

Comparison Between Cosmic Horror and Gothic Horror Through the Works of H.P. Lovecraft and Edgar Allan Poe

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Declaration

It is hereby declared that

- i. The thesis submitted is my/our own original work while completing degree at Brac University.
- ii. The thesis does not contain material previously published or written by a third party, except where this is appropriately cited through full and accurate referencing.
- iii. The thesis does not contain material which has been accepted, or submitted, for any other degree or diploma at a university or other institution.
- iv. I have acknowledged all main sources of help.

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Approval

The thesis/project titled “Comparison Between Cosmic Horror and Gothic Horror Through the Works of H.P. Lovecraft and Edgar Allan Poe” submitted by Ishrar Iftekhar (22203129) of Summer, 2024 has been accepted as satisfactory in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of Bachelors of Arts in English on 7th December, 2024.

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Abstract/ Executive Summary

Cosmic horror is about all things inconceivable in a vast and endless universe and H.P. Lovecraft may not have coined the term but his works led to the genre being made. One such popular work of his is *The Call of Cthulhu*. Gothic horror is also another genre of horror which circles around the macabre, grim and spooky. Poe is pretty much known as “the father of gothic horror”. One great example of his works include *The Fall of the House of Usher*.

Keywords: Cosmic horror; Gothic horror; Lovecraft; Poe;

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Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1 Overview of Cosmic and Gothic Horror

Cosmic or Lovecraftian horror is a fear of the cosmically vast and unreachable universe with depths that humans can not even begin to comprehend, much less overcome or best. Our limited minds were not designed even to be a part of something so vast and incomprehensible, and if we were ever to set our eyes upon it, it would render our minds into shock or utter madness.

Lovecraft uses the horror of something beyond understanding in his works and that we are not even a speck of dust in the expanding cosmos. (Peak 5-6). These Elder Gods that lived before us and how they die but in their undeath rise to cause havoc to the world and rip from us everything we understand about existence and give us something much more terrifying and incomprehensible in its place. (Peak 4). Gothic is associated with the grim and macabre and how they tend to be so hauntingly beautiful despite being so awkwardly grotesque. It uses crumbling architecture from the past, gloomy scenery, eerie sounds, supernatural or ghostly elements, and taboo concepts such as incest or murder, etc in its literature. (Pang et al. 1). It tends to be uncannily sublime in how the story unfolds and how the elements in it come to appear before the narrator and reader.

1.2 Thesis Statement

Though H.P. Lovecraft's cosmic horror and Edgar Allan Poe's gothic horror both evoke fear and dread, Poe's works are more linked to the human mind and the horrors within that are reflected

by external surroundings while Lovecraft's stories expose humanity's insignificance against a harsh and indifferent universe. Upon pitting these two approaches against each other, we can see the depth and psychology of the authors and the intent of what they want to express to the readers through their works.

1.3 Research Question

How do cosmic horror and gothic horror differ through these two texts of H. P. Lovecraft and Edgar Allan Poe, and how can we see how they talk about anxieties that human nature holds towards itself and the supernatural?

1.4 Methodology

This research is qualitative in nature. Several secondary sources have been used to better analyze the texts, the two authors' lifestyles, the key qualities of both cosmic and gothic horror, and what sets them apart from each other. Their biographies have been looked into so we could better see into the psychology behind the texts and its chilling atmosphere, as well as identify if there were any cultural influences.

1.5 Plot

The Call of Cthulhu

"Of such great powers or beings there may be conceivably a survival... a survival of a hugely remote period when... consciousness was manifested, perhaps, in shapes in forms long since withdrawn before the tide of advancing humanity... forms of which poetry and legend alone have

caught a flying memory and called them gods, monsters, mythical beings of all sorts and kinds...” - Algernon Blackwood

The Call of Cthulhu is a series of linked accounts that were found in the papers belonging to the deceased Francis Wayland Thurston. Thurston laments about how men were not designed to venture far into the vast and expanding unknowings of the world and the cosmos. However, if fate allows humanity to fit the pieces together to unveil a disastrous reality which is so ancient and unfathomably appalling, we will stumble into insanity and the world will succumb to darkness. Lovecraft often took inspirations from ocean animals to better picture the abominations he wrote about in his works, their sheer abysmal qualities so grotesque and unimaginable that it instilled terror in those who were cursed enough to have laid eyes upon them. There is some kind of collective memory long forgotten that threatens to unravel in the selective few and leave their minds fractured and destroy any semblance of correlating to reason.

Thurston’s great uncle, George Gamell Angell, has passed away and he was the sole inheritor of his estate and belongings since Angell had no offspring and his wife died before him. He was a professor teaching Semitic Languages at Brown University. He died when a man attacked him but what was curiously peculiar was that he had no signs of physical harm on him, so the doctors deduced his heart gave out in his old age due to fright. Thurston happens upon a box belonging to his uncle and he finds that it is locked. With some difficulty and time, he managed to get the key and upon unlocking it he found some pages with the heading “Cthulhu Cult” and a statuette. The statuette somehow looked like it originated from somewhere very advanced but at the same time the aura and quality it exudes looked prehistoric. The symbols and hieroglyphics looked

nothing like what he's seen. The statuette is of this abysmal quality that is so out of this world and incomprehensible that Thurston finds it hard to tell what kind of monstrosity this thing is. It simultaneously looked familiar to an octopus, dragon and a humanoid because of its octopus-like head with several large tentacles, its baby wings and its humanoid-like features because of how it stood up on its hind legs and had claws. Behind it was masonry that faintly looked Cyclopean in the way it was carved. The contents of the pages were mostly newspaper cutouts and literature that belonged to Theosophists but the rest of it was a series of documentation about two separate incidents.

The first incident narrated Professor Angell's meeting with a young art student and sculptor named Henry Anthony Wilcox who brought the statuette mentioned before. He was very attuned to mysterious stories and psychic dreams that were easily dismissable to the common people. He sought Professor Angell's help to discern the bas-relief. Angell, being an expert in ancient cultures takes one look at this statue and realizes that it is not ancient but rather made fresh - just yesterday. Professor Angell shrugged it off as some sort of sick joke until something Wilcox said caught his interest:

"It is new, indeed, for I made it last night in a dream of strange cities; and dreams are older than brooding Tyre, or the contemplative Sphinx, or garden-girdled Babylon."

The night before there was an earthquake that ripped through New England. When he slept he dreamed of this ancient city of Cyclopean architecture where the buildings surpassed such great heights and there was some sort of slick, dripping gooey substance that resided on every inch of the city walls. There were ancient runes carved along the stone's surface that were unidentifiable

and otherworldly. Everything about the city screamed that it was not man made and rather the design of some unfathomable species. Whispers and chants of something chaotic and unsettling strung in his mind, and amongst that indecipherable gibberish a phrase stood out to him the most that he could take to the waking world with him - "Cthulhu fhtagn."

After hearing this, Professor Angell's mind stirs and he unleashes questions upon questions relating to the statuette and a cult or ancient religion that Wilcox is privy to. He is so desperate that he promises that he will be silent about Wilcox "pranking" if he is willing to tell the truth about what he knows of the cult surrounding Cthulhu. However, Wilcox is actually truly unaware and oblivious to any sort of cult or thing mentioned by the professor and he was genuinely trying to just discern the dream that he had and nothing more. After being finally convinced, Professor Angell just tells Wilcox to inform him of any upcoming dreams surrounding Cthulhu.

