

Universidade Federal de Santa Catarina – UFSC
Centro de Comunicação e Expressão – CCE
Departamento de Língua e Literatura Estrangeiras – DLLE

The Apophatic Discourse in Four Horror Tales by Edgar Allan Poe and Howard

Phillips Lovecraft

Elisa Silva Ramos

Advisor: Professor Daniel Serravalle de Sá

Trabalho de Conclusão de Curso

Florianópolis

2017

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank my advisor, Professor Dr. Daniel Serravalle de Sá, for presenting me with the amazing concept of apophasis, for helping me turn it into this study and for his dedication towards my work.

I would also like to thank my parents, Rosemar da Silva and João Otaviano Ramos, and my grandparents, Maria Francisca da Silva and José da Silva (in memoriam), for supporting me through all my life and for being there when I needed the most.

A special thanks to my friends, who have been a part of this fantastic journey through the past three years of my life, and without whom I would not be here.

Lastly, I would like to thank my incredible boyfriend, Carlos Eduardo Schultz Xavier da Silveira, for being my biggest inspiration through the last five and a half years and for being my best friend through the next years to come.

Abstract

There is extensive literature comparing the works of Poe and Lovecraft. However, much of these works concern their uses of similar themes such as fear and insanity (Svitáková 2013; Harnušek 2013), while there is little discussion on how these authors utilized language to convey meaning. In this sense, the purpose of this study is to identify and analyze apophatic speech in passages from the horror short stories “The Black Cat” and “The Fall of the House of Usher,” by Poe, and “Dagon” and “The Call of Cthulhu,” by Lovecraft. For this work, apophatic speech is defined as a discourse which purposely denies or conceals information from the reader. In horror literature, this device can be utilized to provoke fear and a sense of mystery. Therefore, the main objective of this work is to understand and to compare the reasons why Poe and Lovecraft utilized apophatic speech in their horror tales.

Key words: Edgar Allan Poe, Howard Phillips Lovecraft, apophasis, apophatic speech.

Resumo

Há uma grande quantidade de literatura comparando os contos de Poe e Lovecraft. No entanto, muitos destes trabalhos discutem a similaridade dos temas presentes nestas histórias como medo e insanidade (Svitáková 2013; Harnušek 2013), e são poucas as obras que discutem como estes autores utilizaram a linguagem para transmitir significado. Desta maneira, o propósito deste estudo é identificar e analisar o discurso apofático em passagens nas histórias de terror “O Gato Preto” e “A Queda da Casa de Usher”, de Poe, e “Dagon” e “O Chamado de Cthulhu”, de Lovecraft. Para este trabalho, o discurso apofático é definido como um discurso que nega ou oculta informações do leitor propositalmente. Na literatura de horror, esta ferramenta pode ser utilizada para provocar medo ou uma sensação de mistério. Deste modo, o objetivo principal deste trabalho é entender e comparar os motivos de Poe e Lovecraft para utilizar o discurso apofático em seus contos de terror.

Palavras-chave: Edgar Allan Poe, Howard Phillips Lovecraft, apófase, discurso apofático.

Index

Introduction	6
Poe and Lovecraft: Masters of Horror Fiction	7
1. Review of Literature	9
1.1 Critical Perspectives on Poe and Lovecraft	9
1.2 Apophatic Discourse in Horror Literature	11
2. The Many Faces of Edgar Allan Poe	13
2.1 The Narrative of Edgar Allan Poe	13
2.2 Poe’s Literary Phases	14
2.3 Psychoanalytical Studies.....	16
3. Howard Phillips Lovecraft: Life and Legacy	17
3.1 Facts Concerning the Late Howard Phillips Lovecraft.....	18
3.2 Lovecraft’s Literary Phases	18
3.3 The Influence of Poe and Lovecraft’s Independence	20
4. Internal and External Struggles – The Short Stories of Poe and Lovecraft	22
4.1 Edgar Allan Poe’s Short Stories	22
4.1.1 Summary of “The Black Cat”	22
4.1.2 Summary of “The Fall of the House of Usher”	23
4.1.3 The Apophatic Speech in Passages from “The Black Cat” and “The Fall of the House of Usher”	24
4.2 Howard Phillips Lovecraft’s Short Stories	28

4.2.1 Summary of “Dagon”	28
4.2.2 Summary of “The Call of Cthulhu”	29
4.2.3 The Apophatic Speech in Passages from “Dagon” and “The Call of Cthulhu”	30
Final Remarks	35
References	36

Introduction

This study offers a discussion about uses of apophasis and apophatic discourse in a selection of short stories by Edgar Allan Poe and Howard Phillips Lovecraft, with the objective of drawing a parallel between the uses of this mode of speech in the horror narratives of these authors. The works which will be analyzed are *The Black Cat* and *The Fall of the House of Usher*, by Poe, and *Dagon* and *The Call of Cthulhu*, by Lovecraft.

The concept of apophasis is longstanding and has varied through time and area of knowledge. When discussing the term, Henderson (2012) brings to light some of its most common definitions along the years. Firstly, the term has been used as a synonym to negative Theology, i.e. the act of describing God by saying what he is not. Another meaning, related to Literature, is its association with a rhetorical device: irony, being in this case a humorous tool. Finally, there are some more recent attempts at defining the term, which are the most useful for this research. Generally speaking, these definitions categorize apophasis as a rhetorical device, used to bring up a subject by denying it or denying that it should be brought up at all (Etymonline, “Apophasis”; Henderson 35; Šmejkal 5).

Apophasis appears to be a less used or less known rhetorical device; however, it is frequently employed in Literature although critics have been slow to embrace it as a popular rhetorical device. In addition, a closer look into definitions of rhetorical devices, reveals other terms which are associated with apophasis, such as paralipsis (emphasizing the fact that information is being concealed)¹, and occultation (simply, concealment of information).² These terms are often interchangeable and so the definitions have become somewhat vague and obsolete.

Nowadays, apophasis is still connected to the idea of both emphasis/concealment of

¹ An example of paralipsis would be: The day was hideous, not to mention the rain!

² In some definitions, occultatio would simply be apophasis without any ironical component to it.

information and it is more commonly used by writers and speakers alike with the intention to ironize or criticize something or someone. Its presence is widely found as a humorous device in political speeches, such as in a 2016 speech from the then presidential candidate Donald Trump, when he playfully declared “I was going to say ‘dummy’ Bush; I won’t say it. I won’t say it,” in reference to one of his candidacy rivals, Jeb Bush (“Donald Trump Is Walking Into a Minefield, and He Can’t Stop Himself.” *NewRepublic.com*). In other words, Trump used apophasis as a discursive device to criticize his rival by keeping a light, humorous tone and attempting to dodge the topic. In horror literature, both Poe and Lovecraft have made extensive use of rhetoric devices, particularly of apophasis, in order to keep the whole facts unexplained to the reader. As it deviates from revealing the whole truth behind what is said or written, it can also be used as a device to incorporate mystery or to heighten the reader’s sense of fear, and these are the particular uses made by Poe and Lovecraft in their stories.

