

Jelige: Feanor

The Melancholy of the Letter

Most of the present forms of literary theory, for example reader-response criticism, deconstruction and the newer forms of psychoanalytic criticism see interpretation and meaning production as something essentially tied to the reader. This is a well founded theoretical approach that is supported for example, by modern linguistics, where meaning is the product of conventions and not of the will of the author, therefore the reader will depend on the conventions known specifically to him to be able to produce an interpretation or a meaning; or by Derridean deconstruction where not even convention can stop the deferral of meaning and the differential structure of language implies that absence (of the other signs) is what constitutes meaning for a sign (Derrida, 1982:1-29), and so on. However, all this underemphasizes the fact that the very existence of the text is dependent on the author. That is, even though intention is lost, meaning is deferred, and the author dies (literally), there still was a person who wrote the text at a given point of time. It is justifiable and to some extent necessary to admit the importance of the role of the reader, even to privilege the reader to the author, but it is not justifiable to completely or almost completely neglect the author. The author makes possible everything that the literary work of art makes possible. The question is how this is demonstrable in the process of semiosis. The aim of the present paper is to determine the role of the author in meaning production, without falling back to analyses of authorial intentions or the unconscious of the author.

My aim in the present paper is thus fairly unusual in the domain of post-semiotics. I aim to investigate the role of the author in the work of art. I use this specific word, *role* with a specific purpose, since I shall position the author in an essentially theatrical setup. Of course, I will have to be extremely careful about the question of authorial intentions, in that I will have to avoid every kind of speculation on this matter on the basis of the text itself, since the text does not contain intention. Indeed, one of the inherent aims of this project is to disclose the Derridean notion, *iterability* as the underlying condition for the possibility of meaning (Derrida, 1982:315). Authorial intention is not an essential element in the process of meaning creation. Any linguistic product has to be able to work without the understanding of intention

behind it. This is not to say that the text is not affected by the intentions of the author, but that the text does not represent, or provide access to this intention for the reader.

The scope of this study is thus reduced to the interactions of the author and the text, which then posits a methodological limitation: I have to know what the author thinks, or knows or much rather, thinks he knows about his own text. This is one of the reasons why my choice of interpretation is Edgar Allan Poe's *The Raven* (Poe, 1845) and Poe's subsequent account on this poem, the *Philosophy of Composition* (Poe, 1846). Of course, it has to be noted that I am not writing an account of Edgar Allan Poe, therefore the phenomenon observed is in the end not the interaction of the author and the text, only the interaction of two texts. In this sense, Edgar Allan Poe is only a name, a point of reference which brings these two texts together and turns them into an interaction – much like Foucault saw the author function, when he said that “the Author's name characterizes a particular manner of existence of discourse” (Foucault, 1984:305). As Foucault argued, in modern Western culture the work is the product and property of the author. Or rather, the author's function is to provide the place of product for the work (Foucault, 1984:305). The notion of the author implies that the work is the creation (or creature) of the author and it arose from its meaning producing self.

Institutionalized practices, like, for example, the copyright establish the given text as part of a corpus, which is organized around the author function. This is a limitation on the freeplay of meaning,¹ since the historical context of the production of the text is determined by the author's own historical context. However, this limitation is not a necessity. The text would still be comprehensible without the author function, firstly because it is a linguistic product which is iterable, thus comprehensible to anyone familiar with the given language, even if the receiver was not an addressee and the addressor is unknown; secondly, the very possibility of the author function, of creating a corpus depends on repetition and the recognition of repetition of given elements in the text. If the narrator in Poe's poem was blind or otherwise restricted from seeing the raven, he would still be able to tell that he was talking to the same communicant, because he would be able to recognize the repeated “nevermore.” The author function is therefore, an accidental consequence of a deeper underlying semiotic and

¹ See Derrida's notion of freeplay and its limitations in *Structure, Sign and Play in the Discourse of Human Sciences* (Derrida, 2002).

ideological process which unifies textual products on the basis of similarities. I shall return to this later.