Everyday through phone calls, Professor Angell took updates from Wilcox and every dream was the same - a Cyclopean city with runes carved on every inch of its stone and a language spoken in a voice that is otherworldly. And the most common sounds that were recorded were "Cthulhu" and "R'lyeh".

After a couple of days of Professor Angell taking notes of Wilcox's dreams, suddenly it all stops to a halt because it is as if suddenly Wilcox seems to lose his mind. He becomes sick with a fever and spouts gibberish and no one, not even the Professor, can understand what he is saying. He is moved back to where his family is and it seems like his ailment is gradually but surely killing him. However, some days later he recovers to his normal state and has no recollection of whatever happened, not even the dreams he spoke of to Professor Angell. Hence Wilcox held no

more use for him. The Professor records dreams of other dreamers around the same area and finds that the moment Wilcox hits his delirium, other dreamers also did the same who were in the New England area. They had similar nightmares that were horrid and left them with dread, dreams of a place long forgotten with a tall, gruesome creature that reached the skies.

Other documents recorded of incidents of people suiciding, one where the person woke up screaming and ran to break into a window and fall off to their death. There were several incidents of patients in mental institutions who were yelling and thrashing about to no end for a week and needed to be sedated in order for them to stop temporarily. In India there were reports of an uprising that were violent. All this happened after March the 23rd.

The second part of the manuscript talks about the American Archaeological Society meeting that the Professor went to in 1908 in St. Louis. Amongst several of his colleagues someone new came up whose name was John Legrasse. He was from New Orleans and worked as a police inspector. In the south side of New Orleans he went to the swamps to raid a cult. From that raid he recovered a statuette that was made from a peculiar stone of greenish black complexion never before seen. It was of length of 17 to 20 centimeters, it was similar to the statuette that was in Angell's box - the statuette had an octopus head with many tentacles, long yet thin wings, and its posture looked humanlike as it stood on its hind legs, both hind and fore paws had claws. It was sitting on a box of stone carved with unknown and peculiar runes. The phonetics of these runes were nothing like anything they've seen, even though the people that were witnessing this statuette were among the most talented and experienced people of archaeology and ancient languages. The statuette passed to each person attending but no one was able to tell its origin or

anything about it despite closely studying it. However, there was one person who could recognize it to do something with what they've experienced. Some natives in Greenland were worshipping these idols similar to the statuette and the people who prayed to these idols were known for their barbarity. And the chants that this cult and the cult Legrasse spoke of had a similar phrase:

“Ph'nglui mglw'nafh Cthulhu R'lyeh wgah'nagl fhtagn”.

This phrase means that in his house of R'lyeh, dead Cthulhu waits dreaming. The translation was found by Inspector Legrasse after they took the cult members as prisoners in New Orleans. The inspector tells of what happened in 1908 in New Orleans. There were accounts of people missing in the nights and locals heard strange noises of drums being beaten and chilling chants or incantations. So, to investigate the issue 20 officers were sent to the swamp and surely they found the same incantations and the sound of beating of drums. But as they moved closer they found yells and shouts of something they could not identify to be human or an animal. The locals who helped show the way to the officers backed out of fear, saying of these myths and legends. Upon going further they see something akin to a mix of human and animal beings that circled a ring of fire around a massive block of stone which had the statuette atop it. There was a crazy parade of worshippers and human sacrifices and primordial gods. The police, upon finding them, shoot at them and amongst the 52 worshippers only 5 die while the rest are taken prisoner.

Upon questioning the prisoners, they came to know they prayed to the Great Old Ones who were so ancient, older than anything in the world and the cosmos. They were born from the sky, and

they were long dead and dormant under the surface of the Earth and under great depths of the sea. But death is not the end of them, for in their slumber they dream and these dreams reach the minds of humans from the first men to the people in the contemporary world. These visions reach a select few and it is the Old Ones' mode of communication and from this a cult is born and its followers remain all over the world in shady and dark places. They hope to free the Old Ones from their slumber through Cthulhu, the great priest, but it can only happen when the stars are just right. Then Cthulhu will have risen from the city of R'lyeh from beneath the depths of the ocean. This carven statuette was of Cthulhu and many dark entities (the hybrid abominations found in the swamp) worshiped the Great Old Ones alongside the cultists. The ancient runes or hieroglyphics were long forgotten and could not be read or understood by anyone living anymore.

These ancient Gods were not exactly dead, but dead was the closest word to explain their current state. Inspector Legrasse finds a person of mixed ancestry who could further explain the cult named Castro. He said that these Gods were not fully made of flesh, blood and bones like humans are. They are not composed of matter. In order for them to live, the stars had to be positioned just right and if they weren't they remained dead. But dead not as we know it, but of a deep slumber in a city of stone called R'lyeh. Their graves remain under the sea and under the surface of the earth through Cthulhu's magic to let them be dormant. They await their resurrection through Cthulhu through an outside means to liberate them. Until their liberation, they could only speak to humans through their thoughts and dreams but only to the ones that are perceptive enough to have their dreams molded by the Old Ones. When Cthulhu rises humans will know pleasure, anger, lust, violence, envy and every primal feeling that we humans feel in a

way that is currently impossible. It is as if Cthulhu will unlock channels of the mind that we didn't know existed. Then memories long forgotten will be made new and remembered. This ancient custom or religion is so old and so hidden in the shadows there is no documentation or text to prove that it exists - like how Christians have the Bible to guide them but Cthulhu's followers did not have that. There was however a small hint of his existence in the necronomicon:

"That is not dead which can eternal lie,
And with strange aeons even death may die."

Thurston felt convinced that Wilcox preyed upon the old and feeble mind of his uncle and deceived him with a hoax, so he paid Wilcox's house a visit. Upon getting there he sees paintings and artworks of his dreams of the mighty city of R'lyeh, Cthulhu and of the coming end. Thurston decided not to trouble him with the whole concept of doom and dread that Cthulhu and the Great Old Ones bring, for Wilcox does not know the true extent and the meaning of his dreams.

Some time has passed and he came across a newspaper article from the Sydney Bulletin. The ship called Alert of Dunedin was found with only one crew member and one dead body onboard. However, these two people found in the Alert of Dunedin were in a ship called the Emma. Originally there were 8 crew members so 6 of them were missing and unaccounted for. The one survivor, a man named Gustaf Johansen, said that on March the 22nd he and his crew members were attacked by pirates aboard the Alert of Dunedin. The crew members of the ship fought with

this savagery, using their hands and teeth. However, Gustaf and his men could fight them off but their ship Emma was sinking due to cannon fire. So, they boarded the Alert of Dunedin and followed its predetermined course. Gustaf said they reached an island and something happened for which the 6 crew members were missing. However, what struck Thurston was that this happened during the time when all the chaos happened with Wilcox and the several other people. Gustaf was also clutching a statuette. Thurston goes to Australia and tries to locate Gustaf and searches for him everywhere until he gets to know he returned home to his wife. However, upon arriving at the house he finds that Gustaf is dead and his wife is now a widow. She lamented how Gustaf never got to recover to his original self and somehow died when books fell on him from an attic window. Thurston realizes it points to suspicious deaths befalling people who know too much about Cthulhu. She says how he had a stack of papers kept away that he said were technical matters and Thurston found the letters were written in English so that his wife could not read it (she only spoke in Dutch). He takes these papers and upon reading them finds out what happened to the crew of Emma.

