment of dirt. Thereby, the female one is abjected in the dominant masculine order. Also, abject refers to "[w]hat does not respect borders, positions, rules" (*ibid.* 4). In this sense, the female, who is accepted as the "abnormal" in the patriarchal ideology, can diverge from the dominant roles by subverting them with her grotesque body.

3.2. THE FEMALE NARRATOR IN **HOW TO WRITE A BLACKWOOD ARTICLE AND A PREDICAMENT**

In a few short stories, Poe makes a change in the choice of narrator which leads to the sharing of the male authority with the female. Whereas the authorial aim behoves decorous representations of the genders, the unconscious language reveals a voice that shatters the dominant ideology. The female voice of these stories, **How To Write A Blackwood Article** and **A Predicament**, brings about Poe's diversion from the Symbolic mediums of expression. What happens here demonstrates how Poe's writing subject addresses to Kristeva's concept of subject-in-process.

Dealing with the female unconscious through a female narrator contrasts sharply with the visions of idealized women of Poe's male narrators. In the stories told by

male narrators “Poe’s construction of a male persona [...] depended upon his gentlemanly treatment of women, but it also depended upon exercising *verbal control* over women as literary constructs” (Person, 2001: 133; my italics). Nonetheless, the stories depicted by the female narrator stands out in contradiction to these told by the males. The appearance of the Semiotic and the grotesque female body in those narrations give way to subversion of the Symbolic Order.

Poe’s only female narrator, Signora Psyche Zenobia’s narration emerges in two stories, the first one is **How To Write A Blackwood Article** which is followed by **A Predicament**. Actually, the initial story is a satire as it mocks the examples of Gothic fiction produced by Poe’s British contemporaries. According to Auerbach it ends “with an extravagant display of self-mockery which dramatizes how an author’s experience of writing a story can grow confused with the fictional experience of his characters” (1989: 3). In this story, Mr. Blackwood tells Zenobia to kill herself in order to write down her intimate feelings. Also, he gives examples from other stories:

There was ‘The Dead Alive’, a capital thing! – the record of a gentlemen’s sensations when entombed before the breath was out of his body – full of taste, terror, sentiment, metaphysics, and erudition. You would have sworn that the writer had been born and brought up in a coffin. Then we had the ‘Confessions of an Opium-eater – fine, very fine! – glorious imagination – deep philosophy – acute speculation – plenty of fire and fury, and a good spicing of decidedly unintelligible. (**How To Write A Blackwood Article** 307)

As it is clear from the beginning, Zenobia is the first person narrator of the story: “I presume everybody has heard of me. My name is the Signora Psyche Zenobia” (**How To Write A Blackwood Article** 305). Nonetheless, her narration is shaped by the impositions of Mr. Blackwood who constantly orders her to take down his statements. Thus, Zenobia’s own narration is full of quotations from Mr. Blackwood’s long speech. Zenobia’s statement also justifies this fact: “I wrote as he dictated” (**How To Write A Blackwood Article** 309). Moreover, as Mr. Blackwood explains, to be a writer compels to have a pen which is a phallic symbol: “In the first place your writer of intensities must have a very black ink, and a *very big pen*, with a very blunt

nib” (**How To Write A Blackwood Article** 306, my italics). He also warns her against another important point: “mark me! –*that pen-must-never be mended*” (**How To Write A Blackwood Article** 307). Hence, if masculinity is oriented towards the male organ, provision of having a big one, which is not mended, confirms male one’s recognition of the self as a powerful being. Likewise, Mr. Blackwood’s statement can be considered as a desire to purge the female one of the language, therefore, the Symbolic Order.

Following **How To Write A Blackwood Article**, **A Predicament** is based primarily on Zenobia’s experience of her own death and definition of her sensations. Zenobia with her poodle Diana and her servant Pompey walk through the city of Edina. Suddenly, she is fascinated by the sight of a large Gothic cathedral. At the steeple of the cathedral, she comes across a giant clock. While she looks around the city with Pompey’s help, she realizes that the minute hand of the clock has hit her neck: “Turning my head gently to one side, I perceive, to my extreme horror, that the huge, glittering, scimitor-like minute-hand of the clock had, in the course of its hourly revolution, *descended upon my neck*” (**A Predicament** 316). Meanwhile, Zenobia begins to depict the physical changes on her body: “My eyes, from the cruel pressure of the machine, were absolutely starting from their sockets” (**A Predicament** 317). After a while, the clock totally cleaves her body:

