Chapter - VI

Conclusion

Most famous for his dark, mysterious writings, Poe has built a very morbid reputation. There are many experiences throughout Poe’s life that may have paved the way for these gothic ideas, such as the tragic death of his mother when he was just two years. However, by examining his behaviours throughout his relatively short life, it is found that Poe may have had no choice in his style of writing. While experiences shape humans, there are certainly plenty of biological conditions that give shapes to the individuals in their environment. It is not uncommon knowledge that Poe is afflicted with mental illness, but exploring the types of disorders he may have given insight into why and how his writing came about.

Many people have psychoanalyzed Poe’s writings and life. The most notable mental illnesses that scholars have ‘diagnosed’ Poe with are depression, bipolar disorder, and the less widely accepted, epilepsy. A diagnosis of depression is nearly a no-brainer. Evidence for Poe’s depression can be seen in his alcohol abuse and demeanor. “He is described by co-workers and family as chronically melancholic” which shows that the symptoms of his depression could be seen outside of his personal writings ‘(E.A.Poe; A Psychological Profile Personality and Individual Differences, Giammarco)’. Studies have also shown that having an alcohol abuse disorder is roughly four times more prevalent in people who have depression than those who do not (Grant and Harford). A diagnosis for depression begins to shape fairly well given this simple behaviour of Poe. His attempt to escape society and create his own fantasy is a strong sign that Poe had a depression disorder throughout his life.
The second mental illness that Poe may have been afflicted with is bipolar disorder. The support for this disorder in Poe’s life is much harder to correctly envision than it was for the depression case. Bipolar disorder is a change in moods from a deep depression to an incredibly happy mania or vise versa. However, contrary to popular belief, these mood swings are often prevalent for months, even years, at a time. The hardest part of finding support for bipolar disorder in Poe’s life would likely be locating parts of his life where he was having a manic episode. Manic episodes are often accompanied with feelings of superiority and indestructibility, which occasionally we can see in Poe’s life. For example, when Poe first arrives at college, he begins gambling and loses thousands of dollars. This could be an event that was part of a manic episode; he made a lot of impulsive decisions and did not give much of a care to stop until he was forced to. Another possible manic event could have been when he joined the army. It was fairly soon after he joined the army that he was already looking to get discharged with the aid of his father. He once again made an irrational decision and had to face the consequences of it. These poor, impulsive decisions that Poe would occasionally make can certainly be evidence for a bipolar disorder, especially when he very clearly exhibits one pole of the disorder.

Strangely enough, it is possible that Poe had a form of epilepsy throughout his life. Researchers believe this to be true for reasons that lie within Poe’s stories and his life. For instance, In “The Premature Burial,” Poe states that the author of this tale is subject to attacks of ‘cataplexy’” (Bazil 63, Epilepsy Metaphors; Liminal Spaces of Individuation in American Literature). Cataplexy is when a person is paralyzed but remains conscious throughout the event. This state is often typical of a different kind of epilepsy from what the public usually understands. Poe’s epilepsy would have consisted of complex partial seizures, which would be of the nature that he described in his story “The Premature
This condition not only could have had potential influence on his writing, but also his eventual death. Before Poe died, he was found on the ground in the middle of a street and then was taken to a hospital where he died. While this event was likely induced by alcohol, a complex partial seizure could have been a culprit for the series of events that led to his death.

Understanding the effects of his psychiatric condition on his writing is crucial to gaining further insight into the depth of Edgar Allan Poe’s work. We now know that there is evidence for depression, bipolar disorder, and even a form of epilepsy in Poe’s mental state. It is fairly obvious that we see his depression seep into his writing by simply examining the darkness and hopelessness of depressive outlook on life. The Raven in the story is telling an old man that his past happier feelings will nevermore exist and he will forever be stuck in a rut. The Raven’s words very well could have represented Poe’s expectations of life and furthermore exemplified his case of depression.

While noticing Poe’s depression in his writing is a fairly simple task, picking up on where we can find instances of manic behavior to show his bipolar condition proves to be slightly more challenging. However, one prudent example lies within his story, “The Tell-Tale Heart.” This story features a narrator who is seemingly going through a manic stage. Thoughts are racing through the narrator’s mind, decisions are made irrationally, and a state of constant anxiety leads us to believe that this whole story could be based on what it feels like to have a manic episode from Poe’s point of view. The narrator’s statement, “The disease had sharpened my senses - not destroyed - not dulled them” (Poe 680) talks about a disease of which he feels heightened senses. The heightened senses produced by the disease could be the state of anxiety experienced in bipolar disorder.

Poe’s Gothic writing is so vivid that it only makes sense he would have experienced some of these feelings firsthand before writing about them. Depression, bipolar disorder,
and epilepsy are incredibly fatiguing to the mind and body. But, the built up figurative energies that these mental illnesses create must be released in some way. Poe decided to release his energy, most of the time, in the form of writing. Having a mental illness seems to be a commonality among most famous artists. This is likely because they need a release of sorts just like Poe did. While it is unfortunate that some successful artists live their lives in anguish, their sacrifice is greatly received.