Johansen and his crew members came upon the mighty city of R'lyeh that came to the surface from the depths of the sea, the greenish black structures unlike anything they've ever seen - the figures of Cthulhu, much like the shrine found in Alert of Dunedin, everywhere and strange runes carved on every inch of the stone pillars and monoliths. There was slick and slimy ooze dripping from the stone surfaces and it was as it was completely evident it did not belong to anything from Earth as Johansen struggled to paint a perfect picture of the city through his words, instead describing it due to stone masses with various peculiar angles and there were objects with dimensions not known or seen by men. This non Euclidean architecture baffled the

crew, they did not make sense but somehow did at the same time. One of the crew members climbed up this massive door and onto the top of it. The door begins to open with smoke coming from the gap, and Cthulhu emerges, so hideously dark and massive that it shielded everything from the light of the sun and it seemed to take all of the sky's view. The sickening odor that came off the beast was so disgusting and there was a strangely slimy and squishy sound of something slithering. Two of the crew members were so petrified that they immediately perished at this abomination of a sight. Thurston thinks that it is no wonder Wilcox had violent dreams and many went mad at this very instant for there is nothing so hideously grotesque and abysmal. Words fail to perfectly describe the monster. "The stars were right again, and what an age-old cult had failed to do by design, a band of innocent sailors had done by accident." Three crew members were killed in a single swoop of its claws and upon fleeing one crew member slipped into the abyss. The remaining crew members and Johansen scramble to the boat but it was evident that Cthulhu was swimming towards them much faster than how the boat moved. So, in a flight of frenzy, he turns the boat and slams it directly into the creature's head and a massive chunk of its flesh comes out. However, with great horror, Johansen witnesses that the thing was regenerating its body. The other crew member with Johansen completely went mad and laughed hysterically until he soon perished.

The only investigator who could pick up the puzzle pieces and assemble them together was Thurston. But he did not live to tell the tale but kept his findings in his manuscripts, if recalled, the story itself started with this being found from the belongings of the late Francis Wayland Thurston. And sadly Cthulhu is risen now, and who is to tell when, where and how the wrath of the Elder Gods will unleash upon humanity and an age old dark era will come to be again?

The Fall of the House of Usher

The narrator found himself in the countryside where it was particularly gloomy and cloudy. The narrator notices how unkempt the structure of the house of Usher is, and this overwhelming sense of somberness he felt upon gazing into the eye-like windows of the family home of Usher. This house belongs to Roderick Usher, the childhood friend of the unnamed narrator. He requested the narrator to urgently visit him as he fell ill. Roderick displayed a bizarre set of symptoms where his senses were heightened. He could not bear some tastes in food, or feel certain textures in clothes, or see some feeble lights, or smell scents in flowers, or listen to some pitches or frequencies of noise. He explains this affliction seems to be inherited from his family or the house itself. It comes as a shock to the narrator when Roderick asserts that the Usher mansion is conscious and can influence its occupants to some extent. He wonders if Roderick is losing his mind. His twin sister, Madeline Usher, is incredibly ill with an affliction unable to be explained by doctors. The narrator notices her walking slowly in some corner of the house without seeming to notice him, which unsettles him.

After some days passed, Madeline sadly perishes so Roderick and the narrator take her to the family vault to bury her in her tomb. Roderick's condition worsens after Madeline's death. One night the narrator struggles to fathom what is happening as there are strange noises unexplained, Roderick enters the narrator's room and is terrified. He opens the windows to a powerful storm with thick fog that enveloped the entire house. The narrator reads a book to calm Roderick down but somehow notices the sounds in the story are being replicated in the house. Roderick then

explains that they must have mistakenly buried Madeline alive in her coffin! And that all the unexplained noises were her trying to break open her tomb.

The door is opened to reveal Madeline in her death shroud, all bloody from clawing her way through her coffin. She moans and falls on her brother and they both die. The narrator is terrified and he scrambles to leave the house which was starting to unravel. He looks back to see a gap widen from the top to the base of the house and it all tumbles while a blood red moon is behind it in the sky.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

2.1 Lovecraft and *The Call of Cthulhu*

“Lovecraft’s fictional gods are relegated to the background of his stories—they are never the focal point and rarely, if ever, the cause or reason for the unfolding of events—which is an important element of what makes Lovecraft’s horror horrific. Indeed, only that which exists beyond thought, within the vacuous unknown, can instill true horror.” (Peak 3). Lovecraft expertly crafts horror from the expanse of the unknowable and unreachable cosmos with its equally eluding cosmic beings.

“Coming to know a certain reality can result in a full or partial destruction of the self.” (Peak 4).

It is within these scientific revelations that mankind has wrought upon itself destruction, for being oblivious to the uncaring and cold universe full of primordial gods indifferent to us petty beings is a blessing in itself. It is within these revelations we orchestrate our doom.

“Lovecraft’s gods and monsters are employed to further such concepts as scientific indifferentism and the existence of a reality beyond human conception. As a result, the Cthulhu Mythos is populated by a series of gods who are perhaps best understood as symbols of cosmic outsideness, which refers to the reality of objects and entities outside an earthly, moral, or ethical understanding, in particular, the monstrous, extraterrestrial deities known as the Old Ones. As entities of pure and unknowable horror, these Old Ones are unconcerned with human life. In fact, they are completely indifferent to it, perhaps more likely unaware of it. Any hint of malevolence is strictly the interpretation of the human who seeks an explanation for the unexplainable.” (Peak 5). It is merely by chance that we surfaced into the expanding cosmos to witness Cthulhu and the mighty city of R’lyeh. The Great Old Ones and Cthulhu are indifferent to us humans and it is again by chance that we are scarred by them or perish outright by fear. They never held our interests at heart because we are like a speck on the radar which is the unfathomable universe. And it is again our own undoing that we, instead of being in oblivious bliss, we craved for more knowledge and found something we were never supposed to see.

“As Joshi has written, “[t]he true horror in Lovecraft’s work is the mere knowledge that the Old Ones exist. The psychological devastation in the face of human insignificance makes any actions on the part of the ‘gods’ or monsters seem utterly insignificant.” (Peak 6). The reality that there are beings so abysmally horrifying and grotesque that their sheer existence causes mankind to shrivel, it cannot be put into words what they even look like or what they mean, much less to what they could possibly be capable of doing if they were interested in mankind. Hence: “This is what Lovecraft meant by science being “the ultimate exterminator of our human species”; it is

the self-annihilating disease. With his Mythos tales, Lovecraft sought to emphasize reality as supported by scientific thought—the reality that makes horror horrific—that human life is without meaning, the cosmos itself cold and unfeeling, and that true knowledge of this reality could drive one to the brink of insanity.” (Peak 6).

Cthulhu and the Great Old Ones have been entombed in the city of R’lyeh under the surface of the ocean. They strike fear and chaos amongst mortal men through transmitting their thoughts into the dreams of men. (Peak 14). These dreams show the non Euclidean and bizarre otherworldly architecture of the city of R’lyeh where there are hieroglyphics on every inch of the stone. Cthulhu is perhaps symbolic to the idea that mere scientific evidence is not enough to piece together a reality unbeknownst to us or outside of our intellectual capabilities. Something beyond the realms of space and time as we know it could render our petty human concepts like morality, truth, sentience asunder. (Peak 15).

“As previously mentioned, one half of what allows Lovecraft’s fiction, specifically his Mythos, to persist in contemporary pop culture is his use of an artificial pantheon and myth background to focus on themes of scientific notion and present-day concerns. As a result, Lovecraft essentially moved the weird tale away from vampires and witches and “turned the whole universe into a haunted house,” as Richard L. Tierney has said. The other half of this continued relevance is rooted in Lovecraft’s uncanny ability to hint at future philosophical developments.” (Peak 17). Lovecraft’s use of humanity’s constant weakness of always having something to discern or discover because of how vast and incomprehensible the universe is around us will always be relevant to contemporary tropes of horror. Fear of the unknown in mankind has always been there and will continue to be there.

