

T.C.
BAHCESEHIR UNIVERSITY
GRADUATE SCHOOL
INSTITUTE OF SOCIAL SCIENCES
THE DEPARTMENT OF FILM AND TELEVISION

AN AMALGAMATION BETWEEN
EDGAR ALLAN POE'S THE TELL TALE HEART AND
THE ELEMENTS OF THE MAGICAL REALISM

MASTER'S THESIS
RIAD AFANDIYEV

ISTANBUL 2024

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This thesis was read by us, quality and content as a Master's thesis has been seen and accepted as sufficient.

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ABSTRACT

AN AMALGAMATION BETWEEN THE EDGAR ALLAN POE'S THE TELL TALE HEART AND THE ELEMENTS OF THE MAGICAL REALISM

Afandiyev, Riad

Film and Television
Thesis Advisor: Tuna Tetik

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This thesis proposes to examine a relation of an amalgamation of two different components, including Edgar Allan Poe's short story titled "The Tell Tale Heart" and the elements of a literary genre called "Magical Realism." While the possible elements and the results of such amalgamation are examined through a short film called "Eye for an Eye," the short film is also approached as a particular case for the main topic of this study. Through the case, the relation of Edgar Allan Poe's narrative style to the Magical Realism genre was aimed to be discovered and discussed.

Keywords: Edgar Allan Poe, Gothic, Magical Realism, Art House Horror

ÖZ

EDGAR ALLAN POE'NUN GAMMAZ YÜREK İLE BÜYÜLÜ GERÇEKÇİLİK UNSURLARININ BİRLEŞİMİ

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Bu tez, Edgar Allan Poe'nun "Gammaz Yürek" adlı kısa öyküsü ile "Büyülü Gerçekçilik" adlı edebi türün unsurları olan iki farklı bileşenin kesiştiği noktaların incelenmesini önermektedir. Ayrıca bu tür bir birleşmenin olası unsurları ve sonuçları, bu çalışmanın ana konusu için bir vaka görevi gören "Göze Göz" adlı kısa film ekseninde incelenmektedir. Seçilen vaka ekseninde, Edgar Allan Poe'nun anlatı biçimi ile Büyülük Gerçekçilik türünün ilişkisinin keşfedilmesi ve üzerine tartışılması hedeflenmiştir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Edgar Allan Poe, Gotik, Büyülü Gerçekçilik, Art House Horror



Dedicated to Poe

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Chapter 1

Introduction

A conventionally accepted film thesis would concern a field of study or an interest of the writer to show the culmination of the whole study period done for a Master's Degree, where the expectation would solely lie on the quality of the research, and will depend on the framework of the chosen topic. In the case of a Film and Television Master's Degree thesis, topics could vary from an analysis of films to theoretical research on tropes, genres, and certain filmmaker's works; This notion allowing for increased freedom when choosing a framework for a research topic. In an attempt to deviate from the norm, culminated in an intentional production of a short film which will be acted as a case study that this thesis would be based on. This would be a compelling way to review and explore both practical and theoretical knowledge of oneself. The intention is to produce a piece that is worthy of being written a thesis on. Once this path of course was set, the question remained whether the produced film would be an original piece or an adaptation of an already existing work. So after a thorough research process, it was decided that it would be an intriguing undertaking to make an adaptation of a renowned old short story while combining it with the elements of a fairly new literary genre. This amalgamation of the narrative and visual tropes of seemingly different genres became the reason for the pursuit of a compelling case study.

While selecting a topic for the produced. short film to be tackled, there were numerous choices after each brainstorming session. However, what was kept in mind was that the produced final short film needed to be finished in the limited time of the Master's

