


Blurring the Boundaries of Poetics: A Stylistic and Narrative Analysis of Poe’s “The Fall of the House of Usher” and “The Haunted Palace”

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ABSTRACT	ARTICLE HISTORY								
<p>This article focuses on the intersection of poetic and narrative forms in Edgar Allan Poe’s prose and poetry, offering a close study of “The Fall of the House of Usher” and “The Haunted Palace.” While Poe argues that poetry and prose serve different artistic purposes (Beauty for the former and Truth or Passion for the latter), his literary works prove the contrary. The research aims to analyze Poe’s language choices across both genres and to determine whether the formal boundaries between them are deliberately blurred. A qualitative comparative method is employed, analysing core narrative components (plot, perspective, setting, characters) and foregrounded stylistic features (in particular, deviation, parallelism and sound patterning) in both texts. The findings indicate that Poe’s prose and poetry embed poeticism and narrativity respectively, with both forms elaborating the themes of mental breakdown, decay, and unreliability. Moreover, the insertion of “The Haunted Palace” into the “The Fall of the House of Usher” is considered as a purposeful merge rather than a mere illustration. This research concludes that Poe’s poetics represent a hybrid aesthetic that transcends solid genre classifications. The authorial individual stylistic and structural choices invite the readers to experience his poetry and prose from a different perspective. The research contributes to broader discussions in poetics by highlighting the emotional effects of cross-genre literary techniques.</p>	<table> <tr> <td>Received</td><td>02th March 2025</td></tr> <tr> <td>Revised</td><td>30th April 2025</td></tr> <tr> <td>Accepted</td><td>31th May 2025</td></tr> <tr> <td>Published</td><td>30th June 2025</td></tr> </table> <p>KEYWORDS</p> <p><i>poetics;</i> <i>Edgar Allan Poe;</i> <i>narrative poetry;</i> <i>narrative perspective;</i> <i>stylistic analysis;</i> <i>genre hybridity</i></p>	Received	02 th March 2025	Revised	30 th April 2025	Accepted	31 th May 2025	Published	30 th June 2025
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1. Introduction.

In contemporary research, the notion of *poetics* has numerous interpretations as it is applied in various contexts (Miall & Dissanayake, 2003; Stockwell, 2014, 2019; Tsur, 2002, 2008; van Peer & Chesnokova, 2022; Vorobyova, 2013, 2024). Aristotle initially defined *Poetics* as an artistic form and reasoned about the distinctive features of poetry, comedy, and drama (Aristotle, 1920/2020). Since then, research has been mostly limited to examining the preferences of an author (either a poet or a prose writer) in language and style (Shurma, 2008) or within a specific genre (Miall & Dissanayake, 2003). Thus, Bierwisch (1970) holds that the objects of poetics are patterns that arise in poetic texts and define the features of poetry: “the human ability to produce poetic structures and understand their effect – that is, what can be called *poetic competence*” (pp. 98-99). Following Bierwisch (1970), Tsur (2002, 2008) expands the approach to tenets of cognitive science, defining cognitive poetics as it offers cognitive hypotheses to relate systematically “the specific effects of poetry” to “the particular regularities that occur in literary texts” (2002, p. 281).

In line with this, Bieliakhova (2002), Redka (2009), Shurma (2008), Vorobyova (2004b, 2013), and Yemets (2021) examined literary texts from a cognitive perspective. According to Vorobyova (2004b), poetics is a branch of linguistics that studies literary texts, including poetry and prose (pp. 19-20). On the other hand, poetics combines the elements of the artistic picture, which reflects the world in the text, correlated with a specific idea, motif, concept, or concept sphere (Vorobyova, 2013, pp. 8-9). Following Vorobyova (1993), Bieliakhova (2002) investigates American poetry about cognitive processes and examines the nature of the interaction between language and thought. In doing so, she distinguishes four types of verbal poetic images: *archetypes*, *stereotypes*, *idiotypes*, and *kenotypes*, which allows for an analysis of how imagery and symbolism in American poems reveal perspectives on the world.