Poe is credited as being an originator in the genre of detective fiction with his three stories about C. Auguste Dupin, the most famous of which is “The Murders in the Rue Morgue.” Poe wrote a satirical detective story titled “Thou Art the Man.” He inspired mystery writers who came after him, particularly Arthur Conan Doyle in his series of stories featuring Sherlock Holmes. Each of Poe’s detective story is an origin from which a whole literature is developed. Poe breathed of life into the detective story. Poe can be taken as the founder of detective fiction. Jacques Barzun has observed in his book Edgar Allan Poe as a Proofreader, that it was Poe who first takes the.

….entrancing idea of detection and made it breed a distinctive literature by displaying it is an appropriate form…”The Murders in The Rue Morgue,” published in 1841, put an end to the episodic and casual use of detective fiction. And when four years later Poe had written three other detective tales, all the elements of the genre were at hand. What was to follow could only be elaboration, embellishment and complication most of it agreeable some of it transcending the first creation. (Barzun 79)

A ratiocinative or detective tale can be defined as a story characterized by a process of reasoning. In a ratiocinative tale Poe thinks every point is so arranged as to perplex the reader and to what his desire for elucidation. Once the design of mystery has been determined, it becomes imperative. As W. T. Bandy puts it in his “Baudelaire’s Poe”: 
…first that no undue or inartistically means be employed to conceal the secret of the plot; and secondly that the secret be well kept…. A failure to preserve it until the proper moment of denouement throws all into confusion. If the mystery leaks out against the author’s will his purposes are immediately at odds and ends: for he proceeds upon the supposition that certain impressions do exist which do not exist in the minds of his readers. (38)

The solution of the mystery depends on the exact admeasurements of the other man’s processes. This admeasurement is to be made in terms of analysis. The mystery is not to be solved by intuition. In intuition, one can put forward no criteria which can lead to the final unraveling of the mystery: there is no step by step progression toward the final conclusion. These ratiocinative tales demonstrate Poe’s extraordinary analytical ability. Poe compares analytical ability to physical prowess.

The disentangling power is found in abundance in the detective who steps in to solve the mystery. His name is legion: Sherlock Holmes, Philo Vance, Charlie Chan, Father Brown, Ellery Queen, Perry Mason, Inspector Maigret, Hercule Poirot and others. These are all aliases. His real name is C. Auguste Dupin who was created by Poe. The name C. Auguste Dupin has sent many a researcher guessing. W. T. Bandy has tried to bring all major theories regarding the name of Poe’s detective. Poe, imagining his hero combined three elements which had already developed in his earlier work.

Firstly, Poe enjoyed displaying his ingenuity at solving puzzles of the most extraordinary kind. He solved the mystery of the Maelzel’s chess player. Secondly, in his criticism Poe’s detective ferrets out plagiarisms, and hunts down writers guilty of bad taste, confused thinking or the murder of the language. Like Poe the critic Dupin holds in the public wisdom and the popular taste of his time. Thirdly, Poe, in his Gothic tales
created an Usher-like hero who is a decadent aristocrat. Dupin is depicted as a
‘Gentleman’ of an illustrious family, although reduced in circumstances. As Poe says:

This young gentleman was of an excellent, indeed of an illustrious family, but by a variety of untoward events, had been reduced to such poverty that the energy of his character succumbed beneath it, and he ceased to bestir himself in the world, or care for the retrieval of his fortunes…Books, indeed were his sole luxuries and in Paris these are easily obtained. (TMRM 213)

Dupin has the dual temperament combining the analytical ability of a mathematician with an intuition. The first detective story “The Murders in the Rue Morgue” pioneered the sub-genre of the ‘locked room’ mystery by presenting a seemingly impossible crime with a surprising solution. The second story “The Mystery of Marie Roget” is interesting both historically and structurally. Because it is based upon the real New York murder case of Mary Rogers; structurally because the narrative’s use of newspaper reports and textual sources anticipates the kind of fragmentary structure that would be used by Wilkie Collins. “The Purloined Letter” has become significant in terms of psychoanalytic theory following Jacques Lacan’s analyses of the story. The stories are significant for introducing the detective in Dupin. Dupin would be a template for many of the detectives to appear in the late nineteenth century mystery.

C. August Dupin is a man in Paris, who solves the mysterious brutal murder of two women. Numerous witnesses heard a suspect though no one agreed on what language was spoken. In a letter to friend Dr. Joseph Snodgrass, Poe talks about “Murders in the Rue Morgue.” Its theme is the exercise of ingenuity in the detecting of a murderer. Dupin is not a professional detective. He decides to investigate the murderer in the Rue Morgue for his personal amusement and he has a desire for truth and to prove a falsely accused man as innocent. His interests are not financial and he even declines a monetary reward
from the owner of the orangutan. The revelation of the actual murderer removes the crime neither the orangutan nor its owner can be held responsible. “The Murders in the Rue Morgue” establishes many tropes that become common in mystery fiction: the eccentric but brilliant detective, the bumbling constabulary, the first person narration. Poe portrays the police in an unsympathetic manner. He initiates the story telling device where the detective announces the solution and then explains the reasoning leading up to it. It is a first locked room mystery in the detective fiction.