Poe and Lovecraft: Masters of Horror Fiction

Edgar Allan Poe (1809 – 1849) and Howard Phillips Lovecraft (1890 – 1937) are two of the most noteworthy writers of the supernatural horror literature. Their contributions to this fictional subgenre can be observed in the numerous references to their works, which can be found not only in literature but in many other types of media, such as movies and games.³ The influence of Poe in the horror fiction genre can also be observed in Lovecraft’s oeuvre: this has been explicitly stated by Lovecraft himself (Lovecraft 1040-98) and highlighted by scholars and fans alike (van Santvoort 2008; Gil 2010; Harnušek 2013):

To me, this is an untenable statement: Lovecraft, like every writer of fantasy and

³ Poe’s works have influenced many other artists, including in non-English speaking countries such as Baudelaire and Mallarmé, in France, and Jorge Luis Borges and Julio Cortázar, in Argentina; many of his stories have also been adapted into movies, such as Universal Studios’ *Murders in the Rue Morgue* (1932) and *The Black Cat* (1934). Lovecraft’s writings have also achieved their own status of recognition, influencing writers such as English authors Neil Gaiman and Alan Moore; his stories have also been adapted into games, such as Fantasy Flight Games’ board game *Eldritch Horror* (2013), and have served as inspiration for many videogames, e. g. Blizzard Entertainment’s 2004 online role-playing game *World of Warcraft*.

horror fiction subsequent to Poe, was necessarily influenced by the work of his predecessor – and to certain extent his work needs must be derivative in some slight sense. Actually, Lovecraft's homage to Poe in his essay *Supernatural Horror in Literature*, indicates a degree of appreciation and admiration which leaves no doubt as to the profound impression made upon him by the earlier master. ("Robert Bloch on Poe and Lovecraft." Bloch)⁴

Bloch (1917 – 1994), a distinguished writer of fiction himself,⁵ was heavily influenced by Lovecraft's tales, especially in his earliest writings, and recognized the influence of Poe in Lovecraft's stories. In the essay mentioned in the quotation above, Lovecraft wrote an entire chapter on Poe, offering a critical interpretation of his contributions to the supernatural horror literature and praising him as a pioneer of the modern characteristics of the genre, which Lovecraft himself used in his stories.

This first section of this work sought to introduce the different meanings of apophasis and the importance of Poe and Lovecraft to the world of horror fiction, as well as the influence of Poe on Lovecraft. The remainder of this study will be divided into five parts. The first chapter will discuss some theoretical texts concerning the influence of Poe on Lovecraft and the apophatic speech in Lovecraft's stories. The second and third chapters will present a few biographical facts in the life of Poe and Lovecraft as well as their literary phases, and some specificities concerning each author. The fourth section will present the short stories which were chosen for this study and analyze a few passages which contain apophasis. Lastly, the last section will conclude the study in light of the analysis of the short stories, comparing Poe and Lovecraft's use of the apophatic speech.

⁴ This article was transcribed from *Ambrosia* No. 2 (Aug. 1973) and can be found at *Alangullette.com*. See References.

⁵ Some of his most famous writings include the novels *Psycho* (1959), which was adapted by Alfred Hitchcock into a movie of the same name in 1960, and *American Gothic* (1974), which tells the story of a real life serial killer, H. H. Holmes, in fictional form.

1. Review of Literature

This section will be divided into two subsections. The first subsection focuses on recent works by new scholars about the influence of Poe on Lovecraft. The second subsection debates the apophatic discourse in literature and provides guidelines for the interpretation and understanding of the term.

1.1 Critical Perspectives on Poe and Lovecraft

Poe and Lovecraft belong to distinct generations of American writers and their works, produced in different centuries, have been studied throughout the decades under multiple theoretical and critical perspectives. Their short stories and characters have been dissected, in particular, by scholars who undertake psychoanalysis as a critical tool. Matters of fear and insanity often figure among some of the psychoanalytical aspects critics seek to highlight (Svitáková 2013; de Freitas 2011).

Furthermore, the distinctive levels of influence which Edgar Allan Poe's work has had on Howard Phillips Lovecraft's work have been studied by critics, such as S. T. Joshi, Ondřej Harnušek and Šárka Svitáková. It is often stated that Lovecraft's early writings bear a strong resemblance to Poe's, particularly in regard to the language employed by Lovecraft and the author's frequent use of adjectives. Harnušek's thesis *Lovecraft and Poe: Masters of The Macabre Of Providence* (2013) analyzes the lives and the fiction of both authors in order to show their points of juxtaposition but also their main differences. An example of the latter is Lovecraft's "tendency of getting rid of humour, leaving Earth to describe the insignificance of the human race, or showing that some knowledge is forbidden for a reason" (5-6).⁶ Another

⁶ This is in reference to Lovecraft's own words regarding Poe's body of work, which resulted in the first steering away from such practices: "Poe was by no means immune from defects and affectations. His pretence to profound and obscure scholarship, his blundering ventures in stilted and laboured pseudo-humour, and his often

distinction between Poe and Lovecraft includes the presence of a punishing fate in the lives of Lovecraft's characters, while Poe's characters are usually punished by their own degrading mental state (33).

Still according to Harnušek, there is a difference regarding the presence (or not) of women in their works, as in "Lovecraft did not like to use women in his stories and usually gives them only the roles of birth-givers... Poe, on the other hand, had a genuinely artistic use for women, which was, famously enough, the 'death of a beautiful woman...'" (36).

In relation to the denouement of the stories, on one hand, Poe's finales are often open-ended, leaving room for interpretation. Lovecraft, on the other hand, made sure to leave specific information regarding his stories' ultimate finales (26).

Harnušek's analysis relies on Lovecraft's personal matters in order to explain some characteristics of his work. For instance, the critic suggests that "Lovecraft's fear of cross-breeding and xenophobia" (34) is what encouraged him to write horror tales of humans mating with aliens. Lovecraft's biased opinions about non-Anglo-Americans have been widely discussed (Joshi 358-363; Farias 2015). Although the present study does not deny the presence of prejudice in Lovecraft's personal life, it chooses to steer away from such discussions.

Harnušek brings little information on the converging points between Lovecraft and Poe. Besides the most obvious comparisons involving the themes of horror, fear and mental instability, the thesis does not go into analysis of the common elements between the authors. Nevertheless, by analyzing characters, plots and even the titles of works by both writers, the critic makes a strong argument against the idea of Lovecraft having deliberately stolen from Poe's work.

Other studies have also worked with more specific themes related to psychoanalytical

vitriolic outbursts of critical prejudice must all be recognised and forgiven." (Lovecraft, "Supernatural Horror in Literature"1066)

aspects, such as the notion of fear. Svitáková's *Fear in the Fiction of Edgar Allan Poe and Howard Phillips Lovecraft* (2013) discusses Poe's and Lovecraft's conceptions of fear and how they chose to portray this sentiment in writing form, arguing for a more internal source of fear being present in Poe's short stories, coming from the characters' own mental struggles, while a more external, even otherworldly fear can be encountered in Lovecraft's plots. The author's conclusion is that, despite the obviousness of Poe's influence in Lovecraft's work, in the short stories belonging to the Cthulhu Mythos "Lovecraft evidently loosened the bonds tying him with Poe, finding his own way of writing, but he did not get rid of them completely" (Svitáková 65).

The critic argues for a central dichotomy in the works of Poe and Lovecraft which is related to the inward/outward as sources of fear. In other words, Svitáková identifies that the discursive construction of fear in Poe is related to mental processes, it is internally felt by the self, and often an expression of a guilty conscience. In Lovecraft, the notion of fear is linked to an external threat such as an alien invasion, the extinction of mankind and/or the cosmic loneliness of human beings in an infinite galaxy. In either case, the goal of these stories is to instigate the feeling of horror in its readers. Given this common objective, the possibility of forming a connection between Poe and Lovecraft's by means of their uses of the apophatic mode of speech is feasible. The following subsection will discuss some of the lexical choices that make up apophatic discourse in horror literature.