Vorobyova (2004a) argues that poetics largely depends on the research paradigm that defines this concept in a broad sense, as well as the methodological tools used to better understand the hidden content of poetry or prose (p. 37). In his turn, Stockwell (2014, 2019) defines poetics as the linguistic and cognitive organization of a literary text, aiming to explore how it is realized in the impressions of reading.

2. Literature Review.

This line of thinking in poetics has been well established (Bieliekhova, 2002; 2004b; 2013; 2024; Brone & Vandaele, 2009; Gavins & Steen, 2003; Stockwell, 2014; 2019; Vorobyova, 2004a) and developed, in the last decade, into more reader-oriented scientific models (Chesnokova, 2016; Chesnokova et al., 2017; Chesnokova & van Peer, 2018; Chesnokova & Zyngier, 2024; Hakemulder, 2020; Hakemulder & van Peer, 2016; Jacobs, 2015; van Peer, 1986/2021; van Peer & Chesnokova, 2022; 2025a; 2025b; 2026; van Peer et al., 2021). However, since the end of the 20th century, research on literary texts has primarily been conducted within the framework of cognitive linguistics. Consequently, a need arises to expand the boundaries of cognitive linguistics and to examine, in an evidence-based manner, the effects that literary texts have on readers. Thus, the latter approach not only allows us to answer the question “What happens to the reader when reading a work of art?” (van Peer & Chesnokova, 2025b) but also to establish the possible reasons, that is, to find out “Why?”

In her study of Emily Dickinson’s poetry, Bezrebra (2008) interprets poetics as a system of authorial preferences, both linguistic and conceptual, to bring precise categorization into what was mentioned above. The systematic nature of such choices is revealed through the analysis of the linguistic and stylistic arrangement of speech, the ways of expressing the content of the text, and their relationship (p.15). Hence, Bezrebra defined three components of an author (in this case, the poet): idiolect, idiostyle, and cognitive style.

To broaden the boundaries of looking into poetry and prose, in their seminal *Style in Fiction*, Leech and Short (2007) argue that a poet, more obviously than a prose writer, does “interesting things” with the language. They claim that the aesthetic effect cannot be separated from the creative manipulation of the linguistic code in poetry. In contrast, prose reflects other factors (such as character, theme, or argument) that are expressed through language (p. 2). In his turn, Boyd (2012) holds that narrative and verse are closely related (p. 2). Boyd (2012) notes that most poems also incorporate elements of a story, including situations, emotions, settings, and characters (p. 151). Shakespeare, for instance, experimented with forms and genres, turned from plays to narrative poems and later to sonnets, deliberately avoiding narrative structures and favoring other patterns: emotional,

verbal, and structural (p. 154). Thus, Shakespeare can be considered one of the first authors to employ artistic forms and incorporate narrative elements into poetic texts.

3. Aim and Objectives.

While most canonical authors predominantly practice one literary mode (poetry, prose, or drama), there are exceptions when they successfully develop several forms (e.g., Shakespeare, Wilde, Poe, to name just a few), and this structural interplay inevitably affects their poetics.

To this end, **this study aims** to analyze the language preferences of Edgar Allan Poe (both a poet and a prose writer) as well as establish whether the form and genre of the text affect each other (van Peer & Chesnokova, 2017, 2019), since in Poe's case both artistic forms are considered canonical. To achieve the goal, the following **objectives** must be addressed:

- to examine the theoretical distinction between poetry and prose in Poe's critical writing and assess its reflection in his literary practice;
- to conduct a comparative narrative and stylistic analysis of “The Fall of the House of Usher” and “The Haunted Palace” to identify overlaps in plot structure, narrative perspective, setting, and symbolic imagery;
- to explore how foregrounded stylistic devices function across both texts and determine their role in conveying emotional intensity.

4. Method.

In line with the latest developments in Stylistics and Narratology, this study offers a comparative analysis to investigate the correlation between poetic and narrative forms in the works of Edgar Allan Poe. Specifically, the research focuses on two texts: the short story “The Fall of the House of Usher” and the poem “The Haunted Palace,” both of which share a similar situation model and the character Roderick Usher. Remarkably, Poe embedded the poem into the story shortly after its standalone publication, which justifies their joint analysis.