degree's study period, achievable in the sense of logistics, and most importantly was reasonable within the framework of the written thesis. After numerous back-and-forth, the framework of having titular amalgamation was chosen. This amalgamation consists of the elements from the literary genre of "Magical Realism" combined with an adaptation of Edgar Allan Poe's short story called "The Tell-Tale Heart" where the final product would be a unique combination of the elements of the former and narrative of the latter respectively. The aforementioned combination may seem and sound strange when first heard about, because as to how one is a literary genre defined by Britannica as "characterized by the matter-of-fact inclusion of fantastic or mythical elements into seemingly realistic fiction" and the other is a short story written in a different genre which can be categorized as a representation of Gothic horror. However, this fusion subjectively is a compelling one because of how two completely different-sounding phenomena hypothetically can work together, create something unique and complement each other. Naturally, there is a high chance that another researcher had already thought about how several of the works of the author Edgar Allan Poe could be connected to another literary genre of Magical Realism even though the former wrote his pieces long before the latter was accepted as a possible genre with its own tropes respectively. Nevertheless, from the conducted research, it has been concluded that this connection of tropes has only been observed in the author's other works than "The Tell-Tale Heart" and mostly is an analysis of already written stories of his, without attempting to create something new as an adaptation that will illustrate these connections in an observable format.

One would ask the question of why specifically Edgar Allan Poe was chosen as the author and why specifically his short story "The Tell-Tale Heart" acted as a narrative

inspiration while starting to read this thesis. This notion would be completely justified because there are other authors with their works that could have more relevant parallels with the “Magical Realism”. However, there are several reasons why Edgar Allan Poe was chosen as the author and why his work piece is suitable for both the short film and the thesis. First of all, as the intention is to produce a short film, it was conceivable to have inspiration from an already-written short story. Where Edgar Allan Poe is known for having numerous very successfully written pieces that could be considered as short stories. This leads to the second reason behind the choice which is mostly about the way Edgar Allan Poe writes his works. It's a commonly known fact that Poe's works do not have elements of philosophy, idealism, and morality where he instead gives his attention to more personal things such as individuals and their emotions where additionally his attitude toward his works was known as “art for art's sake” (Poetry Foundation, 2023). Besides, as an author, Edgar Allan Poe is a very influential figure in the medium of film and especially in genre of horror films. This influence can be as not just a direct one through the adaptation of his written works, but also as an indirect influence with the conventions and tropes that he used often in his works. Some of these conventions are psychological study of human characters in a mostly terror-filled environment, exploration of supernatural elements through vivid and suspenseful imagery, emphasis on narrative themes such as mortality, life, death, punishment, guilt, and most importantly masterful handling of the Gothic atmosphere. For many readers of literature, Edgar Allan Poe is a universally accepted master of the Gothic genre, however, it is important to clarify that he is not the inventor of the Gothic genre (Fisher, 2002). It's also essential to clarify what specifically qualifies as a Gothic genre, as because there are several definitions connected to this rather popular to use literary term. Mostly its accepted as a subgenre of horror

literature or fiction, because of their shared intention of giving “an intense feeling of fear, shock or disgust.” However, as there are numerous comparative studies that have been done about Gothic there is a common consensus that: Gothic literature is a genre of fiction that has its emergence in the late 18th century and started to gain immense popularity in the 19th century, with commonly accepted characteristics such as dark, atmospheric setting, supernatural elements, and an exploration of psychological and emotional themes. One of the most recent comparative studies about this literary genre concluded with a quote:

“Horror Literature was created by the people that wanted to terrify people and show them a new way to understand fears and from that Gothic Literature was born by the people who were scared from feelings and mind more than the other things horror ordinarily portrays” (Abedini, 2022, p. 6).

Edgar Allan Poe’s works as mentioned earlier are universally accepted and considered as part of Gothic fiction, where one of his most popular short stories “The Tell-Tale Heart” is also a great example of Gothic fiction. Shortly it’s about an unnamed narrator-protagonist who tries to convince the reader of their sanity while describing a haunting murder they have committed. The narrator claims that their actions were driven by an obsession with the old man's "vulture eye," which they found nerve-rackingly and unbearingly evil. The story unfolds over a span of eight nights as the narrator meticulously plans and executes the murder. However, while feeling confident about the success and the secrecy of their actions, eventually narrator’s guilt overwhelms their feelings which leads to a heartfelt confession. The major elements of this short story are the psychological dark side of human nature and conscience being set in an eerie atmospheric environment that reminds inevitable cycle of life and death. “The Tell-Tale Heart” as a specific piece is

a compelling one to tackle because besides including an individual with their emotions at the forefront, it contains a narrative that inexplicably could work out both from the standpoint of the narrative and the visuals if retooled with the tropes of “Magical Realism”.

