

**Resistance to the Annihilation of the Female in
Edgar Allan Poe's Short Stories**

Jelige: DARKNESS

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Introduction

In both Edgar Allan Poe's short fiction and poetry, female characters frequently appear and have an undeniably significant role. Nevertheless, their agency and representation have been a widely contested issue among critics in the past three decades. Due to the disagreement in academic criticism, several questions arise regarding the depiction of female figures in the Gothic short stories they appear in. An important characteristic of this genre is the existence of two formulae, male and female, which greatly determines how characters of both genders are represented in these works. At first glance, Poe's dark tales qualify as classical texts of the Male Gothic formula since his female figures are suppressed, tortured, lack agency as well as voice, and are all doomed to die. However, a thorough analysis of the female characters can contradict this pattern, since some of the female victims show signs of empowerment and choose alternative strategies to fight back in order to comment on their own fate. Therefore, this paper aims to explore the continuous ambiguity in the portrayal of women in Poe's Gothic short stories and discuss how the author applies the Gothic tradition to reflect on women's situation of his own era.

In his work, *The Women of Poe's Poems and Tales*, Floyd Stovall expresses the importance of the female figure who served as a constant inspiration for Poe and was a determinant subject, especially of his poetry (197). Stovall classifies the female characters into five groups among which he accentuates the pieces dealing with "the death of women" and with the type of the "ideal and preternatural woman", since for Poe "[they] are either extremely innocent and unsophisticated, like Eleonora and Annabel Lee, or else abnormally intellectual, like Ligeia and Morella" (197-198). Although these categories are certainly the most well-known and appreciated ones, Stovall wrongly underrates the class of other types of fictional women who, according to him, "appear as mere mechanisms of the plot, without character or individuality" (197) which consequently limits a more precise and all-inclusive analysis of these female figures.

Elie Martens based her findings on the collection, *The Complete Tales and Poems of Edgar Allan Poe* and concluded, that while fifty-four percent of the sixty-three poems mention and most of them even feature women with a relevant role, the rest of them lack any female characters altogether (7). Nevertheless, it can be said that those few ones depending on "the most poetical topic in the world" are understandably among the most fundamental works of Poe's oeuvre. Stovall's first category employs this theme which was introduced in the essay "The Philosophy of Composition", where Poe presented "the death [...] of a beautiful woman"

as the most adequate theme to convey the “effect”, the central emotion a poem or short story should induce in the reader (272). Joining this argument, Karen Weekes points out that in these works Poe used a female object constructed of stereotypes and ignored “dimensions of character that add depth or believability to these repeated stereotypes of the beautiful damsel” (150). Undoubtedly, Poe’s poems idealize the dead woman, who becomes a catalyst for the male speaker to foreground his own emotional torment and take “verbal control over [her]” (Person 137). Nevertheless, Poe’s short stories delineate female figures in similar ways, his women are usually regarded as “mere inspirations for the narrators” (Weekes 150). The short stories featuring the “Dark Ladies”, as they are commonly referred to, also depict the death of a female character and focus on the melancholy evoked in the male narrators. These are the characters included in Stovall’s second category, Poe’s “ideal and preternatural wom[e]n”, Ligeia, Morella, and Berenice, furthermore Madeline Usher. At first glance they share the characteristics of Poe’s poetical women, their beauty is accentuated, however, it is not considered to be their most relevant feature. Morella and Ligeia are both intellectuals, possessing “immense” knowledge, which makes them superior not only to the previously mentioned beautiful, dead women but also to their husbands. These attributes are consequently accompanied by power, which they exercise over men. Several critics suggested that these characters represent Poe’s ideal not just of women but also of himself. In the case of the two other Dark Ladies, Berenice and Madeline, their characteristics are less elaborate but still can exert a reduced power over the narrators. Although Stovall acknowledges the Dark Ladies’ individuality, he also calls attention to the similarities that almost all of Poe’s female figures share. He states that “in name as well as in character and appearance, Poe’s women are akin” (197). In his third class, in which he presents other types of fictional women, two major subcategories can be mentioned which deserve to be analyzed. According to his definition, these women lack a developed personality, hence, they only serve as “mechanisms of the plot” (204). The first subcategory features “Kate” of “Three Sundays in a Week” and Madame Lalande from the tale, “The Spectacles”. Stovall primarily stresses the absence of their character and calls them “ordinary and dull” (105), claiming it to be a failed attempt of Poe to represent normal, everyday women (104). Martens’ approach is clearly different, as she states that these women “are truly intelligent and play a considerable role in both stories”, furthermore, they seem to be superior to men like the Dark Ladies (36). Stovall’s other subcategory includes the female victims of the detective stories, where they lack all sorts of characterization, and their death, in both a literal and figurative sense, merely “satisfy the exigencies of the plot” (205).

It is a well-known cliché that Poe objectifies his female characters and their depiction undoubtedly suggests conformity to the early nineteenth-century ideals of women. The constant recurrence of ideas concerning femininity can be seen as both the acceptance and questioning of “the brute sexualization and reification of women in the nineteenth century” (Dayan 1). The beautiful, dead women seem to identify with the standards of True Womanhood which rely on the four “cardinal virtues”: piety, purity, submissiveness, and domesticity (Welter 21). However, Poe’s female figures in his short stories do not fit into this concept. Joan Dayan contends that “Poe is after nothing less than an exhumation of the lived, but disavowed or suppressed experiences of women in his society” (10). Therefore, what undeniably divides the short stories and poems from each other is the possibility to voice women’s experiences in the oppressive, patriarchal society of the nineteenth century. Although the poetical women are definitively deprived of their voices and cannot express themselves; the Dark Ladies and the victims appearing in Poe’s detective fiction are given the opportunity to tell, what Jordan calls, the “woman’s story” (5). To further analyze whether these latter characters can verbalize their own narrative, the tales in which they appear should be observed in the context of their genre, the Gothic.

The Gothic originated in the late eighteenth century as a historical phenomenon (Punter and Byron xviii). It became the rejected “otherness” of Romanticism and Realism defined as “the supposedly irrational, the ambiguous, the unenlightened, the chaotic, the dark, the hidden, the secret” (Williams 8). The analysis of the Gothic by feminist criticism reached a milestone in the 1970s when Ellen Moers in her writing, *Literary Women* (1976), introduced the term “Female Gothic” as the “work that women writers have done in the literary mode that, since the eighteenth century, we have called the Gothic” (90). She recognized the importance of gender in Gothic and created the foundation for later feminist critics to divide the Gothic based on the male and female subject’s experiences (Williams 100). According to Anne Williams, this separation resulted in the formation of “two distinct sets of literary conventions” (100). One of the most definite differences can be seen in the treatment of female characters in the two traditions.

Williams states that the Male Gothic “expresses the horrors inherent in the premises of Western patriarchy - that “the female” (the mother) is “other,” forbidden, and dreadfully, uncannily powerful, a monster that the nascent self must escape at the cost of whatever violence seems necessary” (135). To counterbalance the primitive anxiety caused by “the female”, the Male convention turns to the victimization of women, therefore, positioning female suffering

to the center of the plot and narrative (Williams 104). The male characters deliberately set standards for women which they cannot fulfill and for this reason they are punished (105). The formula of the Female Gothic concentrates on “the terror and rage that women experience within patriarchal social arrangements, especially marriage” (136). As Punter and Byron point out, the female protagonist is exposed to the powerful authority of the oppressing male, who imprisons her and puts her virtue or life in danger (279). Nevertheless, all the suffering is resolved with a happy ending, which includes the protagonist’s marriage, hence, her reintegration into society (Punter and Byron 279).