The methodology involves a close reading and comparative analysis of the following narrative elements: plot, narrative perspective, setting, characterization, and foregrounded stylistic features (namely, deviation and parallelism on different levels). This selection assumes that, although formally distinct in genre (poetry and prose), both texts demonstrate

the overlapping of narrative and poetic structures. The study further examines how deviation, parallelism and symbolic imagery convey mental deterioration and decay in both Poe's texts.

5. Results.

5.1. Poetics as Theory and Practice: When Poetry and Prose Intersect.

A prolific author and a literary critic, Poe is explicit in postulating his views on the two modes: poetry and prose. In his "Philosophy of Composition," he claims that Beauty is the area of interest of poetry:

Now I designate Beauty as the province of the poem, merely because it is an obvious rule of Art that effects should be made to spring from direct causes – that objects should be attained through means best adapted for their attainment – no one as yet having been weak enough to deny that the peculiar elevation alluded to, is most readily attained in the poem (Levine & Levine, 2009, p. 63).

On the other hand, Poe defines the objects of prose as Truth and Passion:

Now the object, Truth, or the satisfaction of the intellect, and the object Passion, or the excitement of the heart are, although attainable, to a certain extent, in poetry, far more readily attainable in prose. Truth, in fact, demands a precision, and Passion, a homeliness [...] are absolutely antagonistic to that Beauty which, I maintain, is the excitement, or pleasurable elevation, of the soul. [...] but the true artist will always contrive, first, to tone them into proper subservience to the predominant aim, and, secondly, to enveil them, as far as possible, in that Beauty which is the atmosphere and the essence of the poem (Ibid.).

In other words, Poe argues that it is essential to follow the structure without any deviations in the genre, emphasizing that poetry and prose are mutually exclusive in terms of their effect on the reader. The former aims "to deliver" a poetic text to the one's heart or soul, while the latter "pleases" the intellect. Anastasaki (2013/14) hypothesizes that the insertion of

a poem into a narrative could threaten the structural coherence of the story. However, it could also be interpreted as a deliberate effort to merge two genres, resulting in a more complete and enriched narrative (p. 208). The researcher also questions the function of the verse inserted in the narrative, arguing that, although Truth is attributed to prose, it is the poem that delivers the “truth” of the story, thereby bypassing both the unreliability of the narrator and the limitations of rational prose (p. 212). This leads us to think that in this way, in “The Fall of the House of Usher,” Poe attempts to reach the perfection of the form and, as he claims in the “Philosophy of Composition” (Levine & Levine, 2009, p. 63), objects of literary forms, leaving no room for doubt in the truthfulness and beauty of the story.

To support the points made above, the following section will analyze Poe’s story and poem closely, providing textual evidence to substantiate the claim that the author skillfully employs the two forms. This eventually leads us to the need to readdress the approach to Poe’s poetics.

5.2. A Comparative Narrative Analysis of *The Fall of the House of Usher* and *The Haunted Palace*.

The **plot** of “The Fall of the House of Usher” is relatively well-known to the general audience for its darkness. Roderick Usher, the protagonist, is suffering from extreme mental and physical problems, which become clear from his letter to the narrator as he spoke of *acute bodily illness – of a mental disorder that oppressed him* (Poe, 2000b, p. 398). His sister, Madeline, falls ill and is buried alive. However, she escapes her grave, returns, and: “[...] then, with a low moaning cry, fell heavily inward upon the person of her brother, and in her violent and now final death-agonies, bore him to the floor a corpse, and a victim to the terrors he had anticipated” (Poe, 2000b, pp. 416-417).

The **protagonist’s** mental state is mirrored in the decaying mansion, as both are ultimately destroyed: “and the deep and dank tarn at my feet closed sullenly and silently over the fragments of the ‘House of Usher’” (Ibid., p. 417). The narrator flees in terror, and the entire mansion collapses into the lake, which can be metaphorically taken as the fall of the Usher family: “I saw the mighty halls rushing asunder – there was a long tumultuous shouting sound like the voice of a thousand waters [...] over the fragments of the “House of Usher”.” (Poe, 2000b, p. 417).