Speaking of “Magical Realism”, one of the reasons behind the choice of this genre can be summarized roughly but simply as – there is no limit to it. Even if that reasoning could sound insufficient, there is a truth to those words. Because as it is mentioned above, this genre has a universally accepted convention of that is an inclusion of fantastical elements into seemingly realistic fiction. Where these all out-of-place seeming elements could be there without any explanation and will be just part of the narrative without taking both the character and the viewer out of the world. This kind of convention allows the creator to speculate and write a narrative with fantastical elements that could be beneficial in telling the story while both at the same time being unique and captivating. Even though “Magical Realism” is an accepted literary genre, it still can be explored in the visual medium of film, as there are numerous examples of films that successfully encapsulate its conventions in themselves. Additionally, as film is a visual medium every possibly added fantastical element would be more understated explicitly when being watched by the audience where the told narrative would be enriched that way. The term of “Magical Realism” and its specific definition is highly disputed and debated due to its complicated history of creation and acceptance as a literary genre. Bowers in her titular book about “Magical Realism”, gives example of how the process behind the investigation of the term

led her to an examination of its relationship to other genres such as realism, surrealism, allegory and fantastic. She asserts that:

“Storyteller needs to propose real and magical happenings with the same matter-of-fact manner in a recognizably realistic setting but the magical things must be accepted as a part of material reality, whether seen or unseen. They cannot be simply the imaginings of one mind, whether under the influence of drugs, or for the purpose of exploring the workings of the mind, imagining our future or for making a moral point” (2018, p. 29).

Narrative in this produced short film was the most important part to look onto, while writing script. Because even though the short film would have an inspiration from Edgar Allan Poe’s “The Tell-Tale Heart” it’s still has to have original additions to its narrative from the conventions of the “Magical Realism”. So the most reasonable method to use while discussing about the film in the thesis would be the narrative approach. It is essential to see how the original’s story is retooled with the conventions of a different genre other than itself where it still has the content of the original author while having original ideas of its own too. As there are also several fantastical elements added without being explicitly interpreted in the narrative, it is crucial to discuss them in the thesis as if acting as a rational explanation to the narrative choices, and plot devices. Additional artistic element became obvious after the production of the film ended where it was screened several times in the name of analysis for this study. This particular element would be the relatively new accepted phenomenon of a film genre called art house. Even though it wasn’t the primary intention for this thesis to include this genre, naturally while writing the screenplay, filming and watching the finished film, it was apparent that the produced film has some of the elements in the making of an art house horror short film. This film

genre could be considered as a sub-genre of both horror film while sometimes also being part art-film, where also being referred as an elevated horror.

The main component of these kind of genre films is prioritization of artistic and unconventional storytelling techniques over traditionally accepted genre tropes, where it usually combines elements of horror with artistic visual aesthetics, examining thought-provoking narratives, and a focusing on psychological and atmospheric elements. Some of those accepted elements are: slower pace with more implicit atmospherically visual storytelling, usage of symbolisms, allegories and metaphors to convey abstract and deep philosophical concepts while being mostly a complex character study with emotionally psychological examination of their state of mind. Some notable and recent examples of art house horror films include "The Babadook" (2014), "The Witch" (2015), "Hereditary" (2018), "The Lighthouse" (2019) and "Midsommar" (2019). So needless to say, even in a small chapter there would be a detailed discussion about the recent art house phenomenon in this study with respect to its accepted elements, tropes and conventions.