“Pace Heidegger, Cthulhu, finally, comes into view (Ereignis), but it is a total non-event. And it is precisely the un-eventful nature of the event that I wish to discuss here. Where we should expect the end, all that we receive is a deferral; the re-animation of dead/dreaming Cthulhu is reduced to nothing more than a series of aesthetic phenomena...” (Wilson 11). Cthulhu’s summoning by the band of innocent sailors was so uneventful in the fact that instead of calling upon the end of the world and all that makes sense of humanity, there’s just a few casualties across different places in the world that were affected by the ripple of Cthulhu’s resurrection. Not to mention that a primordial god of infinities unfathomable loses a part of its body when Johansen collides the ship with Cthulhu’s body, momentarily deterring him so he was able to escape his clutches. Perhaps, Cthulhu’s presence in the story was just a fright factor and to bring the ambience of horror in the story. And the end of the story leaves this question unanswered in the readers’ minds as to what happens next to humanity. Lovecraft leaves much of this in the reader’s imagination, further amplifying the mystery of the whole Cthulhu mythos.

“Cosmic horror is a paradoxically anti-therapeutic form of catharsis: curative because of the flooding release of psychic tension that it itself creates but harmful at the same time because of the radical disabuse of human conceit that it involves. As Donald R. Burleson has quite correctly recognized, Lovecraft’s aesthetic is essentially post-modern in nature, a “deconstructive gesture of questioning and unsettling metaphysically privileged systems of all kinds.” The signature feature of Lovecraft’s writing is precisely this ironically self-understood insignificance of being-human, which, given the essentially anthropocentric nature of Western thought, bestows upon the Lovecraftian corpus a status unique within modern literature.” (Wilson 19). Cosmic

horror is about this existential dread and the realization of the insignificance of human life and its accomplishments. No matter how much we scour, we can never fathom the infinite and vast universe around us. And in our obliviousness, we are lucky for the sheer reality of the universe itself would render our minds asunder.

“All of Lovecraft’s plots, in so far as there are any, are occasioned by a traumatic, and traumatizing, cognitive rupturing of the social consensus of reality,⁶⁶ culminating in the annihilating revelation of an unspeakable dis-joint between a human(-istic) phenomena and a post-human(-istic) noumena, perfectly suited to the post-theistic aesthetic experience of the weird tale, signified by the obliteration of consciousness and self-awareness, culminating in Lovecraft’s trademark literary gimmick, the primordial scream. This scream is the epitome of the Lovecraftian artistic effect, a radically alienating encounter with the annihilating nature of the universe, which in the final instance can only be denoted as the nameless. And as no less an authority than Abdul Alhazred himself declares in his darkly magisterial *Necronomicon*, “Man rules now where They ruled once; They shall soon rule where Man rules now. After summer is winter, and after winter summer. They wait patient and potent, for here shall they reign again.”” (Wilson 20). The ancient Old Ones transmit their thoughts through dreams in the human mind. These dreams may likely break the person due to the sheer oddity of them. And upon the summoning of Cthulhu, a new dark age comes for humanity and earth, where human conscience of right and wrong, good and bad hold no weight for the primordial gods and the ever expanding universe. It is something we cannot hope to fathom, much less conquer.

2.2 Poe and *The Fall of the House of Usher*

“In his works, he reveals people’s horror towards super nature, nothingness, death, evil and disintegration of personality. He tries to make it clear that horror comes from our soul. He tries his best to state how the evil and horror function in bringing the sublimation and purification to man’s inner world.” (Pang et al. 1). Poe reveals the less aesthetic side to humanity and makes the gruesomeness and oddity of it come out in a way that is uncannily sublime. He shows that we do not have to look externally to find such horror, but we can search deep within ourselves. And it's through this purging do we find a strange kind of beauty.

The word “Goth” originates from a Germanic tribe in the medieval times, and they left a really non pleasant and scary impression on people, for which the word would be used to frighten children or discipline them. “Gothic” had become a term to refer to medieval things. The architecture and masonry that belonged to the Germanic tribe “Goth” were called “Gothic” to give them an aesthetic feel due to the very tall and narrow structures and their basements would be full of corpses, which gave them a bizarre impression. (Pang et al. 2).

“However, Poe had been misunderstood by readers and his contemporaries for quite a long time. It was until 20th century that the importance of Poe’s literary creations had been recognized by the academic world.” (Pang et al. 3)

Usually the gothic atmosphere involves gothic architecture with decaying castles and the stairways and hallways are eerie with strange noises echoing off the walls. Poe expertly uses the surrounding atmosphere to talk about the subtle details, metaphors, symbols and imagery. He

creates a vividly uncanny picture to better feel the hauntingly beautiful setting and the messages underneath. (Pang et al. 3). “The air about the setting is pensive and gloomy. The “white trunks of decayed trees,” the “black and lurid tarn,” and the “vacant, eyelike windows” contribute to the collective atmosphere of despair and anguish (Edgar Allan Poe, 1982). This is done with the words black, lurid, decayed, and vacant. The narrator says that the Usher mansion had “an atmosphere which had no affinity with the air of heaven.” (Hayes, 2004). It was nowhere near being beautiful, holy, or clean. He uses descriptive words such as decayed, strange, peculiar, gray, mystic, gothic, pestilent, dull and sluggish to create the atmosphere.” (Pang et al. 3). Poe is able to very skillfully use the atmosphere and events to foreshadow events in the future. The eyelike windows of the Usher house foreshadow the spiritual death of Roderick Usher when Madeline Usher dies. (Pang et al. 3).

The characters in *The Fall of the House of Usher* are all suffering afflictions of the mind unique to each other. Roderick Usher suffers overly acute senses that drive him to an insanity that he so desperately wants to escape. Madeline Usher has to suffer the reality of being entombed alive when the narrator tries to piece everything together in the Usher house while worrying about getting mad himself in the process. It is also suggested that Poe projected his home through the interior of the Usher house. (Pang et al. 3-4). “What’s more, the reason that the narrator finds everything within his room in House of Usher, such as the black oaken floor, the dark drapery and the general furniture which are “profuse, comfortless, antique and tattered”, makes an unspeakable sense of familiarity and gives us what the environment like in Poe’s own inner world.” (Pang et al. 4). Since the house stands, albeit almost run down, due to Roderick’s

conscience, it is only plausible that the Usher house falls apart when Roderick dies. (Pang et al. 4).

As for symbols, house symbolizes the Usher family, Roderick Usher and Madeline Usher. Tarn is symbolic of evil, malaria symbolizes the supernatural and illusions. The eyelike windows of the house is vacant and looks like the intelligence in them is disturbed, symbolizing the spiritual death of Roderick when Madeline is entombed. The somber and unruly condition of the inside of the house is symbolic to the stressed and tumultuous mind of Roderick. (Pang et al. 4).

The readers, upon reading gothic literature, feel shock and pleasure from the morally questionable characters and can better judge them through knowing what torment goes on in their minds. This pushes to enlighten the reader about their internal selves. (Pang et al. 5).