In turn, the **main character** of the poem “The Haunted Palace” differs from the one in the story. It is a wise and just monarch who lives in the palace. His people are happy; however, evil creatures attack the place over time: “But evil things, in robes of sorrow, / Assailed the monarch’s high estate” (p. 316). Poe metaphorically depicts the deterioration of a mind through the transition of the palace from bright to dim and abandoned: “Once a fair and stately palace – / Radiant palace – reared its head” (Poe, 2000, p. 315); “Is but a dim-remembered story / Of the old-time entombed” (Ibid., p. 316). The once-beautiful estate becomes a haunted ruin, with ghostly figures *wandering its halls*; the former ruler eventually becomes mad:

And travellers, now, within that valley,
Through the red-litten windows see
Vast forms that move fantastically
To a discordant melody,
While, like a ghastly rapid river,
Through the pale door
A hideous throng rush out forever
And laugh – but smile no more (Poe, 2000, pp. 316-317).

The two texts mentioned above are rather typical of Poe's poetics. Both the prose and poetry pieces tell stories, although the narrative point of view differs: the former is written in the first person, while the latter is in the third person. Remarkably, in the third line of the poem’s first stanza, Poe inserts a *Once*, characteristic of a narrative: “Once a fair and stately palace – / Radiant palace – reared its head” (Poe, 2000, p. 315). Thus, the reader feels that everything being described has only happened recently, as five out of six stanzas of the poem are written in the past tense. Alternatively, in the last stanza, the current state of the palace is depicted, marked grammatically by the transition from the past tense to the present.

Another narrative element is **the setting**; the two works share similar locative circumstances, particularly in their use of buildings. The story describes a family mansion

with *some peculiarities in its form and substance* (Poe, 2000b, p. 403). In the poem, the action takes place in a beautiful palace: “Once a fair and stately palace – / Radiant palace – reared its head” (Poe, 2000, p. 315). Both are remote and ultimately ruined, but for Poe, the settings are more than just physical locations; they are also metaphors for mental deterioration, isolation, and the inevitability of death.

Though first-hand evidence of the authorial intentions is rare in literary studies, here we do have it. In his letter to Griswold, Poe wrote that by the palace in his poem, he meant *to imply a mind haunted by phantoms—a disordered brain* (Poe, 2000, p. 312). When the whole picture of this building is put together (from the ruling *Thought* to the *yellow banners, luminous windows, and pearl and ruby glowing* around the door), it becomes clear that Poe is metaphorically describing a human head:

In the monarch Thought’s dominion –

It stood there!

[...]

Banners yellow, glorious, golden,

On its roof did float and flow –

[...]

Wanderers in that happy valley,

Through two luminous windows, saw

[...]

And all with pearl and ruby glowing

Was the fair palace door, (Poe, 2000, pp. 315-316).

A troop of Echoes, flowing, flowing, flowing through the door of the palace metaphorically refers to the human voice, exiting through the mouth whose only job was to sing the wisdom of *Thought*:

And all with pearl and ruby glowing

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Was the fair palace door,
Through which came flowing, flowing, flowing,
And sparkling evermore,
A troop of Echoes whose sweet duty
Was but to sing,
In voices of surpassing beauty,
The wit and wisdom of their king (Poe, 2000, p. 316).

In the last two stanzas of the poem, as evil corrupted the mansion (“But evil things, in robes of sorrow, / Assailed the monarch’s high estate”) (Ibid.), the travellers can see red eyes filled with sorrow: “Through the red-litten windows see” (Ibid.). The melody, implying emotions and inner state of the king, is no longer *well-tuned* but inharmonious: “Wanderers in that happy valley, / Through two luminous windows, saw / Spirits moving musically, / To a lute’s well-tuned law” [...] “Vast forms that move fantastically / To a discordant melody” (Poe, 2000, pp. 316-317).

5.3. Stylistic Foregrounding and Emotional Resonance.

In the previous section, we discussed how narrative elements in the two works by Poe, belonging to two different literary forms, are similar. This is naturally reflected in the author’s stylistic preferences, which, in turn, induce a specific reaction in the reader.