Another peculiar aspect of *The Raven* which made it easily accessible as an object of interpretation is related to the Derridean notion of iterability. As Derrida famously puts it: “Every sign (...), as small or large unity can be cited, put between quotation marks; thereby it can break with every given context and engender infinitely new contexts (...)” (Derrida, 1982: 320). Now, the word “nevermore”, uttered by a bird, necessarily devoid of intention is an utterly simple and yet completely well usable example of this phenomenon. “Nevermore” is thus a sign that survives its author through a non-sentient carrier, who unintentionally injects this sign into rapidly changing contexts that are established by the questions of the “bereaved lover” as Poe calls him. I seek to gain an insight into the mechanisms of interpretation itself, by observing, on the one hand, the process of semiosis that is carried out by the interaction between the bird and the narrator, and on the other, the same process returning in the interaction between the two texts of Poe.

As for Poe’s account on *The Raven*, the *Philosophy of Composition* expressly proposes an authorial intention: “Let us dismiss, as *irrelevant to the poem*, per se, the circumstance- or say the necessity- which, in the first place, gave rise to *the intention of composing a poem that should suit at once the popular and the critical taste.*” (Poe, 1846, italics mine) By disregarding the context which leads to the emergence of the authorial intention, Poe closes the process of writing into a domain, where pure, ahistorical authorial will operates, thus invoking the Platonic-Romantic notion of the inspired author-genius. This way, Poe already makes it impossible to achieve his alleged purpose with the essay: to represent the wholly conscious (as he writes, “mathematical”) process of artistic creation. It should be understood that Poe wrote this essay approximately a year after the publication of the poem and that it is not an immediate recounting of how the poem was created – Poe very adequately uses the word “reconstruction.” As Poe himself admits, he chose the reconstruction of *The Raven* in particular, because it was his most well known and well received work. Therefore, I propose that Poe’s reconstructed intention is in fact based on the fact that the poem became eventually successful for both the “popular and the critical taste,” and not on what he really thought when he had began writing the poem. I propose, in short, that in *Philosophy of Composition*, Poe is not reminiscing about the writing of *The*

Raven – he is in fact reading and interpreting his own poem. This way, the whole poem becomes a scene for Poe, and for me, in which supposed intentions, supposed and actual effects are mirrored by the interpretation.

This is the point where we arrive to the error at the core of the author's constitutive function of this interaction of texts. For at first sight, the essentially dialectical nature of this reflection on the poem, independently of the fact that it was the author who wrote it (this also makes the present paper a part of this process), may show a stunning resemblance to the lover's dialogue with the bird in the poem. It seems that *The Raven* is the raven, whom Poe had taught a few words, and now it began to repeat them in answer to Poe's questions, which recontextualize its words and provide new meanings for them. The mistake is in the presupposition that by being the originator of the work, by producing a performative, the author becomes a centre of the discourse around the given work. Whereas, actually, there is no such centre at all, only contexts, emerging and disappearing, as Derrida would say (Derrida, 1982: 320). It is taken for granted that, even if we accept that the text does not mediate authorial intention, the author function is still a mediator between texts. In fact, if anything, the author is the one who inevitably creates difference by reiteration. The same is the case with the reader, since reading and re-reading are instances of reiteration. And yet we identify the text, which is in a certain, material sense the same signifier, and on the basis of that, we impose unity upon a set of texts and utterances, via the mediating notion of the author function.

Let me elaborate on this by taking a detour. If we take the example of the Bible, which deploys the tool of the ultimately transcendental author, God, it is visible that it is a fuzzy set of legendary, historical and mythological stories that have been turned into a coherent unit by implying the will of God from/on them. Without the implication of that will, we could say, the Bible just would not fit together. But the question is: what makes it possible for certain texts to be thus batched together? What is there before God, or before the copyright that calls for these very notions to provide a foundation for constructing a poem or a book or a genre or discourse? The answer is a specific form of repetition, a recognition which is at least partly (but sometimes completely) based on disregarding differences: the answer is motif. A motif is what arouses the speculation about unity in things that are otherwise different. Everything can become a motif as soon as it is recognized as repetition of something previously uttered. The author function is merely a transcendental signified that limits and encloses this recognition of repetition.