Poe does not allow the reader to sit back and merely observe; the process of ratiocination is intended for the reader, as well as for the detective. In fact, the story becomes one in which the reader must accompany the detective towards the solution and apply his own logic and deduction alongside of the detective. This idea becomes very important in all subsequent works of detective fiction. That is, in all such fiction, all clues are available for the reader, as well as the detective, to solve the crime. It introduces more basic features of detective fiction than any of Poe’s other stories. Among these basic features are three central ideas: the murder occurs in a locked room from which there is no apparent egress. In later detective fiction, this idea is expanded and is used when the author sets the scene closed environment.

Frequently in detective fiction, the amateur detective is drawn into the case because a friend has been falsely accused. M. Dupin is drawn into the case because of an obligation to the accused; the detective uses some sort of unexpected means to produce the solution. It is noted above that all of the clues should be present but, nevertheless, the appeal of detective fiction lies in the unexpected solution which becomes logical only in retrospect.

The truth is what remains after the impossible has been determined no matter how improbable that truth may seem. That is the police determine that there was no possible
egress from the room of the murdered women. The door was locked from within, and all the windows were securely locked. Secondly, the case can be solved by the key detective. The murders can only be solved, logically, when a person is able to place his human mind into conformity with a non-human mind and with the irrational acts of a beast.

The title of the story is straightforward. In the opening section, Poe offers some of the views expressed above about the need of the detective to be observed. The most casual movement can often reveal more than the magnifying glass which Dupin never uses, even though the police constantly rely on one to help them solve crimes. And, the superlative detective must be able to make the proper inferences from the things he observes. Here the ingenuity becomes the most important aspect in solving a crime.

Mr. Dupin is actually a representative of a man who has a pure poetic intuition bordering on omniscience. He virtually ‘dreams’ his solutions. His logical method is to identify his own intellect with that of another and thereby divine what another person must think. In the first part of the story, Dupin can so completely identify with the thoughts of others that he often answers questions before they are even asked. It is as though he were gifted with extrasensory perception. In this story, there is no human person for his intellect to identify with. Therefore since he encounters what seems impossible, he begins to look for a possible equation. Since it was impossible for a human being to commit the murders. M. Dupin begins looking for other sources. By this method of ratiocination and intuitive perception, he is able to solve a mystifying problem that no one else is able to solve. In this way, he becomes the first in a series of brilliant eccentric detectives who can solve difficult murders that baffle everyone else.

“The Mystery of Marie Roget” is the first murder story based on the details of a real crime. Poe tries to solve the aforementioned enigma by creating a murder mystery. He situates the narrative in Paris using the details of the original tragedy. Although there
is intense media interest and immortalizing, the crime remains one of the most puzzling unsolved murders of New York City. Of Poe’s three stories of ratiocination, “The Mystery of Marie Roget” is generally considered the least successful. An American critic Zimmerman observes in *Poe’s Works* thus:

> It might better be called an essay than a story. As an essay, it is a tedious exercise in reasoning. As a story it scarcely exists. It has no lifeblood, the characters neither move nor speak… Only a professional student of analytics or an inveterate devotee of criminology can read it with any degree of unfeigned interest. (681)

The theme of the story is a strange murder, which is solved by a man who does not take things for granted. He himself thinks about the subject and beliefs that not everything is what it seems. He begins investigation of his own not trusting the police. He looks around carefully. He analyses every possibility and in the end he comes to the right conclusion. Dupin is more idiosyncratic, highly observant and expert in giving chains of reasoning based on his observations. His companion is a plain man who functions as an auditor for Dupin’s explanation and thought.

Poe’s fiction is not concerned with social issues. He views the true reality as a process of the mind. Not a fact of physical existence, for Poe the human mind more than social world is the preferred arena of action. The aspect of his detective stories that might suggest social relevance is the fact which is violated by the crime by its very nature. It is the task of the detective to restore order and this may be the ultimate result of Dupin’s solving the crimes. Dupin wishes to discover order in the bits of the mysterious reality that surrounds him. In “The Mystery of Marie Roget” Poe pits the mind of Dupin against the mass mind in absolute contempt. The mass mind is represented by the police and the newspapers. In “The Purloined Letter” the mind of Dupin is pitted against the mass mind.
In “The Mystery of Marie Roget” again shows Dupin’s extraordinary restraint incoming to conclusion. He can see the highly artificial arrangement of the articles which look like strips torn off, but purposely by hand.

“The Mystery of Marie Roget” never attains the popularity of Dupin’s other stories because of its complicated plot. Poe deserves credit for choosing to investigate a real crime under the disguise which is a courageous thing to do in America of the 1840s. The story has earned for itself a respected place in the history of detective fiction and promoted both Poe as an analytical thinker and Dupin as an infallible solver of difficult crimes. “The Purloined Letter” is the third of Poe’s detective stories, featuring the fictional C. Auguste Dupin again. “The Purloined Letter” is the shortest of the three and most influential in shaping the rationale of the detective fiction. It might almost be taken for the beginning of any Sherlock Homes story.