1.2 Apophatic Discourse in Horror Literature

The phenomenon of adjoining figures of speech such as apophasis, paralipsis and occultatio, which possess the common aspect of negation and denial of the full facts, calls for the necessity of a term which encompasses these very common devices which carry similar concepts, in spite of its technical differences. When used in Lovecraft's tales, for instance,

these negative rhetorical devices help to set the mood of fear and/or mystery in the story by concealing or denying information to the reader. In other words, the reader is left to fill in gaps of information with his or her own imagination.

Ondřej Šmejkal adopted the term apophatic discourse in his master thesis entitled *Azathoth Negative: H. P. Lovecraft and the Unrepresentable Vistas of Ontology* (2015). The author recognizes apophatic negation as being intrinsic to Lovecraft's Mythos. The critic also analyzes distinct lexical items and discursive strategies in Lovecraft's horror stories which refer to contrary or negative modes of reality. The egregious gaps or gaps in the text which are never really filled or answered; the insertion of so much information at the same time that the actual meaning gets lost in the influx; paradoxes, in which the information given to the reader is contradictory, making it difficult to understand, and apophasis itself.

Šmejkal argues that Lovecraft's use of a secondary first-person narrator allows this negative speech to be introduced to the reader at a slower pace, not making the tale too exaggerated and adding a sense of dread to the stories. For Šmejkal, all these devices contribute to Lovecraft's apophatic discourse: telling stories by keeping a lot of the information from being revealed.

Šmejkal's thesis shows how information is presented to the reader in multiple but negative, reluctant ways. However, Šmejkal was not able to find a consistent pattern in the use of apophatic mechanisms in his analysis: they either show up or not in each story, sometimes more predominantly, sometimes more subtly and sometimes even intertwined.

There has been much work on the subject of the influence of Poe on Lovecraft. However, there is still much to be analyzed and discussed, given the authors' extensive body of work. Given that the majority of studies on the area seem to be related to the common but limited themes of fear and insanity surrounding the short stories of Poe and Lovecraft, there is still considerable research to be done on the way these authors used language to convey

meaning and how Poe's use of language affected Lovecraft's work. Studies on apophasis in horror literature have been sparse. Šmejkal was able to provide a fruitful start to the subject but having focused on the discussion of negativity in speech, there is still room for exploration on how Lovecraft, and in the case of this study Poe, presented an apophatic discourse in some of their short stories.

Therefore, the analysis of the short stories by Poe and Lovecraft in this study will consider the term apophatic discourse in relation to the concealment of information resulted from the inability of the characters to narrate the whole facts, and will identify and analyze different characteristics in the texts which fall under the category of apophatic and/or negative in order to consider the discourse in the stories as whole by use of significant passages.

This chapter discussed a few past theoretical works concerning the influence of Poe on Lovecraft and Lovecraft's apophatic speech. The next chapter will present some historical and contextual facts surrounding Poe's life and oeuvre.

2. The Many Faces of Edgar Allan Poe

This section will be divided into three subsections. Firstly, some main facts about Poe's life will be presented. Secondly, Poe's oeuvre will be categorized and discussed. Lastly, some issues regarding the biographical studies about Poe will be analyzed.

2.1 The Narrative of Edgar Allan Poe

Poe lived a rather unfortunate life. The loss of his parents and other family members coupled with his life-long struggle to support himself financially proved to be a challenge which Poe was ever barely able to overcome (Quinn 225-27). His enthusiasm in relation to writing was shown at an early age but received no encouragement from his adopting father. Furthermore, Poe had a hard time establishing himself as a renowned author. His habit of

writing aggressive criticism towards fellow writers bought him a bad reputation as a critic and caused animosity between him and other authors. After his death, one of these animosities, Rufus Griswold, wrote severe remarks on Poe, portraying him as nothing more than a drunk, and spread a very negative image of Poe through his first biography.

While Poe had complications with consolidating a good reputation among English speakers, it was in France that his notoriety started to cement (Quinn 683-4). Charles Baudelaire was a great fan of Poe's work, and was responsible for writing some of the best translations of his work and for portraying Poe as a *maudit* (damned, cursed) poet in a non-derogatory way, relating to his artistry. While some of Baudelaire's remarks were ill-regarded because of his unrealistic portrayal of America, it is via Baudelaire (and Mallarmé, Machado de Assis, Fernando Pessoa, and Jorge Luis Borges) that we look at Poe's ascension towards a recognizable literary artist (Sá 2016).

This section presented a sociohistorical reading of Poe's life. The next subsection will discuss Poe's stories and categorize them into distinct groups.

2.2 Poe's Literary Phases

Poe's oeuvre consists mainly of theoretical texts, poetry and short stories, which deal with themes such as death, obsession, fear, insanity and the supernatural. The father of the "modern horror-story in its final and perfected state" (Lovecraft, "Supernatural Horror in Literature 1065) has influenced not only the latter, but other great authors along the years, such as Charles Baudelaire, Arthur Conan Doyle, and Stephen King.

It was only at the beginning of the 20th century, about a hundred years after Poe's death, that his tales started to raise his reputation as an exemplary writer of short stories after years of being mostly recognized as a poet:

With the celebration of the centenary of Poe's birth in 1909, his short stories began to

achieve renewed attention. Reflecting on the numerous centenary tributes that had appeared in the London press during the week of the centenary, Arnold Bennett, writing the following week, observed, “Last week we all admitted that Poe had understood the ‘art of the short story.’ (His name had not occurred to us before.)” (Hayes 3)

The interest for Poe’s narratives grew exponentially following this event. Nowadays, it proves a hard task to find a reader who has never read or at least indirectly heard of Poe’s narratives, and especially those in the realm of horror literature. With subjects ranging from the macabre, the supernatural and human psychology, Poe was able to attract his own crowd of followers and remains one of the most influential writers of the 19th century.

In *The Philosophy of Composition* (1846), Poe writes about his creative process, bringing a discussion on the importance of the length of a literary text: “If any literary work is too long to be read at one sitting, we must be content to dispense with the immensely important effect derivable from unity of impression” (Poe, “The Philosophy of Composition”), meaning that smaller texts are able to bring a certain intensity to the story, something longer texts lack. Even if somewhat farfetched, Poe’s essay “mark[s] him as the first significant theorist of the modern short story” (Ljungquist 19).

In his *Supernatural Horror in Literature*, Lovecraft dedicates a chapter to Poe, praising his work in multiple ways. In the essay, Lovecraft attempts to separate Poe’s work into four different groups:

Poe’s tales, of course, fall into several classes; some of which contain a purer essence of spiritual horror than others. [1] The tales of logic and ratiocination, forerunners of the modern detective story, are not to be included at all in weird literature; [2] whilst certain others, probably influenced considerably by Hoffmann, possess an extravagance which relegates them to the borderline of the grotesque. [3] Still a third

group deal with abnormal psychology and monomania in such a way as to express terror but not weirdness. [4] A substantial residuum, however, represent the literature of supernatural horror in its acutest form; and give their author a permanent and unassailable place as deity and fountain-head of all modern diabolic fiction. (Lovecraft, "Supernatural Horror in Literature" 1067)

In the first group we have tales of mystery and crime, such as *The Murders in the Rue Morgue* and *The Purloined Letter*. The second group contains texts that are regarded as exaggerated or even bizarre by some, and this characteristic stretches into many of his stories. *The Masque of the Red Death* and *Berenice* are examples of these texts, even if not exclusively. In the third group we find stories of obsession and psychological struggle, such as in *The Black Cat* and *The Tell-Tale Heart*. Finally, in the last group, we have the stories which enchanted Lovecraft so much, tales of the weird and the uncanny. *MS. Found in a Bottle* and *The Facts in the Case of M. Valdemar* fit into this category.