Then, if an interaction between texts is based on this recognition, which is also repetition, which is also alteration, we have to ask: where is the place for the person who is the actual author in all this? To answer this, let us turn back to Poe and his Raven, where the motif, at least the main one is simple and systematically deployed. As Poe writes: “In carefully thinking over all the usual artistic effects- or more properly points, in *the theatrical sense* - I did not fail to perceive immediately that no one had been so universally employed as that of the refrain” (Poe, 1846, italics mine). Refrain is thus a trick of theatricality, it alienates and separates, because it de-humanizes language – that is, it reveals the real nature of language. Let us take notice of the fact that the whole scene, on which *The Raven* is based, is heavily theatrical. It is problematic in the poem that the lover never tries to physically remove the raven from the room even when he is clearly intent on getting rid of it. Except, of course, if we accept that he is not supposed to remove it, because the raven and the lover are separated, because the bust of Pallas is a stage, and the lover is an audience, because the rules of theatre prevent the physical intrusion of the audience to the stage.

But let us notice that the same motif plays an important role in the interpretation itself. “Nevermore” has a function in the *Philosophy of Composition*. It is the first word ever composed from the poem. After the reconstruction of the planning of producing an effect by invoking beauty through sadness, and after the plans on the form of the poem are made, after it is decided that there will be a refrain, Poe confesses: “(...) it would have been absolutely impossible to overlook the word ‘Nevermore.’ In fact it was the very first which presented itself” (Poe, 1846). Much of Poe’s self-interpretation is devoted to explaining how the whole plot of the poem was built around the use of this one word. As if this word had priority. I think Poe was affected by the word, at one moment, sometime before starting or at least before finishing the poem.

This is an interpretation that gets very close to analyzing the author in the classical sense. However, let me carry it out to provide a possible explanation to the evident priority that Poe gives to nevermore. I do not claim to know what exactly was the association made in Poe’s mind when he heard or read or thought of the word nevermore. All I claim is that there was such an association at some point before the poem was finished. This word, a word which closes off future possibilities, a word that, generally speaking, can be easily associated with hopelessness had become a main motif of a poem which is about hopelessness, and a motif that has been tied

to Edgar Allan Poe ever since. Even by himself, in the *Philosophy of Composition*. Let me note in passing that the above interpretations would have been impossible without the recognition of nevermore as a motif.

At this point, it is necessary to examine the nature of this recognition as a dramatic effect in relation to the audience. It is recognition that provokes and draws in the audience, as it has been noted at least since Aristotle. Also, it is recognition of a motif or a recurring element, which in fact constitutes a genre. So, what is it that is attractive to the audience in the recognition of something utterly unpleasant? To answer this question, I will take a detour towards Freud, Aristotle and the synthesis of their thought by Samuel Weber (Weber 2004). Firstly, I have to address Freud's notion of the compulsion to repeat. The problem that Freud examines in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* shook one of the fundamental principles of psychoanalysis: in cases of trauma, the traumatic experience is repeated in dreams (or, as later demonstrated, in life, where the subject is the agent performing repetition). It is a paradigm in psychoanalysis that every dream is a fulfillment of a wish. The dreams of repetition lead Freud to the conclusion that there is a force, a drive operating beyond the Pleasure Principle – which had been thought to be the most fundamental and universal drive that works in the psyche (Freud, 1961:1-5).

Freud has an explanation: the psyche has to be protected from the outer and inner incursions of energy before the Pleasure Principle can be put to work. In order to achieve this, the “outer layer” of the psyche, the part which is connected to the outside world, has to be reshaped after every incursion to be able to protect the psyche from a next one. Whenever the invasive energy is too powerful to be kept outside, it pushes the balance within the psyche – this is a trauma. We have to notice that trauma is not necessarily the consequence of pain, but the impact of an excessive, unbearable and unexpected amount of energy into the psyche. The trauma induces the change of “the outer layer” and this reestablishes stability, in which the Pleasure Principle can continue to operate (Freud, 1961:18-26). It is crucial that we are talking about processes here and not things or structures. The process which restores the balance in the psyche is the repetition of the trauma. In the process of repetition, the subject ceases to be the passive sufferer of the trauma and becomes the active agent (Freud, 1961:10).