Dupin is not a professional detective in “The Murder in the Rue Morgue.” He takes up the case for amusement and refuses reward. But in “The Purloined Letter,” he undertakes the case for financial gain. He is not motivated by the truth, emphasized by the lack of information about the contents of the Purloined letter. Dupin’s innovative method to solve the puzzle is to identity with the criminal. The Minister and Dupin have equally matched minds and skills of mathematician and poet. Dupin wins because of his moral strength, the minister is unprincipled, and he is a blackmailer. Dupin’s investigation in “The Purloined Letter” takes an entirely different route to hire Dupin’s methods of ratiocination to study the mind of the criminal. The case is clear in that the thief and the details of the crime are perfectly obvious, but it is not clear how to outwit the thief and return the letter to its rightful owner. The story shows more of the character of the prefect who merely appeared to act disgruntled and embarrassed at the end of the first Dupin story. As a result, the narrative included two characters, the narrator and the
prefect: they serve as obvious foils to Dupin. The Minister’s similarities to Dupin saves the concept of double selves which is is prevalent in many of Poe’s stories.

With his energy, emotion, and lack of insight the prefect is approach is opposite to Dupin’s approach in solving cases. The Prefect’s major fault is that he does not understand that the key to solve the case is to think in a way that approximates the mindset of the criminal. Instead, he tries to hide the letter in his own clever ways while the answer is further away from the solution. The clash between the prefect and Dupin because of his opposite temperament and it gives a source of humor for Dupin as he constantly takes ironic verbal jabs at his prefect’s mental disadvantage. When the prefect explains the owner of the letter seeks the help of the Parisian police to retrieve her letter, Dupin sarcastically remarks that it must be a reflection of the prefect’s intelligence that he is unable to study anyone’s thought. Later the prefect dismisses the minister because he is a poet, but Dupin notes drolly that he too is something of a poet. The exchange is entertaining because the prefect is totally unaware of the fact that poet’s creativity allows both Dupin and minister alike.

On the other side Minister D is Dupin’s equal in Poe’s stories. Minister D functions as the criminal version of Dupin who acts on the side of the law. Dupin evidently recognizes the similarity, for he tells the narrator that he is all unprincipled man of genius, and he takes pleasure in trumping the Minister in humour. The fake letter that Dupin leaves provides about two Greek brothers from mythology. Thyestes commits adultery with Atreus’s wife and in revenge Atreus kills and cooks Thyestes’s sons before feeding them to his brother. Though Atreus committed wrong, Thyestes was as much at fault because he started the feud. Dupin nonetheless sends the quote to explain that although Dupin may have stolen the letter, the Minister was at fault because he committed the crime first.
Despite all the discussion concerning the whereabouts of the letter in “The Purloined Letter,” the letter itself is merely a literary device around which Poe constructs a game of wit. The contents of the letter and its implications in the political are not included because the plot does not need them, and any other object would have served as well. Significantly, when Dupin finds the letter, the Minister has placed it carelessly folding it inside out and making it appear insignificant. The manner of his hiding the letter is relevant for the purposes of the story, but its appearance reflects its relative importance. We might also consider it ironic that after all the fuss over the letter, it will never become public to the fictional world of Dupin than it will be to the reader.

“The Purloined Letter” is a milestone in the history of crime fiction. Poe came to regard it as an exception that truth is not the object of literary art. He considers it to be a puzzle in which the object is the correct solution so that it resembles a cryptogram. As his practice reveals, the detective fiction is much more than puzzle and is read at least for artistic presentation as for the intellectual manipulation of evidence.

Poe establishes conventions of the genre: the brilliant but eccentric detective, with uncanny, reasoning who subordinates, all else to his intellectual gifts; the devoted friend; the puzzling crime which is unsolved by the police, the innocent suspect; the detailed explanation by the detective; and the solution of the mystery. Conan Doyle acknowledged that any writer who sought to follow Poe was left with ‘no fresh ground they could confidently say their own.’

The subject matter of Poe’s story “The Cask of Amontillado” is a murder. It is not a detective story like “The Murders in the Rue Morgue” and “The Purloined Letter.” There is no investigation for the murder committed by Montresor, yet he himself explains how he committed murder. Without a detective, it is left to the reader to solve the mystery. Its plot is difficult but it makes reference to the secret societies and has revenge as its main theme.
Crime fiction is so common that the literary scene is unimaginable without it. Every year brings good sales of Conan Doyle, S.S. Van Dine, Agatha Christie, G.K. Chesterton, Earl Stanley Gardner, and others but no one was there before Poe. Every writer is in Poe’s debt, directly or indirectly. The craft has become more sophisticated. Clues are placed more artfully; criminals are becoming cunning and detectives have become more astute with them but no one can match the standards set by Poe over a century ago. The mystery writers of America paid only part of their debt by establishing their “Edgar Allan Poe Award” for the best detective story every year.

Poe’s short stories, based on supernatural or psychological manifestations, are highly praised by a secret group of readers who relish the dark worlds of human existence with their roots firmly established in the ancient past. In tales like “The Tell-Tale Heart,” “The Pit and the Pendulum”, “The Black Cat” “The Premature Burial” and “The Fall of the House of Usher,” the strange familiarity with the characters can be sensed which allows the reader to sense the thought of the main protagonist.