For Williams, the Male Gothic is unambiguously antifeminist since its plot revolves around the victimized and demonized “other”, the female (136). As opposed to this, the scholars differ in their views on the conventions of the Female Gothic. Critics such as Janice Radway and Maggie Kilgour, have refuted the claim that the Female Gothic is undoubtedly conservative, which legitimates the status quo and reestablishes the domestic life, therefore, accepts “the home as a prison in which the disempowered female is at the mercy of ‘ominous patriarchal authorities’” (Weinstock 121). Jeffrey Andrew Weinstock refers to Margaret Doody who “understands Gothic fiction by women as arising out of and responding to the historical disempowerment of women“ (120). Numerous critics share this approach and claim the female formula to be a platform for protest against “the oppressiveness of patriarchal constraints” (Weinstock 121-122).

Weinstock analyzed the works of Charles Brockden Brown, who is considered to be the founding father of the American Gothic tradition. While many elements which are typical of the British convention appear in Brown’s novels, he renovated and adjusted them to the American context. One of his innovations was the turn to the human psyche as the source of horror which greatly influenced the themes of Poe’s Gothic tales (93). Also, the Gothic genre was extremely popular in Poe’s time, so these tales were profitable to write. Although Poe was very much aware of the appeal of the Gothic, he disdained the genre and expressed this by treating its themes with irony (Fisher, “Poe and the American Short Story” 22).

At first glance, Poe’s tales featuring the Dark Ladies and the victims of his detective fiction employ the conventions of the Male Gothic. The stories are told from a male point of view expressing the horror of men caused by “the female”. The threat is eliminated by her perish in the interest of the restoration of patriarchal power. However, women’s silence is only temporary, their story is unavoidably voiced. This creates a controversy, namely that Poe’s female figures keep resisting annihilation despite the fact that he seemingly applies the Male Gothic formula. This inconsistency demands a rereading of these short stories which questions

the author's presumed misogyny and intends to explore how Poe's Male Gothic can articulate and recover women's suppressed experiences.

In order to analyze the female characters in Poe's Gothic tales and detective short stories, I apply feminist literary criticism, psychoanalytic criticism, cultural and crime fiction studies. The selected short stories comprise the tales of ratiocination, "The Murders in the Rue Morgue" (1841), "The Mystery of Marie Rogêt" (1842–43), and "The Purloined Letter" (1844) and Gothic tales featuring the Dark Ladies, "Berenice" (1835), "Morella" (1835), "Ligeia" (1838) and "The Fall of the House of Usher" (1839).

The first chapter introduces the Gothic in greater detail as well as the evolution of the Male and Female Gothic including their feminist criticism. This chapter also discusses Poe's American Gothicism and his literary predecessors. The second chapter sheds light on the historical background of women's status in the nineteenth century and the division of the spheres into public and private. This chapter also foregrounds the oppression and empowerment of the Dark Ladies in the selected short stories. The final chapter deals with the silenced women of the detective stories and the role of the amateur detective, Dupin, but first, the media representations of women are discussed.

Chapter 1: The History of Gothic Fiction

In this chapter, I focus on the evolution of the Male and Female Gothic and Poe's American Gothicism. The first subsection demonstrates the major differences between the Male and Female Gothic traditions, then I proceed to discuss how feminist criticism treats the two formulae. The second subsection explores the beginnings of the American Gothic with special regard to one of Poe's influential predecessors, Charles Brockden Brown. Furthermore, the traits of Poe's Gothic fiction and his contribution to the genre will also be examined.

1.1.: The Evolution of the Male and Female Gothic

Influenced by Ellen Moers, who recognized it first that gender is essential in Gothic, later critics Kate Ferguson Ellis and Eugenia DeLamotte started to formulate the different characteristics of the "masculine" and "feminine" conventions (Williams 100). Anne Williams argues that the male and female inevitably have diverse experiences originating from their cultural positions, as she says, "it is all in the 'I'" (107). Accordingly, to tell the two kinds of stories, the male and female formulae emerged differing from each other in the "narrative technique, in its assumptions about the supernatural, and in plot" (Williams 102). Moreover, David Punter and Glennis Byron emphasize the existing dissimilarity deriving from the "relationship of the protagonist to the dominant Gothic spaces depicted" (278).

According to Alison Milbank, the Male Gothic is typified by the works of William Godwin, Matthew Lewis, and Charles Maturin. In these, the male protagonist's principal aim is to penetrate the "domestic female interior" (12). The plot is tragic, the male character eventually fails and is completely destroyed by himself. Furthermore, as Williams argues, he is punished for his pretentiousness and the crimes he committed (103). In most texts, the elements of horror arise primarily from the primitive anxiety inherently present in Western patriarchal societies provoked by "the female", especially the mother (Williams 105). The mother is usually monstrous and evokes fear, as Ruth Beinstock Anolik also remarks, exactly because of her ability to exert "social control and order" (27). In most Gothic works she is absent, either dead or imprisoned which are all the realization of her abjection (Anolik 25). The term, abjection, was coined by psychoanalyst, Julia Kristeva and it refers to the violent exclusion, and rejection of something other than the self, however, it is never permanent, it stays to be both an unconscious and conscious threat (McAfee 46). The abjection of the mother is one of the most frequent signs defined by the ambivalent feeling of the "longing to fall back into the maternal *chora* as well as a deep anxiety over the possibility of losing one's subjectivity" (49).

The threat that the mother and women pose is pushed to the “periphery of awareness” but still haunts the subject (McAfee 49). In the Gothic stories, the tension between desire and fear of the female other is often foregrounded as a result of which female characters tend to be objectified and abused because of their sexuality and their potential to be mothers. The agony that female figures evoke in male characters is exhibited in the power they exert on women, which is also viewed as compensation for the fear and anxiety. Williams remarks that men place the female character in situations where her most valuable strength, her virtue which is fundamentally a patriarchal standard, is inevitably damaged. Nevertheless, the failure to fulfill these expectations leads to her punishment for being a “fallen woman” (105). Unsurprisingly, female characters are denied the privileges of free will and agency, what is more, they are constantly victimized to reinforce their oppressed position in society (105).

The Female Gothic voices the same fears and anxieties women experience in the Male formula. Punter and Byron claim that it presents women’s entrapment in a great house or castle and oppression by a powerful male figure, and the plot focuses on their “attempts to escape from [this] confining interior” (278). In contrast to the Male convention, in British Gothicism, the story must have a happy ending usually realized by the female protagonist’s marriage. Nevertheless, a dissimilarity is present between British and American Female Gothic fiction which is discussed in the next subsection. Instead of horror which endangers the “bodily integrity of the ‘I’” (75), the Female formula is characterized by terror which is evoked by an “imagined threat and the process by which that threat is dispelled” (Williams 104). However, not all threats are imagined, the transgressive male character’s authority and his violent treatment of the protagonist veritably endanger her.