Throughout every stage of both filming and thesis writing, the literature research has been done thoroughly to support the ideas of this compelling amalgamation. The literature that is used in the thesis could be categorized into three equally important groups plus fourth a minor one. The first group would be the primary sources on the topic of "Magical Realism". In itself, these are sources that talk about it as a literary genre which could be accepted as both formal in the case of literature and informal in the case of film respectively. These sources would be essential to explaining the meaning behind the genre, how it was formed, known examples, accepted elements and conventions. There are numerous articles that have been found that describe and interpret this genre such as the

paper of Rajabi, Azizi and Akbari called “Magical Realism: The Magic of Realism” which studies the transformation of “Magical Realism” into one the most appealing and real type of Realism as an art such a way that, despite its magical elements, it becomes mostly acceptable and believable for the reader, where additionally a book written by Maggie Ann Bowers called “Magic(al) Realism” is used as basis of the explanation and “ideal introduction to the so called fascinating field”. Other sources on this genre would be the ones who would discuss it in the context of films even though as it was mentioned above it is not a formally accepted film genre, there are numerous films that are inspired and use the conventions vet successfully. A few of the found research sources would be the analysis of its conventions in the context of a specific films such as the article written by Fredric Jameson called “On Magic Realism in Film” which examines the overall concept of “Magical Realism” in accordance to its usage in film while introducing possible theoretical and historical problems while examining the concept it; Where it is also important to mention that Frederic Jameson was one of the first writers who thought of this concept as a possible genre that can be observed in a film and it’s a commonly accepted fact that he is formally the first author who gave this genre it’s now commonly known name of “Magical Realism” in his written works.

The second group would be the primary sources on the topic of Edgar Allan Poe and his work “The Tell-Tale Heart”. These sources would mostly act as the introduction points for both Edgar Allan Poe’s life, writing style, influences on film, importance to the genre of gothic and especially for all possible interpretations with assumptions to that of his work “The Tell-Tale Heart” that have been existed since its release. Some of these sources are Sova’s “Critical Companion to Edgar Allan Poe: A Literary Reference to His

Life and Work” which has several insightful information about Edgar Allan Poe’s works through detailed historical research, then there are several papers which successfully examine his work specifically such as the Wall’s Narrative Purpose and Legal Logic in “The Tell-Tale Heart”, Shen’s Edgar Allan Poe’s Aesthetic Theory, the Insanity Debate, and the Ethically Oriented Dynamics of “The Tell-Tale Heart”, Zimmerman’s Moral Insanity or Paranoid Schizophrenia: Poe’s “The Tell-Tale Heart”, where additionally Abedini’s paper called Horror and Gothic Literature, Same or Separate: A Comparative Study is an insightful examination of Gothic as whole genre of literature with detailed examples of its conventions and elements.

The third group would be sources that introduce and describe the relatively new accepted formal film genre of art house horror. The only troublesome part of these sources was that most of the sources are relatively recent and most of them are website articles instead of being academic papers, and some of those are from The Verge, Vulture, Screen Rant, Vanity Fair, where additionally there is book by Adrian Gmelch called Art Horror: The Films of Ari Aster and Robert Eggers which in detail studies two most recent, successful and popular films which are considered as great examples of art-house horror while defining commonly accepted conventions and elements expected from those films. Even though, this genre of art house horror could seem as a minor element to the overall picture of this study it is still essential to discuss about it in detail. Fourth and the final group of sources would be the ones that can be used as support for the symbolical elements chosen to be used in the produced film. Where obviously some of the elements of the symbolism still depend on both the creator’s intention and the viewer’s interpretation, so it would be mandatory to discuss about the intentions behind specific choices over the visuals and narrative plot points.

All in all, the main purpose of the thesis was to achieve a worthy amalgamation of two very different phenomena that individually and independently stand on their feet without any problem. Again this amalgamation can be easily dismissed, as a rational reader would think that Edgar Allan Poe's works include dark gothic psychological elements and there won't be any reasonably additional room for the elements of "Magical Realism". Nonetheless, the combination of psychological and fantastical elements in real life setting refined and enhanced the narrative that was being told in the short film while both being an adaptation and including something original on itself. Where after experimenting with both elements this conjunction proved itself to be a compelling case for possible future experimentation and analysis of the works of the past in the context of other relatively recent genres without disrespecting the original while adding some fresh ideas and original uniqueness from oneself.

Chapter 2

Poe, Gothic And The Tell Tale Heart

2.1 Edgar Allan Poe's Life And Works

The first part of the titular amalgamation is Edgar Allan Poe and his work called "The Tell Tale Heart". As it was mentioned before there are numerous other authors whose works could have been chosen from, however specifically and intentionally Edgar Allan Poe was selected. This selection is essential one because of how an importantly inspirational figure Edgar Allan Poe is in both mediums of literature and cinema.