Gothic fiction sheds light on our innermost terrible feelings and traits, making us accustomed to the horror in our very human nature, and expressing it in a way that is aesthetically pleasing. Thus it becomes sublime - grotesque but there is beauty in its horror. Our ugly nature has a composition of feelings like lust, envy, rage, gluttony, sloth, wrath, pride. There is the pain of losing someone or something, the pain of losing people to death, and the wild unpredictable events occurring which we have no control over. All these are the horrors of everyday life. Gothic fiction turns these into something grotesque yet beautiful. Gothic fiction gives a sense of thrill to readers due to the dangerous and macabre scenes. That thrill is pleasurable. Poe wanted to convey the horror in our innermost selves, which could lead us to perhaps turn to good. Thus

we can say gothic horror gives a sense of pleasure through the exaggerated macabre scenes. Hence we are purged from the horrors of everyday life. (Pang et al. 5).

Chapter 3

The Literary and Historical or Cultural Foundation

3.1 Romanticism and Gothic Literature

Romanticism is a rather influential and popular movement that defined how people saw life and they emphasized it through literary works or other artistic means in the 18th century. There was a new bode of meaning to life and its elements, be it in love, life, work, sexual intimacy and such. It was more of a reaction to the ever increasing modernization of the world through industrialization, secularism, consumerism and urbanization. It can be said it was the reaction to the Enlightenment period and its values of rationalism. The people in history who were key contributors to Romanticism are Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Thomas Chatterton, Goethe, Goya, William Wordsworth. Thomas Cole, Charles Baudelaire etc. Rousseau wrote a book *Emile*, in which he laments about the goodness of a young child's mind in its ability to stand unabashed against cold, hard reasons of the adult. In this rapid industrialization and modernization of Rousseau's surroundings, only the child remains unaffected and outside the norms and traditions of rational adults. It is both brave and admirable for how creatively rebellious the youngster's minds can be which contrasts to the harsh and cold capitalistic world. Thomas Chatterton was a 17 year old poet who succumbed to his premature death of his own design by consuming arsenic. He was depressed because none of his poems got published due to being too centralled around the values opposite to those of the modern world, too focused on beauty and artistic intelligence. It is also said that his failing poetic career made his family push him to chase after being a

lawyer. This social pressure killed him unfortunately. His death would be known as one of a tragic artist's who was unable to find a place in this bleak and rapidly developing world. Goethe is known for publishing the popular book *The Sorrows of Young Werther*. He makes the readers sympathize with the impulsively passionate protagonist who is in love with a married woman. He ends up killing himself because of not being able to take it anymore. His feelings of love do not conform to the norm of modern society and its notions of class, race and decorum. Many other artists contributed to Romanticism but the main logic of Romanticism is the expression and glorification of emotions, impulses, irrationality, intuition etc that coolly contrasts with the virtues of the modern world and its constraints. (Swiggett 18).

Gothic literature debuted in 1764 through Horace Walpole's book *The Castle of Otranto*. Gothic literature is coined from the gothic architecture of the European Middle Ages because authors tend to use the settings of these ancient buildings to set the dark and foreboding atmosphere. These buildings consisted of these buttresses to support the walls which extended from the outside, curved arches that narrow upwards, elongated and narrow spires, ribbed vaults, windows that were stained (like from a church) and such. Gothic literature uses a set of tropes relevant to the setting, plot, character and the plot of the story. These settings could use the gothic architecture earlier mentioned. These elongated structures were designed in a way to commit to the idea of reaching spirituality, of reaching high up at the heavens. However, these ancient buildings set the theme in gothic literature of a remnant of a scary era long buried. For example, there would be customs and traditions that were upheld in the past that perhaps could be completely barbaric to the people of the present. These architecture that bore witness to such barbarity are a semblance of what was long past. They become mere shadows of a time they hold

a testament to and they evoke feelings of foreboding and dread in the narrator. These kinds of architecture are usually abandoned which sets a deeper theme of mystery and the unkempt. Graveyards and psych wards in mental hospitals could also be set up as an ideal setting. Oftentimes it is seen that the narrator goes through a psychological meltdown that makes them question reality, they can experience fear, immense grief, anguish and feelings of being restrained in the cage of their own minds. The plot could very well be roped with the gore, as it is a common theme. There is also oftentimes a magically spooky trait that sets the tone of the genre like werewolves, vampires, ghosts, zombies, wendigos, etc. In the 19th century we again see gothic horror come into play in the literary wave of romanticism. Dark Romanticism mixes the genre of romanticism with gothic literature. Edgar Allan Poe uses Dark Romanticism a lot in his stories. It deals with the more harrowing and grim side to human feelings and senses. For example: lust, greed, grief, shock, envy, rage. Sometimes it deals with feelings becoming more complicated and conflicting of morale like incestual lust or addiction to murder. *The Fall of the House of Usher* uses very morbid and dark scenery that vividly captures the more somber, decrepit yet held together settings usually seen in the works of Dark Romantic stories. (Pang et al. 2).

3.2 Modernism and Cosmic Literature

Modernism is a literary movement that started at the end of World War I and ended sometime around the middle of the 1900s. This movement was a post war response to life devoid of hope, reason and faith that many had after being mentally scarred from the war. The disillusionment of life and the fragmentation of people's minds rendered them unable to cope in a way different to how people did before the war. Modernism marks a culture that is struggling to pull itself

together and to cope with the widespread apathy amongst the society. The rapidly increasing industrialization, urbanization and capitalism had big effects on this movement. Not to mention that the evident discrimination between higher and upper class, genders and races also worked to mold modernism. It was different to romanticism in the way that it distanced itself from God and gave up hope of an idealistic world of good people and morals. T. S. Eliot was the first person to gather up all this chaos and its fragmentation in the society and make it into something very expressive and a work of art through his poem “The Waste Land”. It is about finding atonement in an otherwise spiritually barren wasteland. Modernist literature typically lacked a one way directed narrative, rather it was all out of place. The narration was subjective, and there was a sense of a hollow and confused feeling and the narrator tends to feel separated from the rest of the world. This rejection of the past writing styles is evident in modernist literature. It also uses heavy symbolism and formalism or searching for more creative ways to express oneself. Modernist literature sometimes uses a technique called stream of consciousness. Lovecraft’s stories embodied a sense of modernism because his version of horror was much different and newer than the horror works formerly written.

“The oldest and strongest emotion of mankind is fear, and the oldest and strongest kind of fear is fear of the unknown”

Mankind had the fear of the unknown long before anyone can remember, meaning since its inception. What we did not know then cultivated our actions and responses we had in the situations we discovered ourselves in. Whatever new was always a source of fear and a challenge. We formed religions and worshiped gods who we thought had the power to control the

universe. There were countless sacrifices and rituals to appease the gods so that they do not punish us through what was unbeknownst and dangerous for us. And then came philosophers who pondered upon a more rational explanation. Rather than chalk up things to be the cause of gods, mankind sought a more natural and scientific approach, through what we now know as scientists. Science has evolved over time, but it also implied how little we know about the expanding cosmos. The fear of the unknown is something H. P. Lovecraft used quite a lot as a focal point in his cosmic horror works. His works talk of an overwhelming and paralytic sense of dread that easily sweeps over our minds. (Peak 3).

The works of Lovecraft centers around the unknown and the massive existential crisis we experience facing that unknown. The futility of life amongst experiencing the vastness of the cosmos is something the characters in Lovecraft's works often go through. The traditional horror stories consist of ghosts, zombies, vampires, werewolves, etc. However, Lovecraft shifted horror from that to something akin to the helplessness mankind would face when subjected to the cosmic forces who do not have our interests at heart. (Peak 5). Compared to the vast and ever expanding universe, the Earth and humankind is but a speck of dust on the radar. (Peak 6). This means that petty human concerns are trivial on a cosmic level. He laments on the existential fear we face upon discovering beings and phenomena that we could not even hope to begin to fathom, much less grasp completely. (Peak 6). Humans and their existence are pointless around such phenomena. So, to sum it up, Cosmicism is a type of philosophy that has the belief that humans are rather insignificant compared to the cold and uncaring universe, it has no place for trivial human affairs. It is, we could say, existentialism but at an overworked scale.