Samuel Weber provides an excellent model to unify this theory with Aristotelian poetics (Weber, 2004:251-77). He sets up a parallel between Freud's late observations about the Pleasure

Principle and the compulsion to repeat, and Aristotle's observations about the pleasure of imitation. The question that arises in both of these very distinct discourses, and this is a question that seems to come up at some point in any discussion about tragedy is this: why do we enjoy the repetition or the imitation, or for that matter, the representation of often extremely unpleasant things? For Aristotle, the pleasure arises from the recognition of the familiar in a thing that is not entirely identical with the recognized (Aristotle, 2000:7). Freud's case is more complex, but in essence, the argument is the same: it is the recognition of the familiar which provides pleasure. Freud's definition of pleasure sheds more light on this. Pleasure is the relief from pressure, the reduction of anxiety to a bearable level (Freud, 1961:1). Recognition of something unpleasant as familiar is not simply recognition. It is also reminiscence, i.e. it requires emotional, and not only intellectual investment. It is possible to argue, within the framework of psychoanalysis, that it is this compulsion to emotionally relate to objects of experience is what makes recognition (of things as things) possible. As long as we accept that experience is based on reducing differences to similarities, that is, to familiarities.

The goal of all this would be of course to fill a lack, to reach emotional equilibrium (note that in the state of emotional equilibrium, the Pleasure Principle is no longer needed, its aim is fulfilled, which also means that no Pleasure is possible anymore, in short it means death²). It is this need then which "unifies the plot." It is this life instinct, which is in fact a death instinct that compels the subject to make a coherent plot out of the fuzzy set of events on the stage, which are similar but not completely identical to the subject's previous experiences – it is this difference that is neglected and thus allows for the emotional investment which reduces the tension by projecting it into a structure of relations, i.e. by making the emotions, just like the objects, manageable. This would be a psychoanalytical framework for explaining what exactly is purged in Aristotle's catharsis.

Let me return to Poe. It is true that it seems that it is the lover who is the active participator and the *actor* in the whole scene. However, he is, in fact, a receiver, someone who is in desperate need of suffering, according to Poe, he asks his questions

not altogether because he believes in the prophetic or demoniac character of the bird (which reason assures him is merely repeating a lesson learned by rote), but because he experiences a frenzied

² see Freud 1961:31-3 on the Death Drive

pleasure in so modeling his questions as to receive from the expected "Nevermore" the most delicious because the most intolerable of sorrows. (Poe, 1846).

It is this compulsion for self-imposed suffering, which turns the lover into a receiver. His questions are not posed for an answer, but for an effect, for the painfully pleasurable effect of repetition. Of course, we cannot say that the Raven is active either: it is an actor in the theatrical sense: it recites a script and does nothing else than what the audience is expecting.

It is evident that if anyone is constituted by losses, it is the poor lover in Poe's poem. He is nothing more than the aching lack left after the death of his paramour. Let us notice that he is already haunted by Lenore's memories, before the arrival of the raven. The knocking on the door precedes "nevermore," and by opening the window, the lover seeks to erase this symptom, which both upsets him and fills him with hope. This is then supplemented by the entry of the raven. I have to note, the raven actually has nothing to do with Lenore, or the lover for that matter. In the beginning this is how the lover himself sees the bird – it is just a bird. Even the first "nevermore" is taken as a strange and *spectacular* jest of nature. The scene becomes traumatic and the signifier takes over, at the very moment when the raven begins to make sense to the lover, to us, and to Poe.