Edgar Allan Poe was an American poet who lived between (1809-1849) and is best known for his contributions to the genres of gothic horror, mystery, and the macabre. His life was marked by several tragedies and hardships where he experienced the loss of relatives and loved ones at the young age. This way of hard life is commonly accepted to be one of the reasons of how Poe has written his characters by being inspired from his own struggles (Jarnagin, 2018, p. 4). Edgar Allan Poe was born on January 19th 1809 to Eliza and David Poe. When he was very young his father left their family and eventually his mother caught tuberculosis from which she died at the age of 24. Young Edgar Allan Poe was taken by John Allan, but was never official adopted mostly attributed to his hostile relationship with his foster father. He also did take their last name, which was the reason of him becoming Edgar Allan Poe. Whilst he was enlisted in the army he published his work which was a poetry collection, "Tamerlane and Other Poems" which was eventually followed by second collection called "Al Aaraaf, Tametlane, and Minor Poems." Even though Edgar Allan Poe's literary career started with poetry he is mostly known for his short stories. Starting in 1838 while living in Philadelphia, he enjoyed his prime years of

literature. Poe wrote “The Tell-Tale Heart,” the “Masque of the Red Death,” “The Black Cat,” “The Pit and the Pendulum,” “The Gold Bug,” “The Fall of the House of Usher,” “The Murders in the Rue Morgue,” and more (Poetry Foundation, 2022).

Despite the career in literature he struggled with financial instability throughout most of his adult life. Poe's literary career began with poetry, and he gained recognition for his evocative and melancholic themes. However, it was through the publication of his short stories mentioned above that Poe achieved lasting fame and became a pioneer in the development of the modern understanding of psychological thriller tropes. Poe's writing style was characterized by his precisely descriptive language, as well as his meticulous attention to detail. The stories that he wrote often delved into themes of madness, obsession, and the supernatural, leaving a lasting impact on genres such as horror, gothic, psychological and even surpassingly detective fiction. Additionally, what makes his works realistic to the reader is the personal humane touch they have. According to the psychoanalytical study done on Edgar Allan Poe, Pruette asserts that “Poe's heroes are largely autobiographical; they are melancholy men, pursued by unrelenting fate; they are neurotic, hypochondriac, monomaniac, victims of vain delusions; they are the prey of melancholia, insane from sorrow...” (1920, p. 384).

Even though he had a short life filled with challenging numerous personal circumstances, Edgar Allan Poe's literary contributions have had a profound and enduring influence on literature and cinema. His works continue to capture readers' minds and hearts with their atmospheric storytelling, exploration of the human condition, and the enduring power of his haunting and macabre imagery.

2.2 An Overview Of Gothic Fiction

When talking about Edgar Allan Poe, the two most common genres coming into one's mind are above mentioned Horror and Gothic. Some attentive people would even ask the most common question over the similarity or comparison between those terms. Interestingly they are not as similar as a lot of people think. As Abedini wrote in his comparative study "The word Horror's origins come from French as it did with goth, Orror meaning to shudder or to bristle. Gothic novels ordinarily contain old and abandoned castles, extreme spectacles similar to misty forests, rainy and stormy weathers, curses, omens, visions, and religious aspects", where it also becomes apparent that the intention behind two of them start to divert from commonly expected purpose of presenting fear. Besides the intentional difference, there is also separation between all the other important elements which becomes abundantly clear when compared such example would be the characters, like he wrote "...where Horror characters don't have a particular type but they do have a common trait and that trait shows Gothic novels follow more of a way to scare you with thoughts while the horror scares you with psychical action" (2022, p. 7072-7073). However, it's still important to accept that even though these are now accepted as separate genres on their own, Gothic is informally still considered a subgenre of Horror. Nonetheless, Gothic fiction as it is mentioned above has its own settled and accepted tropes such as dark castles, supernatural events, stressful atmosphere, eerie mood, bad omens, thin line between heroes and villains.