This subchapter analyzed Poe's body of work and how his stories can be divided into different categories concerning their themes. The next subchapter will discuss the controversy surrounding some of the biographical studies on Poe.

2.3 Psychoanalytical Studies

Poe's writing style, discussed by him in his essay "The Philosophy of Composition", is often considered to be a response to his tumultuous life. Griswold's biography of Poe helped to spread this idea, and soon enough the image of Poe became inseparable from his tormented characters and upsetting themes.

According to Harnušek, for example, Poe's miserable and isolated life, filled with loss and melancholy, led him to express his emotions in writing, and these feelings deeply rooted into his work could just be what attracted the attention of Lovecraft so much, given his

similarly suffered hardships: “Poe was a figure that not only Baudelaire but also Lovecraft could see connections with. They were different, they were out of pace with their time, they were not properly understood; they were as weird as their literature” (42).

This psychoanalytical view of Poe is reminiscent of past works, such as John Robertson’s *Edgar A. Poe: A Psychopathic Study* (1923) or Marie Bonaparte’s famous biography, *The Life and Works of Edgar Allan Poe: A Psycho-analytic Interpretation* (1949), which shows that the damage caused by Griswold’s biography in Poe’s image still remains in some works to this day.

Whether Poe shared his characters’ pathological struggles, we cannot say. However, different branches of studies regarding Poe point out to the presence of comical and parodic elements in his work, especially in some of his lesser known stories. This contradiction in Poe’s oeuvre could be derived from a will to parody the writing style of some of the magazines of the time, such as *Blackwood’s Magazine* (1817-1980) (Sá 11). In support to this argument, Baudelaire believed that Poe was an artist who went against the sentimental literary practices of his time, while Quinn affirms that if Poe had succumbed to these same realist practices “he would have made a better living, and would now be forgotten” (694). In any way, it is safe to say that Poe’s writing style helped him achieve the fame and recognition he deserved.

This section discussed some main details about Poe’s life, including his body of work, and controversies surrounding some of the biographical studies about Poe and his tales. The next chapter will discuss Lovecraft in a similar manner.

3. Howard Phillips Lovecraft: Life and Legacy

This chapter will be divided into three parts. Firstly, some main facts about Lovecraft’s life will be presented. Secondly, Poe’s influence on Lovecraft will be analyzed.

Lastly, Lovecraft's stories will be categorized and discussed.

3.1 Facts Concerning the Late Howard Phillips Lovecraft

Lovecraft became interested in literature at a very early age, and at five years old he started to produce his own work. Some of his earliest writings include a substantial amount of poetry, essays and treatises on scientific subjects such as chemistry and astronomy: science was one of his greatest interests throughout his life (Joshi 28). It was only later that he started writing the stories that made him famous, having been influenced both by his childhood love for Greek mythology and *Arabian Nights*, as well as his readings of pulp fiction magazines such as the *Pluck and Luck* (1898) series and the *Jesse James Stories* (1901) publications (Joshi 27-8).

Lovecraft experienced great turmoil in his personal life. Having lost his father as a child, he was left to be raised by his mother, grandfather and two aunts. After the death of his grandfather, the family went through serious financial issues (Joshi 46-7). These difficulties would haunt Lovecraft for the rest of his life, while he vainly tried to pursue an income from his writing alone, which in some ways parallels Poe's struggles. Furthermore, Lovecraft himself had been a child prone to sickness, having missed much of his school years because of it. This fact, coupled with the loss of more of his family members, contributed to a life of misery and isolation.

This subsection discussed a few main facts concerning Lovecraft's personal life. The next subsection will present Lovecraft's oeuvre and categorize it into distinct groups, similarly to Poe's stories.

3.2 Lovecraft's Literary Phases

Lovecraft's body of work is made of essays, poetry, novellas and, more recognizably, short stories, which range through themes such as fear, insanity, fate, the supernatural and the

cosmos. Lovecraft was also a prolific writer of letters, his biographers S. T. Joshi and L. Sprague de Camp estimate that a hundred thousand letters were written by Lovecraft during his life, only about a fifth of these letters survived the test of time (“Lovecraft’s Letters”).

His “Poe” pieces comprise the beginning of his career as a writer, and are denominated as such because of their extensive stylistic connections to Poe’s work. In stories such as *The Tomb* and *The Outsider* the reader is presented with characters undergoing interior, psychological struggles (van Santvoort 14), a first-person narrator, frequent use of adjectives and a focus on narration resulting in a lack of dialogues (Joshi 108).

His “Dunsany” pieces comprise his collection of “dreamland stories... that do not necessarily share a central theme that informs their plots, but rather are connected via their diegetic setting” (Šmejkal 42). These stories tend towards the fantastic rather than the horrific. *The Quest of Iranon* and *Celephaïs* are examples of these tales, narrated in first or third person in order to keep focus on the psychedelic, dreamland images which make the reader wonder between what is real and what is fantasy (Šmejkal 43). The use of apophasis is less common in these tales because of their very descriptive nature.

As for his third phase, Derleth created a term much accepted today to define this set of stories – the Cthulhu Mythos. As opposed to the previously mentioned “Dunsany” tales, these stories contain the bulk of Lovecraft’s apophatic discourse because of their focus on mystery, horror and occultation. To this day, there is no critical consensus of how to properly summarize the Mythos; according to Lovecraft himself:

Now all my tales are based on the fundamental premise that common human laws and interests and emotions have no validity or significance in the vast cosmos-at-large. To me there is nothing but puerility in a tale in which the human form—and the local human passions and conditions and standards—are depicted as native to other worlds

or other universes. To achieve the essence of real externality, whether of time or space or dimension, one must forget that such things as organic life, good and evil, love and hate, and all such local attributes of a negligible and temporary race called mankind, have any existence at all. (*Selected Letters II* 150)

Although Lovecraft attributes these characteristics to all of his tales, they can be more directly observed in the stories pertaining to the Cthulhu Mythos. The Mythos nowadays is comprised not only of Lovecraft's writings, such as *The Call of Cthulhu* and *Dagon*, but also of tales from other writers such as Derleth, who felt the need to continue creating stories in this universe so intently created by Lovecraft.

This subchapter discussed the three phases which comprise Lovecraft's oeuvre and the characteristics that define them. The next subchapter will discuss further the influence which Poe had on Lovecraft and how the latter was able to develop his personal writing style.

3.3 The Influence of Poe and Lovecraft's Independence

While Lovecraft himself was not well known during his time, his work managed to endure with the help of his peers, especially author August Derleth (Šmejkal 21), a correspondent and admirer of his writings. Today, his stories have achieved worldwide recognition and popularity. His work is usually divided into three different phases: his "Poe" pieces, his "Dunsany" pieces and the Cthulhu Mythos. In regard to this categorization Lovecraft himself playfully said "There are my 'Poe' pieces & my 'Dunsany' pieces – but alas – where are my Lovecraft pieces?" (*Selected Letters II* 315).