The raven is an automaton, presenting the same signifier in a cyclic fashion, which is made to appear uncannily regular by the meter of the poem. Indeed, the first feeling after the smile inducing insolence of the raven suddenly becomes serious is that of the uncanny. Freud categorizes the feeling of the uncanny as belonging to the field of aesthetics, which makes its psychoanalytical investigation a fairly unusual enterprise. Freud spends several pages in determining the meaning of the term, using dictionary definitions (Freud, 1919:930-934). To sum up this enterprise: the uncanny feeling is always invoked by something new, which however bears in itself a something familiar, it is important that what in fact is the familiar element has to be indeterminable to produce the uncanny feeling. As for the feeling itself, the uncanny is always frightening, and in a sense disgusting, this is not to say that it is gruesome or repelling, but it produces a sentiment that makes the observer think that what he sees would best remain unknown. As Freud goes on elaborating on the subject of his study, it becomes clear that he is talking about something very similar to Kristeva's abjection (Kristeva, 1982). It is enough to look at one example given by Freud to see the similarity: "Many people experience the feeling in

the highest degree in relation to death and dead bodies” (Freud, 1919:944). The uncanny, just like the abject appears when only the borderline of a thing is seen, and for some reason, the observer is terrified by the prospect of seeing the thing itself, beyond the borderline. However, the uncanny is defined as a much wider term, including certain phenomena that do not belong under the notion of abjection. This is the reason why I use Freud’s concept instead of Kristeva’s.

As Freud says, the uncanny feeling can easily be invoked when it becomes doubtful whether something inanimate is actually living, or whether a human being is actually a machine. (Freud, 1919:935). When the raven’s answer is relevant to the lover’s utterance, it is the feeling of the uncanny that first overwhelms the lover. Freud proposes that the feeling of uncanny is always induced by something that was repressed long ago, but then it recurs, the recurring phenomenon does not have to be the object of repression, it can be something that can be related to it, and it can be its symbol. Since every kind of affect is transformed into anxiety when it is repressed, it is the looming of this infantile fear that is known to us as uncanny (Freud, 1919:948-9). And even though the narrator tries to rationalize the raven’s capacity to speak by implying the unhappy master who probably accidentally taught him that one word, it is already inevitable that he finally associates the word “nevermore” with Lenore. This is the traumatic moment. It is not the moment of Lenore’s death, it is when Lenore’s lack comes back to haunt him in a word that is otherwise empty, it has no real agent, it is automatic.

Therefore, the questions posed to the raven, to which the lover knows (even if he does not certainly know that he knows) the answer, are the desperate attempts to invoke the lost object of desire. This is the perfect example of what Lacan calls the dialectics of desire (Lacan, 1989). The only way to access Lenore is now the prophecy of the raven which is neither prophet nor devil. The raven is the unconscious. It has to be understood that a trauma is always constituted by the realization that we witnessed a trauma, and not by living the trauma itself, although the two events may be very close to each other in time, it is also possible that the recognition of trauma is late by years, as is often the case with children who were sexually abused in their early childhood and realize the meaning of what happened to them upon their first normal sexual experiences,

which then traumatizes them³. And it is not the scene of the rape which is compulsively repeated and re-lived, but the scene of the first sexual experience, the scene of the realization.

The trauma is tied to a signifier, which is devoid of the subject. What this means, among other things is that the signifier has to come from the outside; it has no agency, no place in the Cartesian dualism of subject and object. The signifier comes (and always returns) from the Other, which is the place of the unconscious (Lacan, 1993:274). This Other is the Raven, an animal, which is ultimately other and alien, and “nevermore” is the signifier that enters the unconscious, haunts the conscious and obtains agency. The agency of the signifier is the compulsion of the consciousness to recognize and rationalize its emergence. The recognition of the motif, which is an obsessive-compulsive disregard of dissimilarities, is thus built on this scenery, which is the theatrical moment of repression, which is in turn the return of the repressed.

This dialectics of desire goes on forever, since the raven is unable to answer anything else, except “nevermore,” and the lover is never able to accept the answer and give up desire. Let me pause here. What would happen if it was possible to reach the object of desire? That is, what would happen if the signifier was the actual answer, that is, if the signifier itself was the object of desire? For this, of course, the signifier needs to be an utterance that means what it means and nothing else, a signifier without surplus. If all this was possible, if the Pleasure Principle and the Reality Principle would at no point contradict each other, then the Pleasure Principle would take over. This means that the ego would become unnecessary, and, in fact, everything else would also become unnecessary, except, of course, for the signifier. If “nevermore” was Lenore - not metaphorically, but in complete correspondence with her, without differences, with full presence and identity - then the lover would become a rather uncanny sight, repeating, like an automaton, like the Raven, the word “nevermore,” because it alone fulfills his desire. I do not believe, however, that even the most extreme cases of psychosis would allow such a degree of disintegration to take place.