The presence of horror elements in the tales has troubled many of Poe enthusiasts. They charge Poe for creating horror. A look at the scattered references to horror in the criticism and tales of Poe confirm the Gothic is not there for the purpose of ornamentation. There are certain themes of which the interest is all absorbing but which are too horrible for the purpose of legitimate fiction. When he speaks of terror of the soul he is mentioning vampirism although many critics have imputed vampire motif in “Ligeia” and “The Fall of House of Usher.” He is Gothic decor to create a terrible atmosphere. That Poe uses Gothic for a legitimate result is also obvious from his letter to Philip Cooke.

Commenting on his stories like “Ligeia” Poe says: “Your word that it is ‘intelligible’ suffices and your commentary sustains your word. As for the mob let them
talk on. I should be grieved if I thought they comprehended me here” (Poe 287). The Gothic framework is only a mask in such tales because an author who works hidden meanings in his tales will use mannerism for ornamentation. What Poe is really interested in is the nightmarish situation experienced by a man under sentence of death deprived of all the usual means by which people locate themselves in time as well as in space. Poe uses the compression of the story to experience outside normal time and consequently he summarizes all the information a reader might require. Such stories often have a highly emotional style and not totally absurd.

Poe creates a tight atmosphere when the narrative is very loose, but the ominous mood is not diminished by the fact that covers more than a single day. He shows a fine economy of narrative when it is noted in the climax where exactitude of description fuses with theatricality. Poe’s technique has the feeling that art can become the enmity of life.

“The Cask of Amontillado” has been read as one of the greatest short stories of Poe which gets the unity of effect by its best expression. The story establishes Poe as the past-master in condensation. The single effect is by its irony. ‘The Cask’ is a motiveless exercise in the Gothic. James Gargano an American critic says that ‘The Cask’ presents an ironic vision of two men who, as surrogates of mankind, enter upon a cooperative venture that really exposes their psychological isolation. It is a tale of human perversity and evil (Poe’s Works 682).

In the opening sentence, Montressor tries to give a reason for his taking revenge on Frotunato. It is as vague a reason as vagueness could devise like Fortunato ventures insult Montressor. He is actually like the narrator of ‘The Imp of the Perverse’ who commits a calculated murder for months which will go undetected. Montressor is not at all in haste to murder Fortunato and he is proud of his confidence with his determination, he waits for a suitable opportunity to execute his plan. He knows the weakness of
Fortunato who prides himself on his connoisseurship in wine. Montressor himself does not differ from Fortunato in this matter. He selects the carnival time to execute his plan and gives no room for Fortunato’s suspicion.

On the contrary neither by word nor deed had I given Fortunato cause to doubt my good will. I continued as was my wont to smile in his face, and he did not perceive that my smile now was at the thought of his immolation. (TCA 288)

During the carnival time he casually encounters Fortunato. When Fortunato offers to go to Montressor’s place, he declines the offer twice and ultimately accepts the offer. Montressor carefully sends the servants from his house.

The ground is cleaned for the immolation of Fortunato. When they reach the catacombs, Fortunato is still under the influence of wine. He says; “the gait of my friend was unsteady and the bells upon his cap jingled as he strode” (TCA 288). Montressor asks him to return. When Montressor hesitates more to take Fortunato where “The Cask of Amontillado” is kept, Fortunato is determined to go there. At this stage, Montressor gives cause. Montressor praises Fortunato as he was rich and respected. So it is sufficient for the ‘Imp of the Perverse’ in Montressor to commit the murder. That Fortunato had not insulted Montressor is clear from another context. Still he considers it as a joke. It Fortunato had insulted Montressor at last moment of his life, he could have certainly asked for his permission. He finds the joke becoming grim and asks Montressor to leave him, ‘for the love of God.’ But he realizes the truth and becomes silent. At the end, Montressor says, “my heart grew sick on account of the dampness of the catacombs.” Actually it is the dampness of his heart and he reveals this undetected murder after fifty years which he had done for the wrong reason.
The repetition of the word ‘Amontillado’ when Fortunato is led to his entombment contributes to the irony in the tale. Charles Steele suggests ‘Amonticchiato’ in Italy and the Spanish Amontanado both sound the name of wine both mean ‘collected in a heap.’ He adds that collected in a heap the means the pile of bricks shown at the climax of the story. Poe is an inveterate punster…already a grim pun on “mason” is surely recognizable. The narrator adopts an ironic posture in the telling of the tale. The victim’s good nature and nobility to walk with the cunning narrator is contrasted with the cold-blooded calculative narrator who leads him to the tomb as he explains in the opening to carry out the shocking revenge.

“Ligeia” represents the popular achievement in the literary genre of the Gothic mystery. By Gothic, one means the author wants to create a mysterious, desolate, horrible fear in the reader. Characters like Dr. Frankenstein’s monster and Dracula are the two popular cultures of Gothic tradition and of the most adults in the Western world have been exposed to the Gothic tale. A Gothic story often has a decayed mansion in a remote countryside; castle filled with cobwebs, bats, strange noises and secret panels.