In chapter seven of his Lovecraft biography, scholar S. T. Joshi debates the "dominant influence" of Poe on Lovecraft's early writings, comparing Lovecraft's initial style to that of Poe:

In particular, the idiom Lovecraft evolved in his early tales — dense, a little overheated, laced with archaic and recondite terms, almost wholly lacking in ‘realistic’ character portrayal, and almost entirely given over to exposition and narration, with a near complete absence of dialogue — is clearly derived from Poe. (Joshi 108)

This is not to say that Lovecraft merely copied Poe’s style. Having later managed to establish himself as a writer of the weird fiction genre, Lovecraft was able to develop his own style.

One of the themes that Lovecraft explored in his stories and what most defines him as a writer of his own genre is cosmicism, the philosophy present in so many of his tales and which allowed him to surpass from Poe’s early influence. According to Joshi,

Cosmicism is at once a metaphysical position (an awareness of the vastness of the universe in both space and time), an ethical position (an awareness of the insignificance of human beings within the realm of the universe), and an aesthetic position (a literary expression of this insignificance, to be effected by the minimizing of human character and the display of the titanic gulfs of space and time. (Joshi 182)

This philosophy is especially present in Lovecraft’s tales of the Cthulhu Mythos, where we find the presence of cosmic beings which are far older and far more advanced than the human race. Lovecraft’s cosmic horror imposes fear on its readers because their characters’ undergo a realization of the vastness of the universe and humanity’s insignificance, a very real fear considering nowadays technological advances in astronomy. This sense of abandonment is then transported to the reader, who begins to see the reality behind Lovecraft’s fiction.

This section discussed a few facts concerning Lovecraft’s life and oeuvre, as well as the influence of Poe’s work in the latter and how Lovecraft was able to overcome this early predominance. The next section will present the stories chosen for this study and analyze some passages where the apophatic speech is prominent.

4. Internal and External Struggles – The Short Stories of Poe and Lovecraft

This section briefly summarizes the four short stories chosen for this study and analyzes some key passages regarding the presence of apophatic speech.

4.1 Edgar Allan Poe's Short Stories

This subsection summarizes the plotlines of Poe's short stories, "The Fall of the House of Usher" and "The Black Cat," and analyzes two passages of each tale which contain apophatic speech.

4.1.1 Summary of "The Black Cat"

"The Black Cat" was first published in 1843 in the *United States Saturday Post*. It tells the story of a man who had a passion for animals ever since he was a child. As an adult, he and his wife had many pets, and his favorite was a large black cat named Pluto. However, after he starts drinking heavily, his behavior changes. He becomes violent and lashes out on his own pets, killing them all until none are left except for Pluto. One night while drunk he proceeds to attack Pluto as well, and ends up cutting one of the cat's eyes out with a knife. Although he does feel certain remorse, the narrator cannot avoid being overtaken by "the spirit of PERVERSENESS" (Poe "The Black Cat" 309), and eventually he hangs Pluto from a tree.

That same night, their house burns down to the ground, with only a single wall left standing. In the wall, a strange apparition forms: the shape of a huge black cat with a rope around the neck. The man cannot escape the image in the wall, and is haunted by it. One night, drunk as usual, the narrator discovers a new black cat which resembled Pluto, except for a smudge of white on its fur. While at first he is very fond of the cat, the man eventually comes to hate this animal, and he discovers that it also had an eye missing, as Pluto did. He

also notices that the white patch of fur on this new cat has shaped itself into a gallows, a structure used for hanging.

Sometime later, as he worked on his cellar with the help of his wife, the man comes to a fit of rage after almost tripping on the cat and attempts to take the animal's life with an axe. When his wife interferes, he buries the axe in her skull instead. He proceeds to hide the body by entombing it inside the walls of his house. After a few days the police come to investigate the disappearance of his wife. Confident that he was able to hide the body properly, the man taps on the wall as if to show how solid the structure of the house is. Suddenly, loud cries are heard from inside the wall. Finally, the policemen take down the wall, and the body is discovered, as is the black cat.

4.1.2 Summary of "The Fall of the House of Usher"

The tale "The Fall of the House of Usher" was first published in 1839 in the September issue of *Burton's Gentleman's Magazine*. It tells the story of an unnamed man who receives a letter from Roderick Usher, a childhood friend, telling of an "acute bodily illness – of a mental disorder" (Poe "The Fall of the House of Usher 97) that afflicted him, and requesting for his friends' assistance. Arriving in the house, the narrator feels an unexplainable "sense of insufferable gloom" (Poe "The Fall of the House of Usher 95) directed at both the outside and the inside sickening appearance of the house. The front wall showed a fissure extending from the roof all the way to the floor which goes at first unnoticed by the man, but overall the house still looked like a solid construction.

Roderick lives with his twin sister Madeline, who is also sick from an incurable disease. Soon enough Madeline passes away, and Roderick decides to tomb her inside the house, afraid that Madeline's doctors will want to recover the body for further investigation of the disease that killed her. Roderick is much affected by his sister's death and one night, when

both the narrator and Roderick cannot fall asleep, Usher comes to his friend for assistance. While the man attempts to calm Usher by reading to him from a book, both men start to hear sounds coming from the house. Roderick confesses that he has been hearing those sounds for a few days now, and that he is afraid they might have buried Madeline alive. Suddenly, the door opens with the force of the wind, and Madeline is found at the door, with blood covering her clothes from the struggle to leave her tomb. She violently throws herself at her brother, who dies from the terror caused by the realization. The narrator eventually flees the house and observes the fissure at the front wall widen and bring the structure to a crumble, burying the house of Usher with it.

4.1.3 *The Apophatic Speech in Passages from “The Black Cat” and “The Fall of the House of Usher”*

In the very beginning of *The Black Cat* we find apophatic speech when the narrator talks about his sanity. Being the first paragraph of the story, the negations set a mysterious tone to the work by introducing the narrative without giving the reader much detail on what is to come, manifesting a feeling of mystery:

For the most wild, yet most homely narrative which I am about to pen, I neither expect nor solicit belief. Mad indeed would I be to expect it, in a case where my very senses reject their own evidence. Yet, mad am I not – and very surely do I not dream. But tomorrow I die, and to-day I would unburthen my soul. My immediate purpose is to place before the world, plainly, succinctly, and without comment, a series of mere household events. In their consequences, these events have terrified – have tortured – have destroyed me. Yet I will not attempt to expound them. (Poe “The Black Cat” 306)

In the example above it can be observed that the author used negativity in many

instances of his speech: “I neither expect nor solicit belief;” “Yet, mad am I not;” “Yet I will not attempt to expound them.” The narrator’s denial regarding his madness is contradicted by a character who is clearly suffering from lunacy, a fact confirmed by the narrative itself. The narrator sees his own mind and personality be heavily altered with the help of his constant drinking. However, when he commits the crime of killing his wife, there is no mention of him being drunk. This suggests that although the alcohol was a trigger to some of the atrocities he committed, the changes in him were more internal and related to his own sanity, not only a consequence of his drinking. Furthermore, the negations in this paragraph manage to make the narrator’s madness seem even more intense, since he cannot even recognize it.