The treatment of women unequivocally shows that it is solely the female nature that serves as the prime origin of the primitive anxiety felt by men. Women’s subjection and repression in both conventions reflect their actual position in society and their experiences in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Anolik places emphasis on the dangers of marriage and its impact. She refers to two legal principles in England which controlled women’s life until the middle of the nineteenth century, coverture, and primogeniture (26). The law of coverture was enacted in 1758 and declared that “when a woman married, she became a femme covert and ceased to exist as a separate legal entity” (26). Accordingly, her legal identity would be “covered” “by that of her husband” (26), and results in a form of a ‘civil death’, as Anolik calls it, because all of one’s rights to possess property were definitively lost (26). Another common law doctrine is primogeniture which stated that all property belonging to the father was inherited by his firstborn son. While in the absence of a male heir women could inherit the

land, they were effectively deprived of any right to acquire possessions, such as wealth (33). It is no surprise then that the Female Gothic questioned the institution of marriage by exploring its impacts on women. However, scholars' opinions are diverse regarding the Female tradition. These Gothic fictions have always been popular among female readers which according to Williams generates "a certain embarrassment in feminist critics" (138). Many scholars believe that the Female Gothic is profoundly conservative. Punter and Byron claim that these works reinforce the domestic ideology, which seems to be the main source of the female protagonist's suffering, by a necessarily happy ending and the marriage of the female character, thus her reintegration into society (281). Moreover, domesticity validates the Female convention's identification with the private which further emphasized the conservatism of the genre (281). On the other hand, a considerable group of critics argues that instead of being solely reactionary, the Female Gothic is radical. Wallace and Smith consider it politically subversive since it exhibits the female fear of "entrapment within the domestic and the female body" (2). Some acclaimed critics like Frederike van Leeuwen, Anne Williams, and Diane Long Hoeveler join this claim and find the Female Gothic revolutionary because of its criticism of the oppressive patriarchal constraints, not to mention the way it fantasizes about "a reordered, more egalitarian cultural distribution of power" (Weinstock 122). Among these critics, Hoeveler's view is important to highlight, as she regards that these works were early examples of 'victim feminism'. According to her the female characters "masquerade as blameless victims of a corrupt and oppressive patriarchal society while utilising passive-aggressive and masochistic strategies to triumph over that system" (Wallace and Smith 4). Through this disguise of weakness, women can achieve power. Nevertheless, it can be concluded that most critics regard the Male Gothic as the imprint of the society of the nineteenth century, which accents the oppression of women and demonstrates the consequences of actions against this social structure. On the contrary, the Female Gothic's aim is definitely to give an opportunity to writers to present women's silenced experiences and to criticize the Male Gothic and its misogynistic ideas.

1.2.: Poe's American Gothicism

At the beginning of the nineteenth century, Gothic appeared in America and quickly became one of the most popular genres (Savoy 167). Writers were greatly inspired by the successful British works and borrowed from them "narrative situations, conflicts, settings, and motifs" (Savoy 167-168). However, unlike Europe, America did not have a rich national history or buildings that were used in the British Gothic as settings for the stories, hence, it was difficult

to fully adapt the genre (Savoy 174). For this reason, American writers turned to, “other varieties of tangibles”, the wild landscapes of the country (Fisher, “Poe and the Gothic tradition” 75-77). Charles Brockden Brown was the first to Americanize the genre and laid the foundation for the American Gothic. Eric Savoy states that Brown “resituate[d] ‘history’ in a pathologized return of the re-pressed whereby the present witnesses the unfolding and fulfillment of terrible destinies incipient in the American past” (174). His novel, *Wieland; or The Transformation* (1798) is considered to be the first work and the starting point of the American tradition. In this and other works of Brown, the elements of horror differ from the British convention since these are not originated from the supposed supernatural, instead, they come from the human psyche (Fisher, “Poe and the Gothic tradition” 77). According to Therese M. Rizzo, the most significant tropes in the American tradition were “dreams, family conflicts, haunted houses, narcissism, the psyche, and silences” (242).

It is important to mention, that Charles Brockden Brown served as a relevant influence for Poe (Weinstock 150). Brown was considered to be the founding father of the American Female Gothic. Weinstock claims that he “used the Gothic as a means to dramatize women’s disempowerment in late eighteenth-century Euro-American culture, to highlight the forces of explicit and implicit violence used against women to coerce their submission, and to critique these forms of oppression” (123). Brown speaks for women’s unfortunate situations in several works. One of these is the dialog *Alcuin* (1798), in which he presents women’s dependent and defenseless position in the patriarchal society. Furthermore, he rearticulates Mary Wollstonecraft’s idea of the equal education of both sexes. Nevertheless, he cannot give an adequate suggestion for the solution to this problem, only the radical rejection of men (Weinstock 140). In his later pieces, namely *Wieland* and *Ormond* (1799) he extends the thoughts appearing in *Alcuin* and highlights issues such as women’s status in marriage and their victimization by men (129). According to Weinstock, the two novels demonstrate the “‘Gothicization of everyday life’ for women”, which is constructed on the terror caused by the male power” (140).

Fisher asserts that Poe exclusively wanted to produce poetry as a writer, however, his poems were not received well either by critics or readers, which made him turn to short stories in the hope of monetary gain (“Poe and the American Short Story” 20-21). Later, he considered these artistically superior to longer works like novels. In his essay, “The Philosophy of Composition” he highlighted the importance of the ‘single effect’ (Poe 272) which as Bendixen claimed, can be developed the best in short stories (Fisher, “Poe and the American Short Story” 10). Apart from the single effect, Fisher also states that Poe insisted on “suggestiveness”, which

claimed that a great work of art has “multiple layers of meanings” (“Poe and the American Short Story” 11). Several critics mention Poe’s obvious intention to write what would sell well (Fisher, “Poe and the American Short Story” 79). Since Gothic fiction was remarkably popular at that time, it met his expectations. Besides the early American Gothic, British sensational stories such as Blackwood’s *Tales of Terror* served as relevant inspirations for Poe. Heather Worthington believes that Poe was aware of the works published in Blackwood’s *Edinburgh Magazine* (23). However, other critics are of the opinion that Poe despised this type of Gothic fiction and only valued its popularity, which was the reason he used it as an influence. According to Alan Brown, Poe “resented having to compromise his art by writing in a format he considered beneath him but that paid the bills” (247). Based on these, Poe’s contemporaries recognized in his earlier works elements of satire and parody (Fisher, “Poe and the Gothic tradition” 79), which may signal the idea that Poe was able to employ the weaknesses of the terror tale and, as Fisher suggests, he could treat them in a comical way (“Poe and the American Short Story” 22). Nevertheless, his later pieces were characterized by new, innovative elements which helped him to elevate the Gothic to be a serious genre, and which “have been recognized as some of the most sophisticated creations in psychological fiction in the English language” (Fisher, “Poe and the Gothic tradition” 78). Compared to Brown or Hawthorne, Poe preferred “the internal chambers of the mind” instead of nature as a setting (Billy 152), and he turned to the descriptions of the unconscious. Although the Gothic lost its popularity after the 1820s, the tropes which characterized the tradition served as inspirations to other genres, such as crime fiction (Worthington 246). Probably, Poe’s achievement as a short story writer cannot only be measured in his ability to reform the American romantic tale but also by his mastery in transforming the terror tale into a new literary form, detective fiction (Fisher, “Poe and the American Short Story” 10).