“The Black Cat” is a story in which the protagonist is haunted by hostile feeling with no recognizable cause. His wife is congenial and happy and loves her pet cat ‘Pluto’. The unnamed narrator begins drinking to excess and he mistreats his wife and their numerous pets including Pluto. One night he arrives late from the local tavern, seizes Pluto and cuts out one of its eyes with a knife and hangs it from the limb of tree. His home quite unexpectedly catches fire and burns to grounds; after that he obtains another cat Pluto with the exception of a white pattern on its belly. He becomes fond of the new cat and becomes desperate when he finds the white patch taking the image of gallows. He attempts to kill the new cat with an axe, but when his wife interferes he turns on her and kills her. She falls down dead. He hides her body in the cellar to hide his crime. Four days
after that he sleeps well. The local police become suspicious of his wife’s disappearance and begin to search his house and ends up in the cellar where they hear the scream of a cat. Now the narrator admits his crime. The police tear down the wall and they find The Black Cat howling its revenge sitting atop the head of the victim. At one night, returning from his usual alcoholic effects, he feels that the cat is avoiding him. He seizes him and in fright it makes a slight wound upon his hand with his teeth.’ This drives him into rage.

“The Black Cat” illustrates best capacity to observe its own deterioration and the ability to comment upon its destruction without being able to halt it. The narrator is able to see his own deterioration and he finds the changes it makes in him. Eventhough he tries to do something about it he is unable to stop his madness. The chief effect that Poe wants to achieve is the absolute perverseness. Many of the narrator’s acts are without logic. They are merely acts of perversity. One act of perversity brings about another act.

In Poe’s own words, ‘one incident begets another.’

In “The Tell-Tale Heart” the protagonist is vividly described. His paranoia is not detected and he suffers from false delusions. He proceeds to vent these fears upon an innocent old man. The evil eye of the old man angers the narrator to take the life of the old man. The old man is murdered and his body ends up beneath the floor of his bedroom. This story is a study of terror. But the memory of terror is brought about to the narrator quote events from the past. The first word of the story, ‘True!’ is an admission of his guilt. This introduction grabs the attention of the reader and attracts him into the story; from there every word contributes to the purpose of moving the story forward possibly making “The Tell-Tale Heart” the best example of Poe’s perfect short stories. It is the best example of how a short story produces an effect on the reader. Poe believes that all good literature must create a unity of effect on the reader and this must evoke emotions. The story exemplifies Poe’s ability to expose the dark side of man and is a harbinger of the modern novels and psychological realism.
“The Masque of the Red Death” follows Prince Prospero’s attempts to avoid a dangerous plague called the Red Death by hiding in his abbey with his wealthy nobles. He has a masquerade ball within seven rooms of the abbey, which have different colors. In the midst of their revelry, a mysterious figure enters and visits each room. When Prospero confronts this stranger Prospero falls dead. The story follows many conventions of traditional Gothic fiction and it is an allegory about the invincible death. Many different interpretations have been presented to identify the true nature of the ‘Red Death’ disease. This Gothic fiction takes place in a castle. The multiple single tower rooms resemble the human mind, showing different personality types. The entire story is an allegory of man’s futile attempts to avoid death.

Some of Poe’s most recurring themes are: physical signs, the effects and nature of decomposition, the coming back to life of the dead, and the process of mourning. Poe’s stories are remarkable for their inventiveness, construction, their vivid descriptions and their psychological insight. Poe’s powerful stories have captured the imagination of readers. Many of the stories have been made into films or television dramas. The stories are a source of inspiration for countless adaptations. Poe’s fame rests more on his macabre tales of mystery and horror than on his poetry or literary essays, but he did not invent the horror story.

In the Gothic elements of his stories, Poe gets into an existing tradition. He can be credited with creating world’s first fictional detective in the figure of C Auguste Dupin. A number of aspects of Dupin’s character like his method of deduction, his slightly eccentric personality and his low opinion of the police force have all served as models for many detective story writers ever since. One idea that obviously interested Poe is the power of the imagination and how it can possess a person. Poe is interested in analysing how a lonely person reacts in moments of extreme terror or despair facing death or
torment. In the detective stories his underlying theme is the power of deductive reasoning to solve a seemingly insurmountable problem.

The mysteries in Poe’s stories are only but an awakening of the reader’s mind towards the reality through the dark canopies of mystery. The author, as Barthes wants to prove “becomes subject to the reader’s act of assembly.” The reader is more attracted towards Poe’s life than being convinced of the fictionality of the text.

The fictionality in Poe’s stories brings out the characters and conditions related to reality. The tales of ratiocination are fine examples of fictionality that paves way for reality. The mystery becomes but a mere faction of reality; it is no more an image or a fantasy. “The Mystery of Marie Roget” and “The Murders in the Rue Morgue” reflect the true incidents that have been gone unnoticed or maybe taken for granted by the public. It was only after the publication of such stories the public and the Government was realized of the dying need for Detectives. The crimes against women that also involved the ignorance of Psychological considerations for the female came into the limelight. Women’s psychological disorders, physical ailments and the red death made deep gruesome spine chilling anxiety among the people of the day.