At twenty-five minutes past five in the afternoon, precisely, the huge minute-hand had proceeded sufficiently far on its terrible revolution to sever the small remainder of my neck. I was not sorry to see the head which had occasioned me so much embarrassment at length make a final separation from my body. It first rolled down the side of the steeple, then lodged, for a few seconds, in the gutter, and then made its way, with a plunge, into the middle of the street. (**A Predicament** 318)

This plight is ridiculed in the narration as Zenobia begins to question her bodily existence: “With my head I imagined, at one time, that I the head, was the real Signora Psyche Zenobia – at another I felt convinced that myself, the body, was the proper identity” (**A Predicament** 318). Even though her head utters some noble

words from Ariosto, Zenobia's body can hardly hear it without ears. Although Zenobia's body is severed, her narration continues as her body moves: "There was nothing now to prevent my getting down from my elevation, and I did so" (**A Predicament** 318). During this time, Pompey flees in fear and Diana's body is dissolved as it has been eaten by a rat. And, Zenobia's narration concludes with a question and an answer: "What *now* remains for the unhappy Signora Psyche Zenobia? Alas – *nothing* I have done" (**A Predicament** 318). However, her last words, as Royot avows, highlight that "at least Psyche's utmost literary achievement coincides with her last moment" (2002: 69).

Although in **How To Write A Blackwood Article** Zenobia is posited as a passive listener of Mr. Blackwood's speech, in **A Predicament** she is more active as a narrator. On the surface, Zenobia is the first person narrator yet, her narration is predestined by the male editor. Hence, such an extreme irruption of Zenobia's narrative propagates the problem related to the question of whose narrative these stories are. As Auerbach explains **How To Write A Blackwood Article** "consists of a series of complex transferences of power from Blackwood to Zenobia and from Zenobia to her disembodied head, transactions of authority which can finally be traced back to Poe himself, the source of all the doubling in the tale" (1989: 6).

It seems that Poe as the owner of the pen(is) shares his authority with a female other, Signora Psyche Zenobia. However, as Poe, the male author, should maintain his position in the patriarchal establishment, Zenobia is expected to be depicted accordingly. In these two stories, on the other hand, this situation is reversed. Under the female mask, the implied author is not obliged to depict the female as thoroughly idealized as he does by his male narrators. Dealing with the female unconscious through a female narrator contrasts sharply with the idealized female visions that are embodiments of prudence. In other words, Zenobia does not comply with the ideal female figures of Poe's male narrators, on the other hand, she is a rather lusty figure. This prevalent tone in Zenobia's narrations becomes obvious when she comments on

Mr. Blackwood's sight of her: "My dear madam, said he, evidently struck with my majestic appearance, for I had on the crimson satin, with the green *agraffas*, and orange-colored *auriculas*" (**How To Write A Blackwood Article** 306).

Writing through a female narrator renders an amalgamation between the male pen and the female voice. Nonetheless, the inconsistency at the level of narration stems from the fact that these stories are depicted through a dual perspective. The use of language in these stories displays Poe's own dilemma as a writing subject. Whereas his unconscious Semiotic that emerges with Zenobia's voice is in contrast with the cultural codes, his public voice makes him use a decorous language which reflects Lacanian Symbolic Order. To illustrate, even though Zenobia's body is mutilated, she succeeds in surviving. This survival represents the female one's transgression of the borders that repress her within the Symbolic Order. Likewise, the annihilation of female body discharges the male one's fears related to the female body as this act is verified not only by the male figure (Mr. Blackwood) within the text, but also by the male writer (Poe) without.