In the forthcoming chapters, the elements of the Gothic tradition especially the Male formula are going to be analyzed in greater detail. Patterns that are typical of the Male Gothic appear both in the short stories featuring the Dark Ladies and the tales of ratiocination. These works are going to be analyzed in the next chapters.

Chapter 2: The Horror of the Female Experience: Women's Annihilation in the Public and the Private

This chapter explores the Gothic short stories featuring the Dark Ladies. Before analyzing the selected texts, the historical context of the tales should be introduced. Therefore, a review of women's different experiences in the nineteenth century, especially in the first half of the 1800s, is indispensable to start with. It is important to emphasize the forthcoming sections since they accurately represent women's similar roles and positions in the works of Poe. The first subsection deals with domesticity and the private sphere, where I discuss the ideal of True Womanhood, its change into Real Womanhood, and finally touch upon women's roles in the public sphere. Furthermore, this part explains how the Gothic is employed to reflect on domesticity. It can be said that this part of the chapter exhibits the experiences of women which also appear in the tales of horror. The second subsection presents the distinctive characteristics of Gothic, especially Male Gothic appearing in the works, such as the fear from the 'other' and how the protagonists try to contain women. It expounds on how the Dark Ladies relate to the contemporary ideas of the private and public sphere, moreover, women's place in them. The next part directs the attention toward the ways women can be empowered despite their seemingly tragic fate including their defiance of the existing social order.

2.1.: Domesticity and the History of Womanhood

As previously pointed out, in the 1800s women were continuously discriminated against both socially and economically and this is what the Female Gothic mainly sheds light on. Susan M. Cruea justifies this fact by emphasizing some cultural codes that limited upper and middle-class women's potential: they could either get married and become mothers or remain spinsters. Regardless of what they chose, all of these implied domestic dependencies. This was further reinforced by the discouragement of earning a wage because women with an income were considered to be 'unnatural' (187). Similarly, among working-class women, it was more favorable to be married than work for low wages in unhealthy conditions. However, without separate earnings, everybody was entirely dependent upon their husbands (Cruea 187). Yet, women also signified a status symbol and exhibited the husband's wealth. Cruea claims that motherhood was regarded as one's most important and fulfilling role, a True Woman had to show her spouse's success and had to prepare her children to carry on the family's legacy (188-190). Leland S. Person quotes Kimmel who stated that "[w]omen were not only domestic, they were domesticators, expected to turn their sons into virtuous Christian gentlemen—dutiful,

well-mannered, and feminized” (130). The first image promoted by society was the True Womanhood which was built on “four cardinal virtues—piety, purity, submissiveness, and domesticity” (Welter 21). Cruea asserts that women were considered to be inherently more virtuous than men, therefore, their function was to be the “symbolic keeper of morality and decency within the home” (188). Due to this factor, a full-time occupation or other jobs away from the home were strongly discouraged especially physical work, as women were seen as fragile, delicate, and liable to illnesses (189-190). Moreover, cerebral pursuits were also disapproved of as it was seen unfeminine, since “the mind [was] associated with the masculine” (189).

It is important to show the ideals appearing in the middle of the nineteenth century after True Womanhood became obsolete since they represent certain characteristics of women’s position in society which were considered to be radical and were strongly discouraged in Poe’s time, however, they are present in his works. Cruea introduces the new ideal, the Real Womanhood, which emerged in the middle of the 1800s which was the effect of the Civil War when the necessity arose and put women in positions where men worked before, such as teaching, government, and office work (191). Furthermore, after the war many women became widows, spinsters, or had to support their disabled husbands, hence, they were in need of an income (191). Cruea emphasizes the differences in the approaches towards the fields of “health, education, marriage, and, most importantly, employment” by True and Real Womanhood (Cruea 191). Primarily it is important to mention education which made it possible for women to perform their tasks, for example, keeping a house and raising children. Moreover, Cruea quotes Cogan who claims that education aids them to “attract the right kind of man and ... fulfill the duties of wife and companion” (qtd. in 192). Cruea states while marriage was still the most ideal opportunity for women, those who remained single now had alternatives and could be self-sufficient by earning wages (193). On the contrary, building a career was discouraged, because it would divert one’s attention from domestic responsibilities (193).

While Real Womanhood only approved labor of domestic nature, later new occupations emerged for middle-class women which were not connected to the house, laying the foundation for the ideal of Public Womanhood (193). While this new model appeared and was acknowledged decades after Poe’s death women at his time already appeared in the cultural realm as writers. Because of their “increasing involvement in the moral and cultural welfare of their communities” women could enjoy more opportunities to claim public roles (193). Relying on Glenna Matthews, she states that this movement to the public happened in a “legal, political, spatial, and cultural sense” (qtd. in Cruea 193). Working-class women experienced exploitation

in their low-paying jobs, working as servants and seamstresses, however, Cruea argues they soon found respectable occupations where they were treated fairly (194). Although they were mostly employed in fields related to the domestic sphere, such as childcare, teaching, and nursing, due to the increasing industrialization, a demand appeared for office workers for example typists and stenographers (195). Through religious empowerment based on women's moral superiority, their activities in the public sphere were justified and it was also believed that they "combated social immoralities that threatened the sanctity of the home and family", which included the controlling of men's behavior at home (196). Since they were allowed to represent themselves in the cultural realm, they could aspire to become professional writers (196). The popularity of the novel gave women "a public forum through which they could share experiences in an effort to reveal common concerns which allowed women to explore solutions to the social problems that plagued nineteenth-century women" (197).

The ideas of domesticity did not remain unanswered. As it was previously mentioned the Female Gothic gave women a platform to reflect on their roles in society and to criticize the system. According to Ana Cristina Băniceru, while British Gothic fiction used 'exotic' settings such as ancient castles and monasteries, these were replaced by "bourgeois lodgings" (9). She states, that "[t]he Gothic was domesticated or better said the domestic was gothicised, especially in America", which lacked bygone buildings. As a result, writers imported Gothic into middle-class households, which proved to be perfect locations (10). The Gothic questioned the ideas of domesticity and claimed that dangers come from the private, which were thought to be safe and familiar (10). Băniceru asserts that one of the most common elements of the Gothic tradition is the presence of uncanny instances. The concept of 'uncanny' was described by Sigmund Freud and it was later explained in greater detail by Andrew Bennett and Nicholas Royle (Punter and Byron 283). David Punter and Glennis Byron quote their description of the 'uncanny', which is "making things *uncertain*: it has to do with the sense that things are not as they have come to appear through habit and familiarity, that they may challenge all rationality and logic" (qtd. 283). The name of the term is derived from the German *unheimlich* and shows the fear coming from domesticity: "unheimlich is related to the dangers lurking beneath the veneer of domesticity" (10). Dennis R. Perry and Carl H. Sederholm analyze Charlotte Perkins Gilman's work, "The Yellow Wallpaper" (1892) which they believe was inspired by Poe's short story, "The Fall of the House of Usher", and presents the story from Madeline Usher's point of view (20). Gilman in her writing focuses on the social system which "brings down both men and women" (32). Băniceru takes Poe's "The Black Cat" (1843) to introduce how domesticity affects both sexes. She quotes Cavallaro, who claims that domesticity is a cultural ideology that