Edgar Allan Poe's works throughout his lifetime majorly contributed to these commonly accepted tropes of the Gothic. Where it is also important to clarify that Edgar Allan Poe is not the sole creator and inventor of the genre Gothic, as there were already numerous other works published and considered Gothic way before him and his works.

Even some of them were categorized as British Gothic, French Gothic and German Gothic or simply under one umbrella of term as European Gothic. According to Gould this so called European Gothic “was a response to the new sciences and philosophies developed during the industrial period. It was dependent upon the historical landscapes of the continent-wars, legends, myths, and traditions” (Gould, 2010, p. 49). Some of the most commonly known examples of European Gothic would be *The Castle of Otranto* by Horace Walpole (1764), *Frankenstein* by Mary Shelley (1818), *Dracula* by Bram Stoker (1897), and *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* by Robert Louis Stevenson (1886).

Where Edgar Allan Poe is known for his contributions to the so called American Gothic and in some cases considered as the master of the Gothic (Fisher, 2022). This American Gothic is comparatively different than the European Gothic mentioned above. In his work called “Nineteenth-Century American Gothic”, Lloyd-Smith explains that “four indigenous features will prove decisive in producing a powerful and long-lasting American variant of the Gothic: the frontier, the Puritan legacy, race, and political utopianism” (2001, p. 109).” Edgar Allan Poe’s way of writing the Gothic was inclined towards representing human behavior with examination of the psychology in the supernatural environment. As Gould (2010, p. 54) explained:

“In Poe's collection of works there are stories of the fantastic, but included within these are dynamic characters with realistic motivations. Although surrounded by specters and monsters, Poe's characters are fueled by realistic desires familiar to the reading public. In other Poe tales there is a complete absence of the supernatural, but there are monsters, human-monsters. In several of these tales the narrator is this human-monster and the reader

becomes privy to the inner-monologue of a psychopathic killer. Poe used the human mind as a playground for his writing.”

Additionally, it should be mentioned what Sun wrote about Poe’s style in gothic writing:

“In his works, he revealed people’s horror towards super nature, nothingness, death, evil and disintegration of personality. He tried to demonstrate that horror originates from our soul...by means of symbol, suspense, first person narrator, exaggeration of atmosphere and anti-closure, Poe tried his best to construct an intact uniform, mysterious and shaking effect” (2015).

These numerous contributions especially concerning tales of macabre which include stories mostly about death that Edgar Allan Poe made to the gothic genre can be perceived in his works such as *The Black Cat*, *The Fall of the House Usher*, *The Masque of Red Death* and *The Tell-Tale Heart*. In most of his works as in the aforementioned ones Poe's exploration of the human psyche and the inner workings of troubled minds became a defining feature of his stories. Where his characters, such as the unreliable narrator in "The Tell-Tale Heart" is the one who is often tormented by guilt, paranoia, and obsession. The portrayal of the psychological states of characters added layers of complexity and depth to the Gothic literary genre.

2.3 The Tell-Tale Heart And Its Interpretations

This short story of Edgar Allan Poe as mentioned before is one best examples of his works, where his writing style and narrative intention can be observed clearly. As Sova wrote in her “Critical Companion of Edgar Allan Poe” this short story was published in an 1843 issue of The Pioneer, and re-printed in an 1845 issue of The Broadway Journal (2007). The story is narrated by an unnamed narrator who tries to convince the reader of their sanity while describing a gruesome crime they committed. It begins with the narrator claiming that they are not mad, despite admitting to a murderous act. They explain their motive for the crime was the old man's vulture like eye, which they found to be repulsive and representation of evil. The narrator emphasizes their careful planning for the perfect crime. Each night for seven days, the narrator secretly enters the old man's room, opening the door slowly to avoid arousing suspicion and then directs a light towards the old man's eye. However, on the eighth night, they make a noise, causing the old man to wake up. The narrator remains still, listening to the sound of the old man's beating heart, which becomes louder and louder in their ears. Finally, unable to bear the sound any longer, the narrator lunges at the old man, suffocating him on the bed. After the murder, the narrator dismembers the body into pieces and hides it beneath the floorboards in the room. Despite their calculated actions, the narrator soon becomes consumed with guilt and paranoia. This feeling of guilt and paranoia increases when police officers come to the house, when neighbors called them because of the screams. The narrator begins to hear a familiar sound, which they believe to be the old man's heartbeat coming from beneath the floorboards. The sound grows louder and louder, tormenting the narrator's conscience. Driven to madness by the incessant noise, the narrator finally confesses their crime to the police, convinced that they can hear the dead man's heart still beating. The story concludes

with the narrator's desperate plea for the officers to tear up the floorboards and reveal the truth.