“The most merciful thing in the world, I think, is the inability of the human mind to correlate all its contents. We live on a placid island of ignorance in the midst of black seas of infinity, and it was not meant that we should voyage far. The sciences, each straining in its own direction, have hitherto harmed us little; but some day the piecing together of dissociated knowledge will open up such terrifying vistas of reality, and of our frightful position therein, that we shall either go mad from the revelation or flee from the light into the peace and safety of a new dark age.”

Lovecraft’s works have a curiosity for the unknown, but upon unraveling the unknown, instead of being enlightened with the newfound knowledge, we are appalled and horrified. (Peak 4). It makes us succumb to madness and paranoia because humans were never meant to discover such things. (Peak 6). The unknown then, by chance, becomes our undoing. Cosmicism is not only about the unfathomable in the depths of the universe, but Lovecraft also wrote about the Great Old Ones, and the priest Cthulhu, who reside under the ocean in the mighty city of R’lyeh.

3.3 Cultural and Biographical Comparison

Edgar Allan Poe

Edgar Allan Poe was born on January 19th, 1809. His parents were David Poe and Elizabeth Poe. Sadly, they died before he could turn four years old. He was taken to his foster home in Virginia. John Allan was his guardian. He wrote poetry constantly. (Pruette 2-5). Guardian John Allan fell into financial troubles and decided to stop funding Poe’s education. As an immediate way to gather quick cash, he began gambling. He did this to remain studying in college and to continue writing. However, he fell into greater debt. Ultimately, he was unable to continue his education and resorted to drinking. (Pruette 6). He returned home to see his childhood love had

been engaged to someone else. He joined the US army and eventually became a sergeant major. (Preutte 8). Poe published his first collection of poems. Sadly, he succumbed to poverty because his writings alone could not finance him. Poe returned to his paternal house in Baltimore. He began working for a literary magazine and began appearing in the spotlight as a critic and writer. He became known to be a harsh critic, and his short stories and poems were popular. He got married to his much younger cousin, Virginia. He moved to New York with his new wife. Within a couple of years, Poe's works, lectures and critics became quite well known. Poe's work could be described as Gothic Romanticism. In 1847, his young wife, Virginia, died due to tuberculosis. (Pruette 8). Poe was distraught. Within 2 years he fell into a descent into deep depression where he resorted to gambling, drinking, and having multiple affairs with women. The name through years of hard work that he cultivated for himself was now tarnished. A lot of his most haunting works were made at that time by the author. Perhaps he was projecting his inner turmoil through them. Poe died a mysterious death outside a bar in Baltimore at the age of 40. He was known to be the master of the macabre through his fiction filled with mystery, horror, suspense, etc.

Howard Phillips Lovecraft

Lovecraftian horror has themes like fear of the unknown, futility of life, existential dread, isolation, etc. His works stem a lot from his own experiences in life. Lovecraft grew up to be a sickly child, many of his illnesses being mental rather than physical. His father, Winfield Scott Lovecraft, was institutionalized for having mental fits and having psychosis. He soon died from syphilis. During this time Lovecraft was only three years old. Lovecraft seemed to have inherited a similar condition or was agoraphobic. Sarah Susan Phillips Lovecraft, his mother, understandably became fearful for his safety. He was brought up by his grandfather, Whipple

Van Buren Phillips. Through him, Lovecraft came to read a lot of literature, mainly classical, and poems. It was not very surprising that his grandfather became his guiding vessel in life.

Lovecraft grew up to read books a lot and often found himself tucked in his library reading. His grandmother died and it shook the very foundation of his family. He had troubling nightmares of beings that he later wrote about in his works, called “night-gaunts”. Lovecraft was subjected to a dark and perilous time after his grandfather died. He and his mother had to give up living in their Victorian house and move to a more humbling one. He contemplated killing himself but his drive to learn about new things made him stand up and get his bearings. He learnt about astronomy from school which shaped a lot of the lore of his fictional writings. He was inspired about the pointlessness of human existence in the never-ending cosmos through studying astronomy.

Unfortunately he had a severe panic attack in school for which he retired to being home and self studying. His mother and he had quite an unhealthy relationship with each other. She contributed a lot to the lack of his self esteem. One day, he met some newbie journalists and through that he found people he could relate to. This gave him a sense of purpose in life. He wrote about 100,000 letters in his whole life. His mother soon died from a problem arising during the surgery of her gallbladder. He felt suicidal again. He met the love of his life, Sonia, and they got married. They moved to New York. They split up due to personal issues. In New York’s bustling, humdrum society full of immigrants Lovecraft could not find anything he could relate to. This coupled with the tragedies that befell his parents fuelled the stories in his fiction about humankind being the cause for their demise through their insignificance rather than the typical trope of saving themselves due to some enlightened truth. Racism was quite prevalent in that time hence it was integral to the plot of his writings. For example, in *The Call of Cthulhu* he talked about the cult south of New Orleans, the people in India, or people in Greenland, are what

he called “mongrels” or “lesser breeds”/“lesser races”. And it’s evident they are more susceptible to Cthulhu’s calling and worship them. He has a constant mistrust of any faculty of man through his works. Lovecraft finally returned to where he originally lived, in Providence, Rhode Island. His works were not exposed as much to readers sadly and he died probably believing his works would amount to nothing in the world or not hold the magnitude that it does today. He died due to cancer in 1937. Elements of cosmicism are evident and integral to his works and even though his works are not modernist outright, they still hold some hints of it.

Chapter 4

Themes

4.1 Fear of the Unknown versus Fear of the Known

Poe/Fear of the Known

In Poe’s works, the source of fear in the stories often derives from mortal afflictions be it psychological or physical, be it madness or decay. These fears, even though known, are still macabre or gruesome in the sense that they take lives without mercy. Poe often uses unreliable narrators to guide readers through the story, so the narration feels like a fever dream at the brink of madness. (Pang et al. 4-5). In *The Fall of the House of Usher* the house is as if alive and given a human personification through its eye-like windows that seemed vacant in spirit, meaning that its intelligence was disturbed in some way. The house and the Usher siblings were one and the same. Roderick and Madeline’s death mirrored the destruction of the house. Roderick’s illness coupled with his strange symptoms that made his senses acute and sensitive to discomfort. He was struggling in both body and mind and he seemed to know that it was due to the house and its generational long curse on the Usher family. Madeline, too, was gravely ill and sometimes

rendered cataleptic and unable to move at the worst of her symptoms. Their demise together caused the Usher home to crumble, because they were the last of the Ushers left and they were one and the same. (Pang et al. 4)

Lovecraft/Fear of the Unknown

Lovecraft utilizes the mystery and the unseen horrors of the ancient primordial beings that mankind did not discover, much to its relief. He utilizes the concept of beings unfathomable to render in the horror of knowing that these creatures so cosmically greater than mankind and Earth are uncaring and indifferent to us. (Peak 5-6). It was only by mere coincidence that these primordial gods came to be discovered. They have the least bit of interest in us and the fact that they are so incredibly complex to even see and register in our brains that we just go mad from the sheer sight. (Peak 5-6). The mighty city of R'lyeh with its hieroglyphic carved monoliths with green, dripping goo was nothing like anyone has ever seen, which gives away as to how it was surely made by an entirely different and leagues more impressive species. There were angles and depths so bent out of shape that it was impossible to put into words as to what had been seen. And no one saw the Great Old Ones, but Cthulhu who was just a priest and lesser than the Great Old Ones was massive and so incomprehensible in the way it looked that those sailors perished from pure fright. Lovecraft uses the incompetence of men and their limited intelligence to show the horror of being in a universe so cosmically large that mankind and Earth are just a mere dot on the radar, if not less. (Peak 6).