defines the feminized household as a refuge from the public sphere (11). On the contrary, the same idea in Gothic has seemed as a repressing and confining place which infantilizes women (Băniceru 11). Person states that domesticity is damaging for everybody “the home [is] the nightmarish site of barely repressed hostility between men and women” (134), which is complemented by Băniceru’s view that both sexes become victims of domesticity and its values (13). Despite this, female writers were more vocal to criticize the domestic ideal, especially in the Gothic tradition. Băniceru considers Poe to be the representative of the Male Gothic who expresses the disapproval of domesticity by “striking at the very heart of [it]” with the death of the ‘angel in the house’ (13) in his work. This shows that both formulae of Gothic have similar attitudes toward the concept of domesticity, which is its explicit criticism (Băniceru 15). This approach can be seen in the short stories featuring the Dark Ladies, which are analyzed in the next subsections. The settings of these tales are homes, however, the traditional roles of men and women in the private sphere do not conform to the expectations of domesticity, what is more, the Dark Ladies seem to defy these.

2.2.: Gothic Formulae in Poe’s Short Fiction

I previously detailed women’s treatment in the Male Gothic formula and the anxiety originating from the female ‘other’, which controls men to commit their crimes. These characteristics appear in Poe’s four short stories featuring the Dark Ladies. According to Eliza Richards, Poe’s male protagonists’ violent revenge on the female characters is provoked by women’s threatening power over them (10). Tracy Hayes also emphasizes this power and argues that the Dark Ladies are embodiments of the feminine monstrous which she defines as the masculine projection of women who cannot be repressed, what is more, they return in an *unheimlich* manner (1). She quotes Barbara Creed who believes the monstrous incarnates everything “what it is about woman that is shocking, terrifying, horrific, abject” (qtd. in Hayes 2). Cynthia S. Jordan remarks that the principal dread and hatred spring from female sexuality (8). Hayes further expounds on this, women’s horrific depictions come from their “mothering and reproductive functions, and linked to questions of sexual desire” (2). Furthermore, Debra Johanyak claims that these female figures are feminist prototypes, the narrators display the antifeminist sentiments of the period and the fear of independent women (63). In the terror tales, all of the female characters share similar fates. They are carried away by a mysterious disease that distorts their beauty and eventually they die. Leland S. Person asserts that their illnesses “reflect [the narrators’] disease with their embodied beings” (139). The narrators of these stories

try to oppress and abject women, however, their success in it is not permanent. The Dark Ladies “return to teach the oppressive idolater a lesson he will not forget” (Dayan 5).

Although critics generally believe Berenice’s agency is negligible compared to the other female figures, she undoubtedly has an influence on the male protagonist. Egaeus, her cousin and fiancé, states in the tale that his feelings “had never been of the heart, and [his] passion *always were* of the mind” (Poe 101) but he admires her “gorgeous yet fantastic beauty” (Poe 98) which starts to fade away caused by her fatal disease. Furthermore, Egaeus mentions that her “personal identity” also becomes distorted. As Berenice’s illness progresses the narrator’s dread from her, especially from her teeth, increasingly grows. It is stated that Egaeus is a monomaniac and by seeing the “white and ghastly spectrum of the teeth” he develops an obsession which makes him lose awareness during times he thinks about them (Poe 102). After Berenice’s death and burial, her body is exhumed by the narrator to remove these menacing objects. Several scholars believe this organ represents female sexual desire and by discarding them Berenice can be desexualized. Moreover, Hayes argues that the teeth stand for the “vagina dentata, the threat of the feminine monstrous as castratrice, of emasculation” (3-4). Berenice’s smile is a central element in the short story. It is also suggested that it symbolizes the narrator’s similar fate. She greatly influences the narrator, who also starts to resemble a corpse, being “breathless and motionless” (Poe 102) by the mere sight of her. However, not just the sight but also her presence evokes “insufferable anxiety” in the narrator, as she intrudes the library (Poe 102). The library is obviously a sign of Berenice’s moral transgression since knowledge and culture belong to men. Therefore, the woman is seen as an invader, who needs to be banished.

Just like Berenice, Madeline Usher is also a voiceless character, despite this, many critics analyzed her character and many approaches have appeared considering her figure. While “The Fall of the House of Usher” focuses on the experiences and feelings of the two male protagonists, Madeline is constantly present in the story and she actively controls the plot. According to Cynthia S. Jordan, the female character evokes fear and hatred in the narrator because she embodies female sexuality (8). It is suggested by the name of Madeline which originates from that of Mary Magdalena who was associated with sexual promiscuity (Fisher, “Poe and the American Short Story” 29). Besides the ‘feminine’, Roderick and the narrator both try to repress “creativity in artistic and physical (reproductive) ventures” (Fisher 30). Diane Hoeveler also argues that Madeline is the projection of Roderick’s femininity which he abjects from himself (391). The similarities between brother and sister are continuously emphasized in the short story, which can include not only physical qualities but personality traits too. This might suggest that just like Roderick, his sister “ha[s] also been an active intellectual, reading,

writing, painting, and playing an instrument” (Perry and Sederholm 32-33). Madeline like Berenice, appears on the border of men’s sphere, threatening male intellectual superiority. Moreover, it is reinforced by the fact that “the similarity of the characteristics of the sister and brother stresses the equality of the woman’s and man’s minds” (Li 22). To deprive Madeline of her power, both the narrator and Roderick try to oppress her. While she is still alive, they attempt to “exclude her from the text altogether” by ignoring her existence (Jordan 7). The narrator claims, that after his arrival “[Madeline’s] name was unmentioned by either Usher or [him]” as he was “busied in earnest endeavors to alleviate the melancholy of [his] friend”, which the sister evoked in Roderick (Poe 132). This attention to Roderick and disregard of his sister suggests a complete unconcern toward the dying woman. Madeline is Roderick’s uncanny double and therefore foreshadows Roderick’s similar fate. Sigmund Freud argued in his essay “The Uncanny” that the double is one of the uncanny instances and signals a bad omen for the individual. Gothic fiction exploits the motif of the double to enhance the terror of the characters and foreshadow their tragic ending. The decaying body of Lady Madeline highlights Roderick’s anxiety over death and his own mortality, which he wants to rid himself of by burying his sister. Apart from the psychological torment triggered by the sight of the sickly woman, the burial scene, also reveals Roderick’s desire to (re-)unite with his sister, the symbolic mother, in an untimely womb where nothing can disturb their harmony. Freud associates live burials with a desire to return to the womb of the mother (14-15). Nonetheless, this desire for the mother (and the female body) as well as the anxiety that this irresistible longing creates is described and contained in the process of abjection. What is at stake here is control over one’s desires and one’s borders of identity threatened by these unconscious drives.