The narration of a text needs to be more indulged in information. The content becomes the plot’s historical evidence. Poe wants his stories to be broken as codes, which are decoded in such a way, that the readers become reborn every time, every generation as a new dimension towards modernity. It serves as a best tool to drill through the toughest barks of concealment of the past. Time is rewound and reanalyzed to throw light upon the plot in the thousands of different points of view. In a story a character’s experience is like a camera. Like the camera, a character can bring us in to an author’s point of view so that we share his experience. Also the author must be able to remove reader from the character so that reader can contemplate and understand him. The
technique of narration that Poe commonly writes is first person point of view. For Poe, the narrator becomes one of the characters of the tale. The narrator as a main character tells his own story. The narrator conveys his attitude through the way narrative devices are handled. Sometimes the narrator will state point-blank how he feels about a subject. The narrator’s attitude is conveyed indirectly.

Poe is a romanticist who looks through realities into the dream world beyond. He exercises his imagination to its fullest power, which gave strength and intensity to the short story. He is not satisfied with the artistic material furnished by everyday life. When he constructs a story, he desires to weave it out of different material from that which his every day experience offered. Concerning the romantic writer, Perry says, he seeks not the violet that grows in common fields, but some mysterious “blue flower” which forever eludes him. He portrays not some women whom he has not met that morning on the street, but a woman of his dreams. The images, the sounds that haunt his imagination, are not those of wearisome, reiterated reality. All this is perfectly legitimate that it is wholly in keeping with one mode of the artistic temperament.

“Ligeia” utilizes many of these aspects of the Gothic and is considered by critics to be not just among Poe's best short stories, but also among the finest examples of the Gothic genre in all of literature. In addition to the Gothic elements, there is also a sense of remoteness and a sense of indefiniteness that is, “Ligeia” is set in an old castle on the Rhine or else in an abbey in the "most remote part of England." In both stories, the time is set somewhere in the indefinite past. Clearly, it is not in an old castle in the present era.

One of the primary aims of the story is to create the single effect of an eerie and ghostly atmosphere and to do so, both stories emphasize the physical aspects of the various structures — the deep caverns or vaults where the Lady Madeline is buried and the weird room where the Lady Rowena died among various types of black sarcophagi.
In the story, a super-sensitive hero is presented, a man who could not function well in the "normal" world. The narrator of “Ligeia” shares super-sensitivity to the point of maladjustment due to his opium addiction and due to an undefined illness. Often in the Gothic story, the characters seem to possess some sort of psychic communication; this usually occurs between a member of the living world and a "living" corpse.

One of the stock elements of the Gothic story concerns the possibility of returning to life after one is dead and, moreover, inhabiting one's own corpse. Poe uses this effect to its very best effect in this story: To this purpose Poe creates the slow re-emergence into life by the enshrouded Lady Ligeia. In addition to the above features of the gothic story, Poe also stresses another similar element; he placed a strong emphasis on the life of the mind after the death of the body. This is also true of the stories associated with the Dracula legends, where the focus is upon the continuation of the life of the mind after the body has become a living corpse. The central concern of the Lady Ligeia is the continuation of the mind after physical death; Poe's emphasis here additionally stresses that one does not yield oneself to death except through a weakness of the will. In Lady Ligeia, there is a superhuman strength to live even after death.

Part of the genius of Poe is that he exceeded in a number of different types of endeavors. In addition to his reputation as a poet, his originality in his literary criticism, and the perfection he achieved in creating gothic tales of terror and science fiction, he is also acknowledged as the originator of detective fiction. Poe invents the term "Tale of Ratiocination." The ratiocination is not just for the detective. Poe does not allow the reader to sit back and merely observe; the process of ratiocination but he makes the reader participate in the process of investigation. In fact, the story becomes one in which the reader must also accompany the detective toward the solution and apply his own powers of logic and deduction alongside those of the detective. This idea becomes very
important in all subsequent works of detective fiction. That is, in all such fiction, all of
the clues are available for the reader, as well as the detective, to solve the crime, and at
the end of the story, the reader should be able to look back on the clues and realize that he
could have solved the mystery.

A detective story in which the solution is suddenly revealed to the reader is
considered bad form. Poe introduces one of the basic elements of the detective story --
the presentation of clues for his readers, and in addition to the above, Poe is also credited
with introducing and developing many other standard features of modern detective
fiction.

Poe is clearly responsible giving literature these basics of the detective story as a
foundation for an entirely new genre of fiction: the eccentric but brilliant amateur sleuth;
the sidekick, or listener, or worker for the clever detective; the simple clues; the stupidity
or ineptitude of the police; the resentment of the police for the amateur's interference;
and the simple but careful solution of the problem through logic and intuition.