4.2 Death

Poe

In Poe's stories, death is a more intimately personal event because it is something we can conclude even if terrifying. He uses human catastrophes like plagues and illnesses as the focal point of horror often. He does use supernatural elements or madness in his stories but it is on a more personal level. He even includes spiritual death or symbolism to better picture the horror in the characters' minds. And human characteristics could often be the key to such death like lust, greed, envy, rage, etc. (Pang et al. 5)

Lovecraft

Death in Lovecraft's stories are more impersonal because of how mysterious it is and how there's always a lack of a concrete explanation behind the deaths. These deaths are also by chance because the ancient and elder beings in his stories are so indifferent to humankind that their death could not possibly be with strong intent. It is like walking on grass and not noticing that one killed an ant by crushing it under the shoe. It is merely by chance. (Peak 5).

4.3 Madness

Poe

Madness is a key theme in Poe's stories. The narrator questions the sanity of Roderick and Madeline as he personifies the house and says it has the power to affect his mind. What's bizarre is that Roderick seems to be aware of the fact that the house is disturbing his mind and is eventually guiding him to madness. The narrator also begins to question his own sanity as the thin line between reality and imagination seems to blur, with the decrepit yet held together setting of the Usher house to the eerie sounds and atmospheres surrounding them. The narrator is seeing Roderick go mad to the point he buries her sister alive in her tomb, but is too wrapped up

with the hysterics of the house and Roderick's condition that he cannot distinguish what's real or bizarre. Roderick even calls the narrator a madman for not seeing or believing that he buried Madeline alive, hinting at the possibility that the narrator too has succumbed to an ill mind and is trapped in the house with its antiques. Dark romanticism has a famous trope of a character constantly trying to be better or overcome their fears or problems but failing, Roderick can be compared in this way because he wants to grapple with the fact the house is affecting him and he is inconsistent with his words and has these highs and lows like he is somehow bipolar. He has a spirit in him, which the narrator sees in his eyes that he failed to see in the eye-like windows of the house. It symbolizes the fact that intelligence will eventually be disturbed in Roderick just like it is in the house. The light in his eyes goes out after Madeline supposedly dies. Because they are twins and are one and the same so when Madeline "dies" so does Roderick spiritually. It foreshadows his bodily death soon afterwards when Madeline claws her way out of the tomb and falls on Roderick's body and just then the two perish together and so does the family house of Usher. One quality that is very subtly implied may be that Roderick and Madeline are incestual lovers. The Usher lineage has no outside branches which explains that the family tree has been continued incestually. This also shows how claustrophobic the entire atmosphere inside the house is because there is no branching of the family lineage so Roderick and Madeline do not get to interact with the outside world. Madeline is Roderick's double, and the physical house is the double of the Usher family lineage. Perhaps this phenomena where they cannot be external from one another in its taboo incestual way is ultimately their undoing and the sole reason for their madness. Even scientifically, sibling incestual relationships produce offspring with a high chance of being defective at birth mentally or physically. So, it could be implied that due to their incestuous genes they ultimately went mad and died. Roderick could not be external from

Madeline even if he tried with his intellect and hope to best his condition, she proves it by falling on his body and perishing together. They shared a womb together, they were born together and they died together. (Pang et al. 4-5).

Lovecraft

Madness in Lovecraft's stories are usually when we see a sliver of a cosmic being so ancient and in dimensions so bizarre that people go mad from the revelation. This fear of the unknown and the vastness of space and time and how incomprehensible it is because mankind does not have the level of depth in their intelligence to be able to fathom this. Mankind is a speck of sand grain in the never ending desert of the cosmos. These elder beings and primordial gods are so ancient and so unheard of that when they communicate through the dreams of men people go mad or be unable to comprehend what they've seen. In the underwater city of R'lyeh when Cthulhu was finally summoned by accident by a band of sailors, some died on spot from the sheer fright, so many even though miles away were affected in their dreams, some even killed themselves. His resurrection caused a surge of paranoia in people in different parts of the globe. Upon his freeing, a dark age has descended upon mankind that Lovecraft hinted on but left it at the reader's imagination through ending the story. (Peak 4) (Wilson 20).

4.4 Settings

Poe

The settings in which the stories take place are usually gloomy and devoid of any light or happiness. He often uses crumbling and decaying architecture like ancient mansions to set the

spooky theme. He also uses claustrophobic spaces to mirror the inner turmoil of the characters in his stories. (Pang et al. 3).

Lovecraft

The settings in his stories are usually bizarre and in dimensions and angles never seen or discovered before because they are made by or a part of ancient primordial beings unknown to mankind. The mighty city of R'lyeh has these monoliths made of green black stone with ancient carved runes on them on every inch of the stone. The architecture goes so tall it's impossible to reach. There is also a slimy and sticky substance permeating the stone everywhere. It is also in a dimension that cannot be comprehended and the shapes and angles do not make much sense either. (Peak 14-15).

Chapter 5

Monsters and Entities

5.1 Poe

More often than not, Poe's stories hold monsters to be our own human nature. We all have a monster within ourselves. Roderick's inability to externalize himself outside of Madeline and their incestuous bond was his undoing. The air within the Usher home is unbearably stuffy because it mirrors how the Usher lineage has no branch to the outside world and Roderick and Madeline do not get to interact with anyone outside this house. Only the narrator was able to talk to Roderick but it was only because he entered this house but was slowly going insane by the house's effects on him. Roderick was aware of this monster and wanted to best it but he couldn't

pull himself apart from his incestuous trait because Madeline proved it through taking him in death with her. (Pang et al. 4-5).

5.2 Lovecraft

Cthulhu was not one of the Great Old Ones but was the priest that would awaken the Great Old Ones. No one has ever seen the Great Old Ones but Cthulhu could be described as best it could be despite the fact that words mostly fail to do the sight of it justice. He was massive to the point when he appeared he would take the entire view of the sky, he had the head of an octopus with many tentacles and an upright body with claws and rudimentary wings. The sheer presence of him can cause shock within people no matter how far they are. He was black and his body made slippery and grotesque sounds like he was slithering. He looked like a hybrid between an octopus, dragon and a human. It is said he is as ancient as time itself.