As mentioned in the previous section, Svitáková (2013) argues that the sources of fear in Poe’s stories are predominantly internal, related to the characters’ own mind and sanity, or lack of it (61), and *The Black Cat* is an example of this. The constant fear of losing your own mind haunts the story and is transported to the reader. In another passage from the tale, the narrator uses apophasis while attempting to describe a feeling. After killing his wife, the man is unable to find the black cat which caused his rage, and presents us with the following narrative:

It is impossible to describe, or to imagine, the deep, the blissful sense of relief which the absence of the detested creature occasioned in my bosom. It did not make its appearance during the night -- and thus for one night at least, since its introduction into the house, I soundly and tranquilly slept; aye, slept even with the burden of murder upon my soul! (Poe “The Black Cat” 315)

In this passage apophasis manifests when the man attempts to describe the way he feels. He says he is not able to properly describe this “sense of relief”, but immediately after tells us how he was finally able to “soundly and tranquilly” sleep after so much time. The use of apophasis here intensifies the feeling of relief which the man felt after the disappearance of

the cat because even the man's own words would not be able to fully explain it. Furthermore, the insanity of the character makes itself evident again in this passage. It is not the death of his wife that haunts him but his obsession with the creature and the presence of apophasis here assures us of the immensity of this obsession. If this feeling of relief was so intense that he could not describe it properly, so would his obsession with the cat be as well.

Both of these passages suggest that Poe made use of the apophatic speech in order to intensify this internal sense of fear in his stories. By utilizing negation he was able to aggravate the man's lunacy by making him unaware of his own craziness even when confronted with his own atrocities, and by suggesting that the man could not describe his own feelings properly.

In this sense, the apophatic speech is being associated with the insanity of the characters in *The Fall of the House of Usher* as well. The mental disorder which overcomes Roderick is expressed in the story through his paintings and musical improvisations, which the narrator has some trouble grasping:

I shall ever bear about me a memory of the many solemn hours I thus spent alone with the master of the House of Usher. Yet I should fail in any attempt to convey an idea of the exact character of the studies, or of the occupations, in which he involved me, or led me the way. An excited and highly distempered ideality threw a sulphureous lustre over all. His long improvised dirges will ring forever in my ears. Among other things, I hold painfully in mind a certain singular perversion and amplification of the wild air of the last waltz of Von Weber. From the paintings over which his elaborate fancy brooded, and which grew, touch by touch, into vaguenesses at which I shuddered the more thrillingly, because I shuddered knowing not why; --from these paintings (vivid as their images now are before me) I would in vain endeavour to educe more than a small portion which should lie within the compass of merely written words. (Poe "The

Fall of the House of Usher” 103-4)

In this excerpt, negation manifests itself a few times. The narrator tells us that he cannot recall his time with Roderick that well and then proceeds to speak of his experiences with Roderick’s creations nevertheless. This could suggest that the narrator is having trouble remembering the exact facts, evidenced by the “sulphureous lustre” over his memories, but also that Roderick’s artistic notions were beyond his comprehension. The narrator “shuddered knowing not why” because Roderick’s music and paintings were a representation of his sickening mind, something his sane friend could not sympathize with. In another passage, the narrator observes another peculiar moment with Roderick:

This opinion, in its general form, was that of the sentience of all vegetable things. But, in his disordered fancy, the idea had assumed a more daring character, and trespassed, under certain conditions, upon the kingdom of inorganization. I lack words to express the full extent, or the earnest *abandon* of his persuasion. The belief, however, was connected (as I have previously hinted) with the gray stones of the home of his forefathers... (Poe “The Fall of the House of Usher” 106-7)

In this second occasion apophasis is used again in order to intensify Roderick’s actions. The narrator claims to not be able to fully express Usher’s “persuasion”, but the paragraph continues on to present all of Roderick’s arguments for his own theory. The use of negation here seems to suggest that the arguments themselves were not the most important aspect of Roderick’s persuasive manner, but perhaps the way with which he defended his arguments, his tone of voice, the expression on his face or maybe even his gestures, and these characteristics are concealed from the reader. This paragraph also evidences Roderick’s decaying mind as he vehemently goes from being persuasive to abandoning his unorganized arguments. Ultimately, Usher’s loss of sanity is what prevents his friend from detailing Roderick’s feelings and actions, since he cannot fully comprehend their reasoning.

This subsection discussed the context of production and summarized two of Poe's short stories, *The Black Cat* and *The Fall of the House of Usher*, analyzing two passages from each story which contain apophatic speech. The next section will focus on Lovecraft's tales chosen for analysis.

4.2 Howard Phillips Lovecraft's Short Stories

This subsection summarizes the plotlines of Lovecraft's short stories, "The Call of Cthulhu" and "Dagon," and analyzes two passages of each tale which contain apophatic speech.

4.2.1 Summary of "Dagon"

"Dagon" was first published in 1919 in the November edition of *The Vagrant*. It reads as a suicide note written by a man "under an appreciable mental strain" (Lovecraft "Dagon" 3), and it tells the story which drove the narrator into this agony. During World War I, the ship he was in was captured by the Germans. After he was able to escape, he ends up in a horrifying, slimy land mass, "putrid with the carcasses of decaying fish, and of other less describable things" (Lovecraft "Dagon" 4). After waiting for a few days the land became less slimy, and now that he could on it decided to explore the region to look for help.

He eventually comes to an object, a monolith covered in hieroglyphs which resembled aquatic creatures, some of which the man had observed in decomposition when first arriving in the region, but which were "unknown to the modern world" (Lovecraft "Dagon" 7). He also discovers some carvings in the stone which seemed to represent humans, but with fish-like features in the face and in the body. The sheer size of the monolith frightens the man, but the drawings in the stone truly terrify him.

Suddenly, a sea-like creature begins to emerge out of the water surrounding the

monolith. Scared to death, the man flees the scene. He comes to himself again in a hospital. Of his escape he remembers little, but he recalls singing and laughing oddly during his run. Haunted by the existence of these creatures and by the possibility that one day they might come to the surface and overtake mankind, the man finally runs to his window as he hears the slippery sound of a huge body outside of his door.

4.2.2 Summary of “*The Call of Cthulhu*”

“The Call of Cthulhu” was first published in 1928 in the February edition of the *Weird Tales* magazine. It is separated in three parts, The Horror in Clay, The Tale of Inspector Legrasse and The Madness from the Sea, and it reads as a manuscript “found among the papers of the late Francis Wayland Thurston” (Lovecraft “The Call of Cthulhu” 124). In the first part, Thurston tells of a box he found among the documents of his deceased grand-uncle, Angell, filled with papers and a sculpture of a winged, tentacled creature. The statue is the creation of a certain man named Wilcox, who brought the sculpture to Angell to analyze the hieroglyphs that covered it. Wilcox had been having nightmares of strange places after an earthquake, and had sculpted the statue out of one of these nightmares. Angell studies Wilcox’s narratives for a while, but ceases to do it after the nightmares suddenly stop. However, Angell continued to research the matter and found out that many other people had had the same recurrent dreams.