The female characters of “Morella” and “Ligeia” are analyzed together since they share many characteristics. Both unnamed narrators first express their adoration for their wives who possess great knowledge and beauty. Morella’s husband “abandoned [himself] implicitly to the guidance of [her]” and identifies himself as “her pupil” (Poe 105). Despite this, the feelings of the narrator change suddenly as his “joy suddenly faded into horror, and the most beautiful became the most hideous” (Poe 106). His feelings turn into a desire for Morella’s death, which after a long illness eventuates. The narrator experiences similar anxieties toward their daughter who “grew strangely in stature and intellect, and was the perfect resemblance of her who had departed”, and from fear, he does not even name the child (Poe 109). Kennedy suggests, that by eventually naming his daughter Morella he seeks the same fate for her as for her mother (119). In the case of “Ligeia”, the narrator emphasizes both his wife’s beauty and “immense” learning and likewise acknowledges her “infinite supremacy” (Poe 115). He claims himself to

be “a child groping benighted” without Ligeia, which suggests her role as a mother in this relationship (Poe 115). Her mysterious illness and death are mourned by the narrator, who later remarries Lady Rowena whom he loathes “with a hatred belonging more to demon than to man” (Poe 120). The new bride suffers the same fate as Ligeia, however, by her death, she completely loses her identity and receives no chance to return. Hayes argues that “the unheimlich act of metempsychosis ushers in the return of the monstrous sexuality of Ligeia” as she consumes the body of the deceased Rowena (4). Johanyak sees them as ‘femmes fatale’, however, not just their sexual power but their nonconformity to the domestic sphere and the traditional ideal of women make them fearsome (63). She believes Morella and Ligeia are considered to be dangerous because of the threat they pose to the male-dominated society.

2.3.: The Empowerment of the Female Characters

I argue that although superficially the Dark Ladies are victims of men who try to repress them since they endanger the male characters, they cannot be regarded as passive. While these ladies suffer the same fate as Poe’s beautiful dead woman, they do not entirely fit the ideal. Their deceases do not mean their destruction as they resurrect. Person argues that “[t]he death of a beautiful woman, [...] is a logical outcome of woman's separation and idealization. The Truest Woman, in effect, is a dead woman—an object, not a subject” (138). As I previously mentioned in the first half of the nineteenth century, True Womanhood was the accepted ideal, and its pillars, the “four cardinal virtues—piety, purity, submissiveness, and domesticity” served as the exemplary model for women (Welter 21). The Dark Ladies unambiguously cannot correspond to these qualities. Person claims that the terror tales they appear in “might be read as a parody of domestic values and the positive influences of separate spheres”, as these women do not meet the expectations of domesticity (135).

Of the four women, Berenice seems to be the most traditional one. Egaeus only accentuates her beauty and her “agile, graceful, and overflowing with energy” living (Poe 98). It can be said that Berenice is objectified in the tale. During her illness, Egaeus turns away from her since her decay “pervade[s] her mind, her habits, and her character” (Poe 98), instead he starts to concentrate on her only intact body part, her teeth. Although it is suggested that she revives from death, her body is violated and disfigured, moreover, it is not clarified what happens to her in the end. Nevertheless, it is not negligible how Berenice influences the narrator. Egaeus fears her smile, which, as I have argued before represents her sexuality, and dreads her mere presence. These confirm her power over the man.

Perry and Sederholm assert that “The Fall of the House of Usher” portrays how the “oppressive social system has split the genders in two in a way that signals the possibility of a new order for the new century” (35). Madeline is seemingly a passive character, whom both her brother and the narrator attempt to exclude from the text and destroy. According to Johanyak, despite this, the two women Madeline and Berenice “appear at dramatic moments, confronting their lovers at reading-room or library door, as though threatening entrance into a traditionally male sphere of intellectual advancement” (69). Moreover, Madeline constantly affects men’s feelings and actions. She is seen as “the powerful, though silent and mostly absent, major agent of all action, thought, fear, and art in the story” (Perry and Sederholm 32). Perry and Sederholm believe that Madeline’s death is a willful act to escape (36). Death frees her from her Rodericks’s oppression and she is given the agency to control him. Perry and Sederholm claims that the “suspiciously lingering smile upon [her] lip” (Poe 138) is the sign of the discovery and emergence of the self (36). Moreover, the narrator during their first encounter “regarded her with an utter astonishment not unmingled with dread” (Poe 132) and is constantly affected by her. She even influences Roderick who hears her struggle in the tomb for days but “dare[s] not to speak” (Poe 143). Finally, freeing herself from the vault she returns to avenge her repression by her brother and manages to force him down to the floor where they both die. Therefore, Madeline becomes an active character.

According to Johanyak Morella and Ligeia “acquire personal interests and aspirations having little to do with the domestic roles generally assigned wives and mothers of this period” (63). They undeniably have a superior position in their relationships which is acknowledged by the narrators. None of these characters conform to the ideal of the True Woman, they seem to represent the prototype of the New Woman whose ideal emerged in the late nineteenth century (Martens 54). According to Person, Ligeia “reverses the conventional power imbalance between husband and wife” (135). Although Morella is a mother, she does not perform the roles of motherhood since her death allows her to escape from these responsibilities and child-rearing becomes the duty of the father. The abilities of the child suggest that “each succeeding generation reinforces more strongly and demonstrates more clearly the evolution of women’s individuality and rights” (Johanyak 66). Both characters’ intellectual superiority over men is emphasized in the tales, they are undeniably feminist characters ahead of their time who completely disobey the conventional roles of women and present a new ideal.

Chapter 3: Gothic Encounters Detective Fiction

In this chapter, Poe's tales of ratiocination are introduced regarding the female characters in them. The first subsection discusses the media representation of women, including the emergence of the crime narrative in the first half of the nineteenth century and women's portrayal as victims and perpetrators in them. The second subsection presents the ways the Male Gothic appears in the detective short stories, focusing on the fear women evoke in men and the male actions committed to contain the female. The third part examines how the media represents the victims and degrades them, moreover, I analyze the character of Poe's amateur detective, Auguste Dupin's reflection on the depiction of the crimes and his effort to voice the victims' suppressed experiences.

3.1.: Media Representation of Women

In the seventeenth and eighteenth-century America, the most significant form of murder story was the execution sermon. In these works, the "spiritual condition of the murder" was emphasized and they aimed to explore the progression from smaller spiritual transgressions to more serious ones such as murder. Violent crimes were not incomprehensible, their culprits were considered to be common sinners who were "spiritually wayward but not monstrous, inhuman, or beyond redemption" (Murley 7). In the nineteenth century, new sensational narrative forms appeared for example newspaper accounts, trial transcripts, and killer's biographies. Murderers were depicted based on the traditions of 'Gothic horror' and their cases were seen as mystery stories. Jean Murley claims that due to the changing cultural and ideological views killers were no longer seen as ordinary sinners but "moral aliens" (8). Radojka Startup states that with the spread of print technologies and the growing "reading public" there was an increasing demand for crime stories, which became a permanent part of the culture (41). Murley mentions two British publications, the *Newgate Calendar* and the *London Police Gazette* which served as models for magazines in America (9). Among these, the *Newgate Calendar* is a prominent one especially its later version published in the late 1820s, the *New Newgate Calendar*, which is analyzed by Startup in great detail. According to her, the stories describing infamous crimes and trials became important cheap literature, which satisfied the need for sensational and thrilling reading matter (149-150). She also refers to the *Bury and Norwich Post* which informed about the Suffolk Assizes cases since 1782 (154).