Chapter 6

Narrative Styles

6.1 Poe's Gothic Style

Poe has an unreliable narrator to pace the story through melodramatic prose that sets everything in an exaggerated detail, which exemplifies the loose grip on reality the narrator has in the story. In *The Fall of the House of Usher* Poe uses symbolism, motifs, doubling to create the dense atmosphere in the story. The “eyes” of the Usher house, also known as the windows, are one such symbol. The narrator personified the house before Roderick could even tell him the house has a life of its own! The eyes reflect someone's emotions and in a way are a window to their soul and mental state. When the narrator sees the “eyes” of the house, he realizes there is

something wrong, like a disturbance of the inner self or something hollow. At first there is some lighthearted spirit in Roderick's eyes, indicating that he is still very much sane and wants to be well but when Madeline supposedly dies the narrator discovers that the light he saw in Roderick's eyes are vacant now, just like the eyes of the house. Another major symbol is the house of Usher. The house symbolizes the family line of the Ushers. The living Ushers are the house of Usher, they are one and the same. The house reflects Roderick's mind, and the narrator tries to calm and soothe Roderick down, but his mind is shattered once Madeline dies and when she breaks out of the tomb and she falls on his body, perishing together, the house collapses too. The weather surrounding the Usher house is symbolic of the turmoil and unrest of the mental state of the people inside the house. When the narrator reaches the Usher home, he sees the clouds hanging low in the sky and there is a very dense and gloomy atmosphere. After Madeline supposedly dies, the narrator is awoken by Roderick, who frantically opens the windows to reveal a wild storm with a thick, dense fog surrounding the whole house. The distraught mood of the weather mirrors the emotional unrest of the people in the house. Amongst the motifs there is sound. When the narrator reaches the house he discovers that the air is soundless. However, when he enters the house it's exactly the opposite because there are several sounds that play out and gain emphasis as the story goes on. Roderick's illness makes his senses acute to sounds so some sounds actually hurt him even though they are light in general. After Madeline's "death" and burial, he becomes even more sensitive to these noises. He seemed to be looking for something within these sounds. When the narrator tries to calm him down by reading a book to him, they both hear sounds exactly as the ones in the plot of the book he is reading just as he is reading them. Illness is a major motif as well. Madeline is found to be cataleptic in which she becomes rigid and unresponsive, and it is as if she cannot understand or see what is going on in

the outside world. Opposite to her, Roderick's illness makes him overly sensitive to external stimuli. He is too sensitive to noise, smells, taste and is very picky about them. It is as if Madeline is the physical embodiment of Roderick while Roderick is the spiritual embodiment of Madeline since they are one and the same. Fear is another crucial motif. In the story fear takes such a hold in Roderick in his life. He fears death more than anything and the external stimuli to which he is sensitive to. He feared being dead so much he actually in the end manifested his death. Claustrophobia is another important motif where the Usher twins are alienated from the outside world in their house. This contributes to them feeling incredibly stuffy and isolated and the Usher twins being as close as they were. Madeline in the end worries about being enclosed in an even smaller space and it all comes true when she is buried alive. (Pang et al. 4).

6.2 Lovecraft's Cosmic Style

Lovecraft tends to use archaic language that is packed with dense prose or writing. Choosing to write in this way makes the readers detached and unfamiliar to the writing and story, hence contributing to the eerie and uncomfortable atmosphere. Lovecraft's packs a lot of information in a singular sentence with commas in between, making the reader focus and read carefully to be able to be immersed in the Lovecraftian world. He also purposefully builds the anticipation and suspense through giving the reader little information at first, slowly building it up to the point of the climax of the story. But even then, much is left unsaid or is mysterious because Lovecraft tends to leave some of the horror to our imagination. His stories are from a first person perspective to give a more intimate and locked in approach to his cosmic horror stories. He also uses symbols and motifs to enhance the eerie depth of his stories. The clay bas-relief made by Wilcox, albeit modest, is a symbol of the Cthulhu cult and Cthulhu itself. Even if being a simple

statuette, it still evokes fear in Professor Angell and Thurston simply because of how monstrous and unusual the form is. It also symbolizes the dreams through which Cthulhu and the Great Old Ones transmit thoughts and how Wilcox's poor and feeble mind fell victim to it. When Thurston came to find the news of Johansen with his dead crew member being the only two to not disappear amongst the crew members onboard the Emma, he also found a curious rumor where Johansen's hair completely turned white after his sail on the Emma. This symbolizes the trauma and stress Johansen suffered after his near death experience with Cthulhu in the underwater city of R'lyeh. Voodoo is also a major motif because he uses the cult in Southern Louisiana to be the place for demonic rituals to be taken in the swamps to worship Cthulhu. Lovecraft uses voodoo and supernatural elements to set the mysterious and foreboding aura of Cthulhu and its cult. Greek mythology is one key motif because the city of R'lyeh uses non Euclidean architecture and often is said that the stonework seems to be Cyclopean in nature, this suggests that perhaps something as dangerous and predatory as the Cyclops could live in R'lyeh. These one eyed beings were known to be volatile and feed on the flesh of men. Modern art is also a big motif because the Cthulhu mythos seems to be inspired by some of the schools of modern art, for example: Surrealism, Cubism, Decadence, etc. (Peak 6) (Wilson 19).

Chapter 7

Conclusion

7.1 Key Differences

Themes

Fear of the known versus Fear of the unknown

Poe utilizes fear to be about something internal rather than the traditional horror stories about monsters, ghosts, zombies, vampires, etc. Humans have a plethora of various morally dubious emotions which deserve to be looked into. Poe uses these emotions to craft an aesthetically pleasing horror fiction.

Lovecraft utilizes the fear we have towards things unknown and mysterious. He creates this doubt in the capabilities of humankind, that there could be endless things which are undecipherable in the vast cosmos, and that glimpsing it could render our minds insane.

Death

Poe's stories use death as one of the elements of horror, but death is more intimate and personal there. Death stems from worldly and mortal issues like plagues, illnesses, things we have no power over.

Lovecraft's stories have deaths that are not exactly purposefully made to happen. Cthulhu and the Old Ones do not blink an eye at mankind, let alone have strong intent to crush them. It is by mere chance they instill death in people since they are so indifferent.

Madness

Poe makes madness stems from our own internal emotions, such as guilt, hatred, envy, grief, etc. These revelations are so terrifying they sometimes cause death in the characters.

Lovecraft uses madness to revolve around the fact that humankind is insignificant and almost amounts to nothing when compared to the infinite cosmos. These revelations come through when characters get a glimpse of the primordial gods that they cannot fathom in their minds.

Settings

Poe uses gothic settings or atmosphere like gloomy and almost run down architecture in his stories. He also uses claustrophobic spaces that convey the tension in the character's minds.

Lovecraft uses bizarre and non Euclidean architecture to set the mysterious and otherworldly vibe of the settings. There are shapes and angles that cannot be discerned and every inch of the masonry is filled with hieroglyphics and a strange, oozing, black liquid.

Monsters and Entities

Lovecraft uses Cthulhu and the Great Old Ones as primordial beasts that transcend time and in their wake cause humanity to crumble due to their own insignificance.

Narrative Styles

Poe uses an unreliable narrator to better convey the mad aspect of his stories. He uses symbolism, motifs, and doubling to enhance his stories.

Lovecraft uses a lot of detail packed in fewer sentences and in an archaic language. This makes it harder for the readers to understand the stories, compelling them to be more invested in order to understand. He also uses symbolism and motifs.

How they both instill terror

Poe uses gothic horror to exemplify our innermost vile tendencies and emotions and gives the readers to see them through a lens of macabre delight and a sense of sympathy we may not have felt otherwise.

Lovecraft uses cosmic horror to exemplify the lack of confidence he has on any faculty of man when faced with the vast and uncaring universe. He uses it to convey the futility of mankind in the grand scheme of the cosmos.

Impacts both of them hold

Poe was known as the master of all things macabre and sublime. It was hinted he himself projected his inner mental conflicts in his stories and through his characters. It can be said he contributed a lot to gothic fiction as a writer, poet and a critic.

Lovecraft died not knowing how significant his stories are today and how they hold such magnitude in cosmic horror fiction. It could be said he may have projected his mistrust of men through his stories, having suffered as much in life. His works and depth in writing are unparalleled.

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