In fact, Zenobia's confusion due to her severed body has clear allusions to Kristevan Semiotic as she is unable to perceive her entire body. Also, Zenobia's sight of her severed body can be considered as her confrontation of the self and the other at Lacan's mirror stage. Moreover, the uncanny effect of Zenobia's disembodiment stems from the nature of the grammatical first person (Auerbach, 1989: 13). As Emile Benveniste reveals: "*I* cannot be defined except in terms of "locution", not in terms of objects as a nominal sign is" (Benveniste, q. in Auerbach, 1989: 13). Therefore, the usage of *I* as a pronoun in the first person narrations is important in that,

[I]t suggests how subjectivity and social relations are absolutely interdependent, with language the defining relation between them. To determine a self means simultaneously constituting an other, since the "I" achieves substance only insofar as it is circumscribed. Creating its own grounds of reference, the first person arrives at an identity by trying to situate itself in the world of fiction, some otherness outside the self. In the absence of any external source of validation, the

narrating subject runs the risk of expanding endlessly to encompass anything and everything. (Auerbach, 1989: 14)

Zenobia's tone of narration emerges as grotesquely comic and wryly constructed when she depicts her own dismemberment. Thus, the image of Zenobia's body actually echoes Bakhtinian concept of grotesque since "[i]t is dying and as yet unfinished; the body stands on the threshold of the grave and the crib" (Bakhtin, 1984: 26). Seemingly, Zenobia is in total contradiction to the idealized females depicted by male narrators. It is also understood that the idealized women hint at their silent presence within language, to wit, the Symbolic Order. However, Zenobia transgresses the gendered positions imposed by Symbolic perspective and turns them upside down as she is able to survive within the narrative. So, it is possible to catch glimpses of Bakhtin's grotesque body as it "retains the parts in which one link joins the other, in which the life of one body is born from the death of the preceding, older one" (*ibid.* 318).

It is important to point out here that, the word "grotesque" used by Poe conveys a different meaning than Bakhtin's conceptualization. As Kayser interprets, Poe's usage of this word is "more closely related to that which Scott preferred" (1963: 78). When Poe uses the word "grotesque", he wants to "describe a concrete situation in which chaos prevails, and to indicate the tenor of entire stories concerned with terrible, incomprehensible, inexplicable, bizarre, fantastic, and nocturnal happenings" (*ibid.* 79).

Indeed, Mr. Blackwood's advice on how to write an article illustrates Poe's own literary principles. Owing to the fact that the narrative adopts a satirical tone, this correspondence becomes more crucial. Plotwise, "Blackwood serves as a kind of double for Poe, a target of satire that ultimately mocks the author's own literary pretensions" (Auerbach, 1989: 6). Also,

Blackwood's predilection for pretentious foreign quotations, his emphasis on the nuances of prose style, and his preference for plots of impending doom that seriously compromise the first person narrator's ability to bring the story to a close all mirror Poe's literary practice. Poe even lets his counterpart cite some of the author's favorite snippets of poetry that express Poe's obsession with the possibility of life after death. (*ibid.* 6)

Hence, Zenobia's satirical tone in the narrative baffles the impositions set by the Symbolic Order. Such a diversion from masculine dominance renders Zenobia's the subject of the Semiotic. However, the women characters narrated through males function as the objects in the Symbolic Order. On the other hand, the appearance of the Semiotic in language, albeit temporarily, urges Poe to preserve his given role in the Symbolic Order. That is why he presents Mr. Blackwood as a means serving to sustain his authorial control. Even though this makes Zenobia's narration pre-destined by a male editor or author, the emerging of Maternal Chora becomes an indication of its intrinsically uncontrollable aspect.

CONCLUSION

This study has attempted to analyze how the female figures in Poe's selected stories demonstrate Poe's formation of his subjectivity. While in his stories narrated by males he emerges as the advocate of dominant patriarchal ideology, the stories narrated by Psyche Zenobia, who is Poe's only female narrator in his short fiction, are remarkable in the sense that they have a tone that subverts the fixed masculine order.

Theoretically, this alteration in the narratives can be explained through psychoanalytic feminist criticism. Therefore, especially Freud's, Lacan's and Kristeva's arguments are used in order to examine these stories. Since Poe's inconsistent voice plays a major role in the analysis of his split identity, his usage of language becomes crucial for this study. Also, behavioural abnormalities inherent in Gothic fiction stem from the repressed desires of the characters. All of these aspects make psychoanalysis be chosen as the framework of the analysis. Likewise, Poe's repressed female figures who indicate the gender boundaries give way to adoption of feminist approach.