Both Poe’s works are highly foregrounded. In the following paragraph of “The Fall of the House of Usher,” Poe uses unconventional punctuation (e.g., numerous dashes, exclamation marks), and the emotional effect is enhanced through *italicized* (by the author) words and even whole sentences:

Not hear it? – yes, I hear it, and *have* heard it. Long – long – long – many minutes, many hours, many days, have I heard it – yet I dared not – oh, pity me, miserable wretch that I am! – I dared not – I *dared* not speak! *We have put her living in the tomb!* Said I not that my senses were acute? I *now* tell you that I heard her first feeble movements in the hollow coffin. I heard them – many, many days ago – yet I dared not – *I dared not speak!* And

now – to-night – Ethelred – ha! ha! – the breaking of the hermit’s door, and the death-cry of the dragon, and the clangor of the shield! – [...] Madman! [...] – “*Madman! I tell you that she now stands without the door!*” (Poe, 2000b, p. 416)

Additionally, the author employs numerous examples of parallelism (lexical and syntactic). In the paragraph above, Poe repeats, often anaphorically, the following lexical items: *long, long, long; many minutes, many hours, many days; many, many days ago; Madman!, Madman!* At times, the pattern is combined with syntactic parallelism: *I dared not, I dared not, I dared not speak, yet I dared not – I dared not speak!*

Subject + Verb + not;

Subject + Verb + not + Verb.

Finally, rhetorical questions are ubiquitous:

[...] Oh whither shall I fly? Will she not be here anon? Is she not hurrying to upbraid me for my haste? Have I not heard her footstep on the stair? Do I not distinguish that heavy and horrible beating of her heart? Madman!” – here he sprang furiously to his feet, and shrieked out his syllables, as if in the effort he were giving up his soul [...] (Poe, 2000b, p. 416)

Similar foregrounded elements are characteristic of the poem, just like in the abovementioned story. The author extensively uses unconventional dashes and exclamation marks:

Once a fair and stately palace –

Radiant palace – reared its head

[...]

This – all this – was in the olden

Time long ago

[...]

Ah, let us mourn! – for never morrow

Shall dawn upon him, desolate!

[...]

And laugh—but smile no more” (Poe, 2000, pp. 315-316).

On the phonological level, alliteration is frequent: *Radiant palace – reared its head, glorious, golden; float and flow; plumed and pallid; A wingèd odor went away; moving musically; lute’s well-tuned law; ruler of the realm; flowing, flowing, flowing; wit and wisdom; blushed and bloomed*, etc. Additionally, assonance is used: *Radiant palace–reared its head; monarch Thought’s; Never seraph spread a pinion; Banners yellow; glorious, golden; float and flow; This–all this–was in the olden; And every gentle air that dallied; Round about; The wit and wisdom of their king; But evil things in robes of sorrow; Shall dawn upon him; round about* etc. Apart from it, Poe uses consonance: *Over fabric half so fair; spread a pinion; This–all this–was in the olden; Along the ramparts plumed and pallid; A wingèd odor went away; Of the old time entombed*; etc.

Semantic parallelism is conspicuous in the contextual proximity of words that are closely related in meaning. For example, the lexemes *yellow* and *golden* are contextual synonyms, used in the description of the banners to refer to the same color. The same semantic pattern is observed in the following pairs of words: *plumed and pallid; glowing, sparkling; wit and wisdom; blushed and bloomed*. In addition, the pairs quoted above (except for *wit and wisdom*) are adjectives often linked by a conjunction *and* appear as a repetition on the syntactic level:

Adj. + Adj. / Adj. and Adj.

All these features produce a strong emotional effect on the reader. Both characters have lost control over their thoughts and emotions, which leads them to become increasingly unstable.

6. Discussion.

The comparative analysis of Poe’s “The Fall of the House of Usher” and “The Haunted Palace” offered above illustrates a striking convergence of prose and poetry, thus casting

doubt on the conventional dichotomy between these two literary genres. Although in his theoretical statements Poe attributes Beauty to poetry and Truth and Passion to prose (Levine & Levine, 2009, p. 63), his literary practice reveals a far more integrated and experimental approach. The insertion of the poetic text into the narrative is not merely ornamental or decorative. On the contrary, it fulfils an essential function of the structural coherence of “The Fall of the House of Usher”, going beyond genre boundaries.