Let me position this argument in the context of a critique of ideology. In his essay about the subject and power, Michel Foucault describes the methods by which the subject is constituted in

³ For examples of this phenomenon see Freud’s collection of case studies, *The Wolfman*, which is centered around the issue of childhood trauma and its retrospective recognition. (Freud, 1992).

society by technologies of power. This constitution is achieved through a certain kind of individualization that fixes the position of the subject (as an individual) in its social context. As an individual, the subject has to be “othered”, through the system of binary oppositions, which is inherent in the structure of power, and also, the technologies of power provide (institutionalize) certain discursive practices and the possible meanings within them, and the individual subject has to have the opportunity to react to these discourses – we should not be misled by the word “opportunity”, the subject does not have the choice to abstain from reaction, but it can choose from a number of possible reactions (possible as determined by the power technologies) that will represent it within the power relations to other subjects. This way, the subject takes up a position concerning certain epistemological questions - or answers, but that mostly depends on the position (Foucault, 1988:208-26).

According to Foucault, the subject has its own technologies for reflecting upon its own actions and thoughts as well. Through these technologies, the subject aspires to achieve the “purity of thought.” This requires the censorship of “impure” thoughts. In Foucault’s model, this censure is achieved through the “confession” of the thoughts to the figure(s) of authority, and then finally to the subject itself, after internalizing the figure of authority and producing self-hermeneutics. Foucault states that this technology originates from the Christian tradition of confession. But since the decline of the influence of Christianity, it is the State which assumed the position, to whom the permanent verbalization of thoughts is addressed (Foucault, 1993:198-227). This verbalization constitutes the subject and it is a function of the pre-determined meanings established by the power relations. The unchanging, uncontested meaning of a signifier ties down the subject in its place in the hierarchy. The ideologically pre-established meanings do not allow a subject to interpret a signifier differently than as it is provided by the given ideology.

However, this tying down of meanings and of subjects is only possible if the subjects are unaware of the possibility to create alternative interpretations of a given sign. This has to be so by necessity, because it is the essential property of linguistic signs that they never stop generating new meanings. This property of language is what the notion of iterability aims to express. Thus, what an ideological limitation on meaning does is fundamentally the repression of certain possible interpretations. The ability to “misinterpret” thus remains unconscious but it is still there, since language does not allow it to vanish. Ideology makes certain possible interpretations appear as unusual or ridiculous, but it cannot prevent the emergence of those

interpretations. If ideological practices succeeded to deprive language of polisemia (something very close to what George Orwell tried to describe in his dystopia with the project of “Newspeak”⁴), then they would establish subjects as automatons who are unable to give different answers to questions than it is ideologically predetermined.

Therefore, what is essentially ensured by the overdetermination of signs, linguistic and non-linguistic is freedom. Not freedom as part of the essence of the human being, and neither the freedom that is defined in opposition to the objectification of the subject by ideologies, but freedom in the sense that the subject is not a machine, not an automaton who is in possession of the proper responses to everything, and who thus does nothing else but automatically, and without thinking provides pre-made answers to pre-made questions. The freedom is thus not in the subject who would be compelled by his indestructible desire to accept this servitude if it was possible. The freedom comes from the signifier which makes this servitude impossible by necessarily imposing ambiguity upon the subject. Of course, ideologies would always aim at producing such a structure which would completely oppress this freedom, thus making resistance not only impossible but also meaningless. But they inevitably fail. Language, the only available tool to an ideology to impose itself on the subject is what makes it necessary for ideologies to employ the possibility of resistance within their operations. Language forces ideologies to integrate freedom into themselves. The fundamental universal human right, as long as humanity is subjectivity in either a Cartesian or a psychoanalytical sense, is the right to the freedom of misunderstanding.