In the very first part, the notion of desire becomes the center of attention and the unconscious exerted through language leads to the discussion of their interrelation. Since Plato, the constitution of desire has been depended on the concept lack. Likewise, for Freud and Lacan, lack finds its reflection in desire. The proneness to gain the desired object gives way to its sublimation by the subject. However, to have the object of desire is intrinsically impossible and therefore, the subject orientates his desire towards **l'objet petit a**. This, inevitably, necessitates the sublimation of it to the level of the Thing (**das Ding**).

Similarly for Poe, beauty is the ultimate goal for the soul. The celebration of the physical beauties is a constituent element in order to reach the transcendental ideal. However, the lost feeling of wholeness is the elemental aspect of the imaginary stage,

therefore, the pursuit of perfection is unattainable. Also, Poe's longest story **Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym** conveys Poe's own engagement with the desired object. Even though there are no female characters in the text, the desire to return to mother's womb is prevalent throughout the narrative. On the other hand, the theme of repetition which is employed in **The Purloined Letter** becomes influential in analyzing the text. To put it plainly, for Lacan the attainment of the desired object does not provide permanent satisfaction for the subject, yet, it is accomplished only by repetition, albeit temporarily.

The second part of the study deals with the concept of gender. The gendered perspective of women which is shaped by cultural pragmatics are noteworthy for the feminist framework. The discrepancy between the figures of Virgin Mary and treacherous Eve is molded in the gender distinctive policies of Western discourse. The standardizations urged through masculine norms form the passive and idealized positions of women in Symbolic Order. Predominantly masculine ideology abjects the female and reinforces the passive, idealized position of the other which is desired by the patriarchal orientation. Also, in psychoanalytic theory, the Symbolic subject has to eradicate the female other in order to have a right to exist as a male self.

In **Ligeia** and **The Oval Portrait**, the females are not entirely characterized, yet they are bound to their functional roles as idealized images. Therefore, Poe's public voice in these stories engage in patriarchal cultural codes molded by nineteenth century ideology. The interrelation between death and female body gives way to the male subject's artistic creativity. Apart from that, in these works the misogynistic tone makes the women merely functional in the narrative.

The leitmotiv running through the chapter entitled "The Monstrous Female" is significant in the sense that it visualizes both the unconscious psychological plight of the male self and the patriarchal concepts related to the gender oppositions. Woman as the negative other is constantly blamed for the bad events and the failures of the

males. The destructive side of the female one is stressed through her genitals which remind castration. The dead female body pertains to Kristevan concept of abject. The sight of the cadaver illuminates the appropriation of the self and the other. Allegedly, the male subject conceives the other as a threat to his identity. Hence, in **Berenice**, **The Black Cat**, **Morella** and **The Fall of The House of Usher**, the language is used as an instrument for the annihilation of the female other by male pen(is). Under the light of psychoanalytic approach, the repetition of monstrous females reflects the anxieties and the fears of the male self which unconsciously woven in the abovementioned stories.

Nonetheless, the Kristevan Semiotic gives a change to the subject to step outside the limits of the Symbolic Order. As it is illustrated in the last part, Poe's only female narrator in his short fiction *Psyche* Zenobia attenuates the impact of the dominant ideology. The inconsistency in the language adopted in those stories unmasks the dichotomy between Poe's public and private voices. The voice of the repressed feminine maintains a transgressive tone against the masculinocentric order. Thus, whereas the Symbolic Order instruments the females as the objects of language, the Semiotic constitutes them as the subjects. To wit, Zenobia in **How To Write A Blackwood Article** and **A Predicament** rejects the subordinate roles so desired by patriarchal intentions. The fact that Poe unconsciously attempts to control the fluid female subjectivity represents Poe's subjectivity in process. This subversive aspect of the stories narrated by a female voice affirms the emergence of the Semiotic reflections.

Admittedly, the scope of this study does not include all of Edgar Allan Poe's stories. The stories which are the best examples for their own chapters have been chosen. Besides, as the psychoanalytic feminist criticism is a broad area, this study is confined to its major elements. All in all, this study has attempted to analyze Poe's own subjectivity through the momentous alterations of the female images in his selected short stories. Nonetheless, to reach a complete meaning in language is

impossible to fulfill as desire is unstable. Thereby, what this study has illustrated is not limited to one single meaning. Also, it aims at making a modest contribution to Poe studies saturated by multivalent readings.

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