The findings indicate that Poe’s stylistic and narrative choices in both texts demonstrate a share of poetic competence (Bierwisch, 1970) and cognitive stylistic design (Tsur, 2002; Stockwell, 2014). Narrative elements, such as setting, plot development, and thematic motifs (e.g., character’s mental disintegration, decay, and isolation) are mirrored across the two artistic forms. The collapse of the Usher mansion in the prose text metaphorically parallels the psychological decay depicted in the palace of the poem. This mirroring effect affirms the view that Poe constructs meaning not only through story, but also through form, in this way employing poetics as a multidimensional strategy (Bieliekhova, 2002; Vorobyova, 2004; 2013).

Foregrounding, particularly deviation and parallelism, manifests itself as a fundamental device in the two texts. Lexical and syntactic repetition, unconventional punctuation, and rhetorical questions in the story align closely with phonological parallelism in the poem, namely alliteration, assonance, and consonance. These devices mutually evoke a strong emotional reader’s response (Chesnokova & van Peer, 2018; Tsur, 2002). The linguistic texture of both works reinforces affective and conceptual salience, which resonates with the reader’s literary expectations (Djicic, 2012; Miall & Kuiken, 1994; 1999, van Peer & Chesnokova 2025b; 2026).

This study also supports the argument that Poe’s poetics can be viewed as a hybrid formation (what might be termed narrative poetry or poetic narrative), where the epistemological categories of genre dissolve in favor of a unified aesthetic effect. The textual interplay between “The Haunted Palace” and “The Fall of the House of Usher” invites the reader into the space where the boundaries between poetry and prose, form and meaning, structure and sensation, are intentionally blurred. Such a strategy aligns with the broader



contemporary shift in literary studies towards trans-genre reading practices. It also emphasizes the necessity of reconceptualizing the poetics of an individual author as not merely genre-based but as a dynamic interaction.

However, the research reported above has some limitations that need to be addressed in future studies. We are aware that two texts by the author are not enough to draw solid generalizations concerning his poetics as a system. At the same time, the provided comparative analysis demonstrates strong mutual influence between the two literary genres, paving the way for future research in the area. Secondly, this study focuses more on the way prose affects poetry, leaving aside how Poe plays with poeticism in a narrative. Thirdly, as in the last few decades, empirical stylistics has significantly broadened the boundaries of literary and stylistic analysis, involving real readers. We believe that the study of readers' responses to Poe's texts is a promising direction in the research of his poetics.

Finally, in Poe's works, not only do the genres influence one another, but they also coalesce to represent unique features of the author's poetics.

7. Concluding Remarks.

By examining the two texts in parallel, we gained evidence to support the initial claim that Poe's artistic strategy transcends the traditional dichotomy between poetic and prosaic forms.

The findings indicate that, although Poe theoretically opposed the merging of prose and poetry (assigning Beauty to the former and Truth or Passion to the latter), his actual writing demonstrates a contradiction, integrating both. The poem "The Haunted Palace," embedded in the short story "The Fall of the House of Usher," plays a crucial role. It serves not merely as an interlude but rather as an interpretive lens through which the reader can have a better grasp of Roderick Usher's inner state in general and the broader theme of psychological collapse in particular.

The analysis of narrative elements, such as the plot, the narrative perspective, the characters, and the setting, demonstrates a clear correlation between the two texts in that both works portray isolation and mental deterioration through overlapping imagery and metaphor. Additionally, foregrounding (particularly deviation, parallelism, and phonological patterning) contributes to the emotional intensity and depth of the texts.

These results serve as an additional argument in favour of the claim that Poe's poetics cannot be confined to one literary form. Instead, they represent a multidimensional system of the authorial choices. Thus, this study suggests redefining poetics as a system of a writer's individual preferences, implementing a trans-genre approach of self-expression.

Generally, the results offer **a prospective direction for further research** of the hybrid literary forms and invite scholars to consider how authors manipulate genre structures to produce layered meaning and emotional resonance. Hence, Poe's poetics remain an abundant ground for revisiting the interplay between narrative and poetry, particularly between textual structure and emotional impact.

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The author declares no conflict of interest.

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Nika Marushchak contributed to the design and implementation of the research article, the analysis of the results, and the writing of the manuscript.

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