The two publications greatly differ from each other in their approaches to the crimes women experienced. The cases of domestic violence appearing in the *New Newgate Calendar*

depicted the female victims as “disloyal, fickle and unfaithful wives whose sexual deviancy provoked regrettable but highly justified acts of male retribution” (Startup 49). The ones published in a *Bury and Norwich Post* portrayed women as ‘unfortunate’ victims, who suffered from men’s momentary lapses in conduct (49). Startup states, “the media reporting of these crimes highlights their implications for middle-class ideals and expresses the concern to regulate working-class morality” (50). However, these assumptions disregard relevant circumstances. According to the concepts of the temperance movement “drink could make all the difference between the unhappy, dysfunctional household and the harmonious home modelled on the middle-class idyll” (125). In the case of crimes where the influence of alcohol was present it was considered to be the principal cause of men’s extreme and deviant behavior (131). Furthermore, the ideals of domesticity also originated from the middle-class promoting principles regarding the traits of the two sexes, that “manhood was defined as responsible and chivalric and womanhood as passive, protected and housebound” (132). The “ideal of companionate marriage” was similarly supported by the middle-class, however, its important pillar, conjugal love, was not the main reason for marriage among the working class, instead, they valued the economic aspects this union provided. The expectations, that men should be the breadwinners in a family and women should be dependent wives created continuous tension and conflict within the home (134-135). Startup believes that domestic violence is an obvious consequence of men’s failure to live up to these demands (135). Women were expected to support their husbands and be indulgent with them even if they become victims because of men’s behavior (140). If domestic crimes were taken to court “it [was] highly likely that women took recourse to the judicial system as a warning to their husbands and in an attempt to modify, their behaviour”, because the absence of the convicted husband’s income would cause troubles for the wife and family (141). Generally, it can be said, that crimes committed against women were understood as outcomes of unfortunate accidents, however in some cases, it was believed that women were “provoking or contributing to their own suffering” (146).

Nevertheless, the previously mentioned publications also featured affairs in which women were not victims, but perpetrators. Referring to Zedner, Startup states that female convictions occurred less frequently, which partly originated from the belief that women were inherently ‘non-criminal’, however, if they committed crimes they were stigmatized since this conduct contradicted their idealized roles as wives and mothers (20-21). Furthermore, they were found guilty in cases of juvenile crimes too, which were thought to be the consequences of mothers’ neglect to educate children both religiously and morally (202-203). According to Glyde, the other reason for the small number of serious crimes committed by women was their

lack of ability and opportunity (qtd. in Startup 198). Female criminals evoked “extreme cultural anxieties” and therefore received more attention (193-194). Similar to men, in their cases “the economic pressures they faced, whether as single women, wives or widows” were also disregarded (Startup 208). Women preferred poisoning as a method to kill which was especially terrifying and disingenuous since it showed the deed as a deliberate and prepared crime (Startup 218). Thereby women were “betraying the trust placed in [them], abusing [their] privileged position within the home” (219). Thus, these cases questioned the trust put in the safety of the private sphere (221).

3.2.: The Silenced Women of the Tales of Ratiocination

Edgar Allan Poe is considered to be the father of detective fiction. Michael Cook applies Todorov’s argument that “every great book establishes the existence of two genres, the reality of two norms: that of the genre it transgresses, which dominated the preceding literature, and that of the genre it creates” (4). Cook claims that “The Murders of the Rue Morgue” served as a prototype for detective fiction and established a distinguishable structure for the genre while employing central ideas of Poe’s tales of horror and utilizing “elements of storytelling [...] from the tradition of the Gothic and Sensation novels” (1-4). Moreover, according to Heather Worthington, the “narrative and thematic patterns” appearing in the short stories are still present in modern crime fiction (22). It shows that the significance of Poe’s contribution to the genre resides in the possibilities the tales of ratiocination “introduce but do not exhaust” (Lee 370).

The influence of the Gothic tradition especially of the Male formula is undeniably present in the three Dupin tales, “The Murders in the Rue Morgue”, “The Mystery of Marie Rogêt”, and “The Purloined Letter”. It differs from the previously analyzed works featuring the Dark Ladies since the female characters’ literal or figurative deaths are only “mechanisms of the plot” (Stovall 204). The victims of the detective short stories are endangered or dead from the beginning of the plot. The atrocities women experience in these are similar to the abuse they have to endure both in the Male and Female Gothic stories. As I previously mentioned men’s actions to oppress and contain the female can be understood as a counterbalance to the fear and unease caused by the ‘other’. Like in the case of the Dark Ladies, women in the detective tales do not conform to the contemporary ideal of True Womanhood. In “The Murders in the Rue Morgue” the victims of an “extraordinary murder” (Poe 245) are Madame L’Espanaye and her daughter, Mademoiselle Camille L’Espanaye. Based on the testimonies of their acquaintances, Madame L’Espanaye “was reputed to have money put by” (Poe 247), lived alone with her daughter in a great house she owned, and frequently bought “tobacco and snuff” (Poe 247) for

themselves. Furthermore, she “had some property” deposited in a bank account from which before their murder she took out 4000 francs. Joseph Church claims that by the act of taking the two bags of money from the bank clerk “the arrogant women have appropriated phallic power” (411). He believes that while the Dark Ladies’ “intellect [...] depart from the conventional and threaten[s] man's superior position” it is Madame L’Espanaye’s wealth which is intimidating to men (Church 407). Moreover, the female characters' self-reliance suggests that they are in no need of a man, nor they would accept a subordinate position, which completely rejects True Womanhood’s virtues: submissiveness and domesticity. The short story, “The Mystery of Marie Rogêt”, deals with the disappearance and death of Marie Rogêt, a beautiful perfumery girl. It is known that Marie had a fiancé, Jacques St. Eustache, however, Dupin reveals that the man who identifies her corpse, Monsieur Beauvais, was also “a suitor of Marie’s; [whom] she coquetted with” (Poe, “The Mystery of Marie Rogêt” 156). Furthermore, during Marie’s first mysterious disappearance “she was [seen] in the company of a young naval officer much noted for his debaucheries” (Poe, “The Mystery of Marie Rogêt” 159). Dupin believes that the vanishing of Marie for the first time was an elopement with the naval officer. As Richard Kopley says, the short story is about a “woman’s uncertain reputation” (78) and it seems that Marie was undoubtedly a lady of easy virtue. In addition, as a working woman who had to deal with male “admirers”, the female character did not correspond to the ideal of a True Womanhood. In the third tale, “The Purloined Letter” Dupin is entrusted with the recovery of an important letter which was stolen from the “royal *boudoir*” (Poe 329) and its release “would bring in question the honor of a personage of most exalted station” (Poe 329). It is suggested by scholars that this royal personage is the Queen of France (Kopley 66) and the content of this letter would be compromising since it would serve as a piece of evidence supporting the Queen’s infidelity.