Part two of the story tells of an earlier encounter of Angell with another sculpture resembling Wilcox’s. A certain Inspector Legrasse had brought in to the American Archaeological Society a statue captured during a raid in a voodoo circle. When interrogating the participants of the cult the Inspector learned a detailed narrative of the gods they worshipped, the Great Old Ones, who would one day “rise again when the stars were right.” (Lovecraft “The Call of Cthulhu” 143)

The last part of the story tells a narrative of Thurston himself. While visiting a museum, he finds a newspaper with a story of a man who was the sole survivor of a voyage. The man was also found with one of the statues previously mentioned. Thurston attempts to speak to this man, called Johansen, but when arriving at his house, receives the news of his death. However, the seaman left a manuscript behind telling the tale of his voyage. While exploring uncharted land, the crew found architectural structures with strange geometry and angles which did not seem to follow human logic. They manage to open a door, and out of the opening came out the creature of the statues, Cthulhu himself. Johansen manages to hit the monster with the boat and Cthulhu dissolves into a green mist, to return yet again someday. The story ends with Thurston's belief that he will be the next to die because of his knowledge, hoping that the box will never be found again lest someone will put the pieces back together.

4.2.3 The Apophatic Speech in Passages from "Dagon" and "The Call of Cthulhu"

The stories pertaining to the Cthulhu Mythos, as defined by Derleth, concern the entities known as the Great Old Ones, indescribable cosmic beings ultimately indifferent to humanity and the universe in where it is contained. These stories are usually written in "secondary first-person narration, as the first-person mode would make the story too unintelligible, the third-person omniscient too revealing and the third-person limited too disengaged" (Šmejkal 43), and touch on the subjects of cosmicism, externality (as opposed to Poe's characters, who suffer from internal struggles) and negativity.

In "The Call of Cthulhu," apophasis is also used as a tool for intensifying the sources of fear in the tale. However, as in opposition to Poe, Lovecraft's sources of horror and fear are predominantly external, usually coming from other characters in the stories (Svitáková 17), and especially in the stories pertaining to the Cthulhu Mythos, coming frequently from the cosmic beings known as the Great Old Ones. In a passage from the short story, the narrator

attempts to describe the great Cthulhu:

Poor Johansen's handwriting almost gave out when he wrote of this. Of the six men who never reached the ship, he thinks two perished of pure fright in that accursed instant. The Thing cannot be described – there is no language for such abysses of shrieking and immemorial lunacy, such eldritch contradictions of all matter, force, and cosmic order. A mountain walked or stumbled. God! What wonder that across the earth a great architect went mad, and poor Wilcox raved with fever in that telepathic instant? The Thing of the idols, the green, sticky spawn of the stars, had awaked to claim his own. (Lovecraft 377)

The author uses apophasis here when stating that “the Thing cannot be described” and immediately after attempting to describe it as “a mountain [who] walked or stumbled,” a “green, sticky spawn of the stars.” This suggests to the reader that no matter the description given by the narrator he will never truly be able to describe the creature by using “human” words (Šmejkal 52), and could be a mechanism to increase the reader's sense of dread. Furthermore, the mention of the idol in this passage calls out to the previous descriptions of the statues in the narrative, and allows the reader to imagine the creature at a greater length:

If I say that my somewhat extravagant imagination yielded simultaneous pictures of an octopus, a dragon, and a human caricature, I shall not be unfaithful to the spirit of the thing. A pulpy, tentacled head surmounted a grotesque and scaly body with rudimentary wings; but it was the *general outline* of the whole which made it most shockingly frightful. Behind the figure was a vague suggestion of a Cyclopean architectural background. (Lovecraft “The Call of Cthulhu” 127)

The act of leaving these gaps suggests that even the most detailed accounts of the facts and the characters pertaining to these stories would still not be faithful to reality, not because

the narrators' themselves cannot recall these images properly, but because the feelings brought up by these experiences were too intense and unfamiliar as to be described by any pre-existing words or sentences. The character's necessity to compare the sculpture's features to animals and beings known to mankind, such as an octopus or a dragon, comes from the necessity to comprehend the monster and control the character's fear, but the suggestion that these comparisons are not enough in fact shows that these characters were not in control of their own minds.

This negativity in speech also manifests itself in the gaps of information left in some of the passages of the story:

Meanwhile no more must be told. There was a secret which even torture could not extract. Mankind was not absolutely alone among the conscious things of earth, for shapes came out of the dark to visit the faithful few. But these were not the Great Old Ones. No man had ever seen the Old Ones. The carven idol was great Cthulhu, but none might say whether or not the others were precisely like him. No one could read the old writing now, but things were told by word of mouth. The chanted ritual was not the secret—that was never spoken aloud, only whispered. The chant meant only this: "In his house at R'lyeh dead Cthulhu waits dreaming." (Lovecraft "The Call of Cthulhu" 141)

In this case, the mention of a secret which is never revealed serves as a mechanism to intensify the narrative's foreboding. Even after the worshippers' previously mentioned detailed narrative of the Cthulhu cult, there is still more which the cultist will not share with humanity. Furthermore, the passage itself is filled with the denial of information: no one had ever seen these monsters and the old writings could not be read anymore. This represents that even the worshippers, who had the most knowledge of the Great Old Ones, did not have complete control over the situation. The unpredictability of these great monsters is certainly a

cause for fear.

In “Dagon” apophasis is used similarly by the narrator when attempting to describe his feelings towards the images he sees:

Though one might well imagine that my first sensation would be of wonder at so prodigious and unexpected a transformation of scenery, I was in reality more horrified than astonished; for there was in the air and in the rotting soil a sinister quality which chilled me to the very core. The region was putrid with the carcasses of decaying fish, and of other less describable things which I saw protruding from the nasty mud of the unending plain. Perhaps I should not hope to convey in mere words the unutterable hideousness that can dwell in absolute silence and barren immensity. There was nothing within hearing, and nothing in sight save a vast reach of black slime; yet the very completeness of the stillness and the homogeneity of the landscape oppressed me with a nauseating fear. (Lovecraft “Dagon” 4-5)

In this passage the narrator declares he will not be able to express properly his emotions, but the rest of the paragraph speaks of his fear, horror and astonishment towards the land mass he encountered. Once again we see the character’s descriptions of his feelings not being enough to convey the true horror he feels. In the case of this passage, the narrator’s fears are directed not only towards the appearance of the place, but also towards the sheer emptiness of it. The complete silence of this area frightens the narrator because it does not belong to his world: wherever there is mankind there is sound, and this place appears to have been forgotten by time. The narrator’s horror directed at the “less describable things” in the region contributes to this argument. The contrast with the “decaying fish” shows the true impossibility of the narrator to compare the “things” to any living being, while the use of the “thing” itself suggests an impossibility to even define them as animals, a truly terrifying

thought.

Further in the story there is another passage where the apophatic speech is used to intensify the reader's fear:

I think that these things were supposed to depict men—at least, a certain sort of men; though the creatures were shewn(sic) disporting like fishes in the waters of some marine grotto, or paying homage at some monolithic shrine which appeared to be under the waves as well. Of their faces and forms I dare not speak in detail; for the mere remembrance makes me grow faint. Grotesque beyond the imagination of a Poe or a Bulwer, they were damnably human in general outline despite webbed hands and feet, shockingly wide and flabby lips, glassy, bulging eyes, and other features less pleasant to recall. (Lovecraft, “Dagon” 7)

The narrators' fear in this passage is directed at his discovery of human-like creatures carved in the monolith. This fact, coupled together with his previous realization that the stone was made by “living and thinking creatures,” (Lovecraft “Dagon” 6) indicates that the carved beings exist and perhaps even live in this place. But what truly terrifies the narrator is the fact that they do not look like any creatures known to human kind. Again, his comparison of the creatures with humans is an attempt to comprehend the beings and control his own fear, and to bring certain rationality to his discovery. The narrator does not want to speak of the creatures' features in detail, but immediately after describes some of their physical characteristics. This indicates that the beings must have features which did not look like anything the man (or any other human) had ever seen. The possibility of the existence of another sentient race on Earth is too much for the man to bear by himself, especially after he realizes how ancient the monolith must be.