Many of Poe's short stories treat the same type of phenomena, yet in fact, part of
Poe's greatness lies in the diversity of his creativity, and everything he wrote carries with
it the distinctive trademark that would identify it as being a work by Poe. The stories in
this section are Poe's best examples of another type of story. These are tales of the
psychotic personality, one who tries to give a rational explanation for his irrational and
compulsive acts. In the stories examined in the present Thesis, the criminal is so
completely occupied with his own mental state and in justifying his horrifying actions
that the reader is not nearly as aghast at the horrors that the criminal perpetrates, as he is
at the bizarre mental state of the criminal. The cruel acts performed by the criminal in
both stories are de-emphasized in order to examine the mind of the criminal. In other
stories, Poe creates a feeling of horror in the reader's mind by certain acts of cruelty. The
reverse is true; for example, the narrator's murder of his wife in “The Black Cat” occurs so suddenly that we hardly notice the horrible cruelty of the act. Instead, we note the mental state of the psychotic killer.

Poe makes one assumption throughout his writings that is very important in understanding both of these stories. Poe assumed that any man, at any given moment, is capable of performing the most irrational and horrible act imaginable; every mind, he believed, is capable of falling into madness at any given moment. Thus, these stories deal with those subconscious mental activities which cause a person who leads a so-called normal existence to suddenly change and perform drastic, horrible deeds. Unlike some commentators who thought that Poe was trying to determine exactly what constitutes madness, Poe is more accurately concerned with the accurate conditions and the various stages which lead a person to commit acts of madness, particularly when that madness manifests itself in an otherwise normal person. Both narrators in these stories are just prior to their atrocities considered to be normal, average, commonplace men. Yet without warning, each of them loses his sanity momentarily. Poe's emphasis is on the fact that the narrator is sometimes aware that he is going mad. Yet even with this self-knowledge, he can do nothing about his terrifying, changing mental state.

Aside from the general patterns and concerns that are present in both stories, there are even more basic similarities: Both stories, for example, begin with a first-person narrator who begins his story by asserting that he is not mad ("Why will you say I am mad" and "Yet, mad am I not"); in addition, both narrators are seemingly average people at the beginning of their chronological narratives; and both perform crimes that are both irrational and intensely personal; both love their victims deeply (the narrator of “The Tell-Tale Heart” loves the old man he murders, and the narrator of “The Black Cat” loves and adores his wife, and, therefore, ironically the murderers' love for their victims makes
their crimes even more irrational; both narrators consider dismembering the corpses of
the victims; this is actually done in “The Tell-Tale Heart,” and in “The Black Cat” it is
considered before the narrator finally decides to entomb the corpse in the chimney; in
both cases, the narrator's over-confidence in the superiority of his concealment of the
body leads directly to the discovery of the body.

There are other similarities in the two stories, but these basic correlatives suffice to
show how Poe uses similar techniques to achieve the desired effects in each story. In both
the stories, the narrator attempts a rational examination and explanation for his impulsive
and irrational actions. He attempts to bring reason into the picture to explain a completely
irrational act. Both stories attempt to present an exterior view of the interior
disintegration of the narrator. Both narrators begin their stories at a moment when they
are sane and rational, and throughout the story, we observe their changing mental states.
These tales are perhaps Poe's most thorough investigation of the capacity of the human
mind to deceive itself and then to speculate on the nature of its own destruction.

“The Cask of Amontillado” is often used as an example of the perfect short story.
In this story, there is a strong kinship to the psychotic criminal as seen in “The Tell-Tale
Heart” and “The Black Cat.” In “The Cask of Amontillado” the other character
(Fortunato) addresses the narrator as Montresor, thus allowing the reader to know the
narrator's name. The main character's motive in telling about his horrible and heinous
crime is never revealed. In each case, the reader must wonder why the narrator chose to
reveal such a horrible deed about him. In the stories of the psychotic criminal, each
narrator of those stories tries to convince his readers that he is not mad. And yet each
succeeds only in convincing the reader that he is indeed mad.

In contrast, Montresor seems to have other reasons for telling about their heinous
deeds. And in each case, we must note that the story is narrated some time after the
horrible deed was performed. For example, in “The Cask of Amontillado,” the entombed body of Fortunato has gone for fifty years without being detected; thus we know that the entombment occurred at least fifty years ago. Also the narrator comes from a highly respected family, in contrast to the highly disreputable deed he commits. The setting is some time in the past, in some foreign country (or countries), in order to make the evil seem both more alien and more horrible. In both stories, also, there is an emphasis upon the labyrinthine cellars of the school and the long underground vaults of the Montresor mansion. Finally, there is a perverse, well-wrought plan conceived in order to wreak vengeance upon an unsuspecting victim.

Some critics have described such tales as “The Masque of the Red Death” as unbelievable horror stories. The success of this type of story relies upon the completeness with which he is able to communicate a terrible sense of horror and torture and fear. The success of the story depends not only on the fact that the narrator undergoes suspense, horror, and mental torture, but that we, the readers, are also forced to undergo the same feelings. Poe designates such effects and responses as the ideal, or as being in the realm of ideality. By this, he intends the reader to understand that when an author used certain calculated effects, he could make the reader's reading experience (and emotions) identical to those of the protagonist (or narrator), thus achieving a perfect empathy between reader and main character. In “The Masque of the Red Death,” Poe carefully chooses every word and every description to make us feel the utter fear and horror of the presence of the dreaded Red Death. Thus the present Thesis is an attempt to unveil the mysteries with all possible way of identifying the crime and criminals through the psychological processes of the characters in Poe’s short stories.