It is certain that ideologies by their nature aim to reach the complete eradication of this freedom. However, it is an open question on the one hand, to what extent they can be successful in it and on the other, how they can maximally use this to their benefits. The way an ideology can utilize this inherent freedom is the introduction of the possibility of resistance. Ideologies that are founded on binary oppositions, for example, allow the rise of a form of resistance which positions the subject in opposition to the ideology, thus allowing some free play, but this kind of resistance is inherently no more than a safety valve for the given ideology (although it can get out of hand and reverse the hierarchy). The only successful form of subversion is thus arising from a form of resistance that is not directed directly against the system. It is not passive

⁴ Orwell, 1948: 174-181.

resistance, which is just another form of action. It is affirmation, but not cynicism. It is playing along, in parody, in jokes and in satire or in the employment of the grotesque or in horror. Subversion is hidden in unusual meaning. Subversion is misinterpretation. What is tricky about it is that it does not have to be intentional.

The recognition of “nevermore” as a metaphor which stands for (the lack of) Lenore is both repetition and innovation. It turns the lover into the author of the narrative, in the sense that the recognition is his. The theatrical pleasure deriving from the scene is the realization of tragic irony, the realization that the raven will always say “nevermore,” and still asking it the most important questions possible. In this allegory of theatre, of reading as theatricality, we have to find a place for the author. Not for the author function. For the Edgar Allan Poe, who is at this moment, lying in a grave in Baltimore. So, what does he have to do with all of this?

Let me extrapolate on this by describing the semiotic process of reading. The implied author (Booth 1983, 71) is also part of the reader’s interpreting apparatus, the agent maintaining the connection between reader and text, by adjusting to the demands of the text. During the process of interpretation, the reader is involved in a virtual communication with the implied author, and uses the information it knows about the implied author to decipher the “hidden meaning” of the text. This “hidden meaning”, however, is not there in the text (the signifiers that constitute the text do not necessarily point to a second meaning), neither is the implied author. The implied author is only present in the text if it is being read, it is a reflection (and projection) of the reader. If we continue this metaphor, the text is the mirror and, though the reader looks at the mirror, it observes the reflection and not the mirror itself – however, we should add, the mirror will inevitably distort the image. The story told in the text is recreated by the reader, even if the reader perceives its interaction with the (implied) author as the origin of the new story. The new story, that has its origin in the reader, is also textual in nature (though it is not necessarily written) it is a set of signifiers. This means that the reader will become an author of the interpretation of the read text.

It is evident that when the reader becomes an author, his new position is based on iteration, on recognition and alteration of the read work. But how does this work in the case of the original author? What is iterated? Can we say that the author was also a reader and the text is a product of an interpretation? I propose that we can. To defend this argument I have to show what is read by

the author that produces the interpretation the final product of which is the text. The author, first of all read everything that he read – this circular argument is here to reveal that the author had to be able to read, to understand language to be able to produce his text. Also, the texts read by the author have certain effects on the texts he produces. These effects are often impossible to trace back to the particular texts read by the author, but they involve style, references, elements of plot, and so on. However, more importantly, the author seeks to interpret the demands of an imaginary reader. To make the most general claim I see possible: the author always seeks to have an effect by what he writes. I think this is true for every linguistic utterance.

The text induces the creation of the implied author and the interpretation in the reader, but the text when created is also addressed to an entity – to an “other”. While writing the text, the writer faces the same problem as the reader when reading it: there is no real person, with whom they can communicate, therefore there is no context. To maintain a virtual context, the writer implies a reader. It is through this implied reader that the writer can see itself as the origin, the producer of the text. But as we have seen in the end, the “production” of the text is also interpretation, the reading of another text.

The author does not aim on receiving the pleasure of recognition, although it can happen that he finds something unexpectedly “sublime” in his own work. However the effect that arises from producing the sign, for teaching the raven to say “nevermore” is the only thing retraceable to the author. It is not necessarily the intention of the author to produce this particular effect. For example, he may simply want to make the work enjoyable to make money, but in the meantime he may produce a work that can be read as a critique of consumerist ideology. The only effect that the author necessarily integrates into the work is innovation. The author’s work is essentially created to be different from other works. It is a not-necessarily-intentional alteration. The author injects a sign with the potential to make a difference.