This subsection summarized two of Lovecraft's tales, “Dagon” and “The Call of

Cthulhu,” and analyzed two passages from each according to the presence of apophatic speech. The next section will bring the final remarks on Poe and Lovecraft’s uses of the apophatic speech by comparing them.

Final Remarks

This study intended to identify and analyze apophatic speech in passages from “The Black Cat” and “The Fall of the House of Usher,” by Edgar Allan Poe, and “Dagon” and “The Call of Cthulhu,” from Howard Phillips Lovecraft. For this work, the term “apophatic speech” was defined in terms of negativity and concealment of information from the reader, which represents the specific use of apophasis in horror literature.

It was argued that, in the case of Poe’s short stories, the sources of fear are predominantly internal, related to the characters’ inner thoughts and mental health. In the case of “The Black Cat” and “The Fall of the House of Usher,” the sensation of terror comes from the narrator’s and Roderick Usher’s degrading minds, respectively. In this sense, apophatic speech was used when attempting to describe these characters’ feelings, as well as the characters’ actions resulted from these feelings.

In the case of “Dagon” and “The Call of Cthulhu,” it was discussed that, as opposed to Poe, the sources of fear in Lovecraft’s tales are mainly external, related to the characters’ interactions with the world around them and with other characters, such as the monolith in “Dagon” and the monsters in both stories. Apophatic speech was used in these tales when attempting to describe these objects and monsters, as well as the characters’ actions derived from interacting with them.

Although there is a difference regarding the sources of fear in Poe and Lovecraft’s tales, it can be seen that in both cases apophatic speech was used to increase the sense of fear expressed through these narratives. Furthermore, in all the short stories apophasis was used in

passages which are mainly descriptive. In the case of Poe's tales, the characters' inability to describe feelings is related to lack of mental health, while in Lovecraft's stories it relates to forbidden and undesired knowledge of the world and its monsters.

By analyzing these passages it could be noticed that the way which Poe and Lovecraft utilize apophatic speech is in fact very similar, suggesting that Lovecraft's apophatic speech could be reminiscent of the influence which Poe had on his work. Although the authors' sources of fear are very different, apophasis was still used in comparable ways. Furthermore, analyzing two of Lovecraft's short stories which are considered to belong to his Cthulhu Mythos literary phase proved to be very fruitful. While the topic of cosmicism, which is most present in the Cthulhu Mythos tales, represents Lovecraft's independency, it can be noticed how the influence of Poe remained all throughout Lovecraft's writings.

The literature comparing these authors is extensive, but mainly focused on thematic similarities, such as Svitáková's and Harnušek's works. The process of analyzing the way which Poe and Lovecraft utilized language to convey meaning proved to be another way in which we can compare these authors' oeuvre. Future research in this fashion could help further understand the different levels of influence which Poe had on Lovecraft.

References

"Apophasis." *Etymonline.com*, <http://www.etymonline.com/index.php?term=apophasis>.

Accessed 2 Jul. 2017.

Bloch, Robert. "Robert Bloch on Poe and Lovecraft." *Alangullette.com*, 1996,

<http://alangullette.com/lit/hpl/bloch.htm>. Accessed 19 Apr. 2017.

Burton, Gideon O. "apophasis." *Silva Rhetoricae*, Brigham Young University, 2007,

<http://rhetoric.byu.edu/Figures/A/apophasis.htm>. Accessed 18 May 2017.

"Donald Trump Is Walking Into a Minefield, and He Can't Stop Himself." *New Republic*,

<https://newrepublic.com/article/137272/donald-trump-walking-minefield-cant-stop>.

Accessed 6 Nov. 2017.

Farias, Ricardo Heffel. *Cthulhu is here: the monster as an allegory of history in Howard Phillips Lovecraft's Cthulhu Mythos*. MA thesis, Universidade Federal de Santa Catarina, 2015.

Harnušek, Ondřej. *Lovecraft and Poe: Masters of the Macabre of Providence*. BA thesis, Masaryk University, 2013.

Hayes, Kevin J. Introduction. *The Cambridge Companion to Edgar Allan Poe*, by Kevin J. Hayes et al., edited by Kevin J. Hayes, Cambridge University Press, 2004, pp. 1-6.

Henderson, David. *Apophatic Elements in the Theory and Practice of Psychoanalysis: Pseudo-Dionysius and C.G. Jung*. Dissertation, University of London, 2012.

Joshi, Sunand Tryambak. *A Dreamer and a Visionary: H. P. Lovecraft in his Time*. Liverpool University Press, 2001.

Ljungquist, Kent. "The poet as critic." *The Cambridge Companion to Edgar Allan Poe*, edited by Kevin J. Hayes, Cambridge University Press, 2004, pp. 7-20.

Lovecraft, Howard Phillips. "Dagon." *The New Annotated H. P. Lovecraft*. Edited by Leslie S. Klinger, Liveright Publishing Corporation, 2014, pp. 3-10.

---. "The Call of Cthulhu." *The New Annotated H. P. Lovecraft*. Edited by Leslie S. Klinger, Liveright Publishing Corporation, 2014, pp. 123-57.

---. *Selected Letters II (1925-1929)*. Edited by August Derleth and Donald Wandrei, Arkham House Publishers, 1968, pp. 149-51.

---. "Supernatural Horror in Literature." *H. P. Lovecraft: The Complete Fiction*. Barnes & Noble, 2011, pp. 1040-98.

"Lovecraft's Letters." *HPLovecraft.com*, <http://www.hplovecraft.com/writings/letters/>.

Accessed 27 Sep. 2017.

- Poe, Edgar Allan. "The Black Cat." *The Annotated Poe*. Edited by Kevin J. Hayes, Harvard University Press, 2015, pp. 306-17.
- . "The Fall of the House of Usher." *The Annotated Poe*. Edited by Kevin J. Hayes, Harvard University Press, 2015, pp. 95-116.
- . "The Philosophy of Composition." *Eapoe.org*, 2015, <https://www.eapoe.org/works/essays/philcmpb.htm>. Accessed 26 Jun. 2017.
- Quinn, Arthur Hobson. *Edgar Allan Poe: A Critical Biography*. Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998.
- Sá, Daniel Serravalle de. "'The Raven,' a história do poema e de suas traduções." *O Corvo multilíngue*. DLLE/UFSC, 2016. pp. 7-18.
- Šmejkal, Ondřej. *Azathoth Negative: H. P. Lovecraft and the Unrepresentable Vistas of Ontology*. MA thesis, Anglo-American University, 2015.
- Svitáková, Šárka. *Fear in the Fiction of Edgar Allan Poe and Howard Phillips Lovecraft*. MA thesis, University of Pardubice, 2013.
- van Santvoort, Derk. *Casting Shadows out of Time: H. P. Lovecraft, his Influences and his Influence*. MA thesis, Utrecht University, 2008.