It can be said that these women perfectly represent the characteristics which evoke fear in men. They reject the ideas that True Womanhood promoted: the concept of domesticity, the sanctity of marriage and virtue, moreover, women’s proper roles in society. To contain these rebels, men have to criminally silence them. Cynthia S. Jordan asserts that “the speech that would allow [women] self-expression has been denied or usurped by male agents” (2). In the case of “The Murders of the Rue Morgue” Madame L’Espanaye’s “throat [was] so entirely cut that, upon an attempt to raise her, the head fell off” (Poe 246) and her daughter “had been throttled to death” and had her “tongue [...] partially bitten through “ (Poe 251). Marie Rogêt is also strangled: “[a]bout [her] throat were bruises and impressions of fingers” (Poe, “The Mystery of Marie Rogêt” 144), furthermore, “[a] piece of lace was found tied so tightly around

the neck as to be hidden from sight; it was completely buried in the flesh” (Poe, “The Mystery of Marie Rogêt” 145). In “The Purloined Letter” the female victim “cannot speak to save herself for fear of jeopardizing her position with the King” (Jordan 3).

As in the Male Gothic, two of these tales do not end with a happy ending from a female point of view. Church points out that the crimes committed against Madame L’Espanaye and her daughter is “strangely unpunished” (409) so is the death of Marie Rogêt. The culprit of the double homicide, the Ourang-Outang, was only captured and his “owner himself, [...] obtained for it a very large sum at the Jardin des Plantes” (Poe 270). The fate of the naval officer who supposedly killed Marie is not clarified. Nevertheless, the Queen appearing in “The Purloined Letter” retrieves her letter and culprit, Minister D—, like the heroes of the Male Gothic fails, and “he inevitably commit[s] himself, at once, to his political destruction” (Poe 343).

3.3.: Voicing the Female Victims

In the pieces “The Murders of the Rue Morgue” and “The Mystery of Marie Rogêt” newspaper articles appear with a significant role concerning the plot which reflects the similar relevance of similar papers of the period. As I previously mentioned as an answer to the increasing need for crime stories, new narrative forms appeared in the early nineteenth century which depicted true cases of murder and other felonies in a thrilling, sensational manner. Dupin is informed about the “extraordinary murder” of Madame L’Espanaye and her daughter by reading its sensationalized reports in the “Gazette des Tribunaux” (Poe 245). Similarly, Dupin and the narrator try to solve the murder of Marie Rogêt with the help of “a full report of all the evidence elicited, and [...] a copy of every paper in which, from first to last, had been published any decisive information in regard to this sad affair” (Poe, “The Mystery of Marie Rogêt” 144). Church relies on Lemay’s idea and asserts that “the women bring their murders upon themselves” (409) since they “aspir[e] to be men when they should be sexually subservient [...] [and] materially subordinate” (413). In the case of Marie Rogêt, her affairs with men are discussed in several papers which might even contain an opinion and objection to this immoral behavior. This approach resembles the victim blaming typical of the newspapers I introduced and detailed in the first part of this chapter. Nevertheless, Dupin seems to criticize these articles claiming: “in general, it is the object of our newspapers rather to create a sensation—to make a point—than to further the cause of truth” (Poe, “The Mystery of Marie Rogêt” 150), which suggests that the amateur detective aims to present and solve the crimes committed against women.

According to Cynthia S. Jordan, Dupin was created by Poe to be “the new caretaker of social and political order: going beyond the imaginative limits of the male storytellers around him and recovering the second story-“the woman's story”-which has previously gone untold” (5). Since women are silenced from the beginning of the plot, they cannot express their annihilation, thus they need a mediator who can voice their experiences. To be able to speak for the victimized women Dupin must cross the boundaries of gender, hence, he has to become androgynous (Jordan 5). The narrator of these tales suggests that he has a ‘Bi-Part Soul’ which creates a double Dupin, one that is creative and one which is “resolvent” (Poe 242). Masculinity and femininity define the detective at the same time. For instance, he uses “pure reason” to unravel the offenses committed in the selected works which are associated with the conscious and the male, nevertheless, he is also intuitive which is linked to the “female” and unconscious (Williams 19). The detective rejects “male-authored texts [which] exclude femaleness because their authors are incapable of imagining women's experience” such as the newspaper articles reporting the crimes (Jordan 14). Moreover, he criticizes the incompetence of the police as they are unable to solve the felonies in “The Murders in the Rue Morgue” and “The Mystery of Marie Rogêt” because they are limited to masculine comprehension (17). On the contrary, he is capable to voice the experiences of women because he can see through female eyes. However, Dupin’s duality also implies ambiguity. His benevolence and pursuit of the truth to dispense justice can be questioned since his actions are guided by converse motives. In “The Murders of the Rue Morgue” the arrest of Le Bon elevates his interest in the crime because the accused “once rendered [Dupin] a service for which [he is] not ungrateful” (Poe 253) and the detective wants to repay his debt by saving the man. Concerning the disappearance and death of Marie Rogêt Dupin states that he undertakes the solution of the case “[f]or [his] own purpose, therefore, if not for the purpose of justice, it is indispensable that our first step should be the determination of the identity of the corpse with the Marie Roget who is missing” (Poe, “The Mystery of Marie Rogêt” 150). In the case of “The Purloined Letter”, the detective’s reasons are also equivocal. He expresses his resentment toward Minister D— who once “did [Dupin] an evil turn” (Poe 344). Nevertheless, he also claims that because of “[his] political prepossessions [...] [he] act[s] as a partisan of the lady concerned [the Queen]” (Poe 343).

Conclusion

This study aimed to analyze Edgar Allan Poe's Gothic tales and detective short stories with a special view to the conventions of the two genres and the portrayal of the female figures in them. I applied feminist literary criticism, psychoanalytic criticism, cultural and crime fiction studies to achieve a more exhaustive reading of the selected works. It can be concluded that Poe unambiguously employs the characteristics of the Male Gothic formula, however, instead of the definitive oppression and destruction of the female figures he gives women the opportunity to resist.

This paper discussed the history of the Gothic genre and the societal context of the first half of the nineteenth century. The separation of the Male and Female formula showed that men and women have different experiences and the comparison of them suggested that the undeniable aim of the Female Gothic is to give voice to writers to present women's silenced experiences while the Male Gothic insists on the constant abuse and victimization of the female characters. The societal context of the 1800s which was discussed in the second chapter exhibited that women could enjoy certain advantages even in ideals that can be understood as oppressive to them, such as True Womanhood and the concept of domesticity. The continuous shift from these provided more favorable conditions for women and opportunities to enter the public sphere. Nevertheless, the public image of women presented in the media, especially in connection with crimes showed a conservative and sexist approach towards women who do not correspond to the expectations of society.

The analysis of the selected works in the second and third chapters showed that the male point of view dominates the narrative. The plot both in the Gothic and detective short stories is determined by the Male Gothic formula, which accentuates the horror evoked in men by "the female". Although men aim to repress and contain women, the female figures reject the demands of the patriarchal society and resist annihilation. The Dark Ladies' efforts are more performative, they exercise their power over men and return from death, while the victims in Poe's detective tales need a mediator to voice the crimes committed against them and this role is fulfilled by the character of Dupin.

These findings suggest that while employing the Male Gothic formula Poe disregarded the misogynistic ideas of the tradition and innovated it to a genre which can voice the previously suppressed experiences of women.

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