It is not very easy to tell what exactly is read by the author and in what sense does he really read. This is because this varies indefinitely from author to author. Because every author seeks to have an effect, but they may be in complete disagreement about what effect means, about who is to be addressed, about whether anyone should be addressed at all. All this is open to the interpretation of the author. Indeed, the text comes about as the effect of these interpretations. However, the interpretations themselves are not contained in the text; they are lost just like the authorial

intention. But, in spite of this, the text does have an effect – as soon as it is read by someone. The particular effects are based on the reader's interpretations about the same or similar factors mentioned above. However, there is a more general sense of effect, since the very existence of the text (its existence as an utterance) opens up a space for interpretation. Therefore the utterance becomes the place where ideological meanings either come about or are destroyed, or rather, both, that is, they are erased in the process.

Therefore, I conclude that the theatrical role of the author in this scenery, exemplified by *The Raven* is that of the director. He cannot manipulate the work's reception, its content or meaning, he cannot even communicate his intention. But it is him who sets up the stage; it is he who decides how it is presented. The author directs attention towards motifs thus creating the possibility of recognition and of free play. The work of art is set up by the author to provide the same answer to all the questions, just like the raven, and just like "nevermore" it is both the same and an entirely different answer every time it is uttered or re-read.

Semiotically speaking, on the other hand, the person who was the author plays the role of a simple communicant who makes an utterance. But this utterance aims to be different from any previous ones. The author seeks to make a difference with his utterance – and I am not referring to intentions here, I just want to point out that the author of a literary text is an author because he creates texts that are not identical to previous texts. And even if he did create a text that was identical to an antecedent text, it would not be interpreted as the same text, because the two authors are tied to different motifs. Therefore, the role of the author can be summarized in both theatrical and semiotic terms as the place where utterances are transformed into motifs or pre-existent motifs are reduced to utterances.

Bibliography

Aristotle (2000) *Aristotle's Poetics*, trans. S. H. Butcher, Hazleton: Pennsylvania State University

Derrida, Jacques (1982) *The Margins of Philosophy*, trans. Alan Bass, Brighton, Sussex: The Harvester Press Limited

Derrida, Jacques (2002) "Structure, Sign and Play in the Discourse of Human Sciences" In Derrida, Jacques. *Writing and Difference*. London and New York: Routledge, 352-370.

Foucault, Michel (1984) "What is an Author?" in Paul Rabinow (ed.) *The Foucault Reader*, London, etc.: Penguin Books, pp. 101-20.

Foucault, Michel (1988) "The Subject and Power" in Dreyfus, Hubert L. and Rabinow, Paul (eds.) *Michel Foucault: Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, pp. 208-26.

Foucault, Michel (1993) "Hermeneutics of the Self" in *Political Theory* 21.2 (May, 1993), pp. 198-227.

Freud, Sigmund (1919) "The Uncanny" in Vincent B. Leitch et al. (eds.) *The Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism* (2001), New York, London: W. W. Norton & Company Inc., pp.: 929-952.

Freud, Sigmund (1992) *Farkasember: klinikai esettanulmányok*, ford. Gyenge László, Budapest: Hunga-print.

Kristeva, Julia (1982) *The Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection*, trans. Leon S. Roudiez New York: Columbia University Press.

Lacan, Jacques (1989) "Subversion of the Subject and the Dialectics of Desire in the Freudian Unconscious" in *Ecrits: A Selection* trans. Alan Sherridan, London and New York: Routledge Classics, pp. 223-249.

Lacan, Jacques (1993) *Seminar III: The Psychoses*, trans. Russel Grigg, New York, London: W.W. Norton and Company

Orwell, George (1948) *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, London: Secker and Warburg.

Poe, Edgar Allan (1845) "The Raven" in *Spirits of the Dead: Tales and Poems* (1997), London, New York, etc.: Penguin Classics.

Poe, Edgar Allan (1846) "Philosophy of Composition" at xroads.virginia.edu/~HYPER/poe/composition.html, date of access: 2012.06.02.

Samuel Weber (2004) *Theatricality as Medium*, New York: Fordham University Press.