Even though it's a relatively short story, it has several elements that make it up as an essential one for a possible adaptation. Most important element would be the inclusion of an unreliable narrator that is so present in other Edgar Allan Poe's works but again portrayed and represented really well in this story. Because of an unreliable narrator being in front stage of the story, the interpretations that the readers' have over this story mostly concerns about their fractured mind. One of the most common interpretations is the that of the narrator's insane or schizophrenic behavior. As Shen wrote:

“The narratio, however, is less an effort to defend his innocence from a murder charge than an effort to prove that he is sane. Yet the narration betrays notable features of insanity. In order to account for the deviant direction of the defense, which goes against conventional expectations...” (2008).

Where there is another complementary point of view from Zimmerman in his study of the moral insanity of this work as he wrote “Finally, the patient's hypothesis that his disorder is physiological rather than mental also indicates that he too lacks insight into his true psychological condition— another symptom of paranoid schizophrenia” (1992). These are just the interpretations formed through the cross referenced study of cultural context of the tale and from the medical standpoint, where there are numerous other interpretations. Nonetheless, as it is clear most of the interpretations about Edgar Allan Poe's work is about the narrator. Additionally, there is another assertion that in actuality there is a relationship that exists between the world in Poe's stories and the world in which Poe lived. Which means that even if Poe did not shape his characters and their world to

replicate his own, his writing was still somewhat limited by what he knew and understood, and much of what he knew was sadness because of his life was filled with it (Jarnagin, 2018). This also goes well with what Gargano tried to claim with Poe having intention for his readers keep their powers of analysis and judgment ever alert; as he does not require or desire complete surrender to the experience of the sensations being felt by his characters and in this case the unreliable narrator (1963). Edgar Allan Poe's meticulously conscious intention to make the main character into an unreliable narrator pays out well, as it is evidenced with endlessly numerous interpretations of the narrative since publication date of the short story. This is one of the main reasons why specifically Edgar Allan Poe's "The Tell Tale Heart" has been selected to be the basis of inspiration for the adaptation of the narrative in the produced short film.

Talking about the adaptation, it would be important to assert that how much Edgar Allan Poe is also influential for cinema both on account of his peculiar life and a consequence of his written works. This goes with how there have been numerous films which were inspired by his life and especially his death where to most people it is still a question of supernatural strangeness. However, while researching adaptations of Edgar Allan Poe's works it was very surprising that the most adapted work of his was actually "The Tell Tale Heart." As Dilon wrote:

"When it comes to larger productions we must look to some of Poe's most popular stories today and none are more popular than "The Tell-Tale Heart." With more than 14 movies and a ray of TV adaptations, this story has found a home in the entertainment industry like no other Poe story. The highly suspenseful story

has captured the minds of many creative people and the psychological plot is almost made for a horror movie”

where one of the most recent adaptations which reverses genders and creates more direct connection between murderer and the victim is accepted as giving modern and surprising element to the story (2020). Surprisingly, this sheer number of adaptations of the selected work did not bring fear or doubt over the choice, instead it became clear stimuli to make own version both better and unique from the ones that came before. That desired uniqueness was going to be possible through the help of the second part of the titular amalgamation, which is the elements of the literary genre of “Magical Realism”.

Chapter 3

History Of Magical Realism

This genre is a relatively new for oneself, as the first experience with it was after watching a film called *El Viaje* or *The Journey* (1992) directed by Fernando E. Solanas for one of the graduate classes. As soon as the screening was finished, it became compelling to research and understand to what genre does this film belong to. Because this film included numerous fantastical and magical elements in relatively grounded present time world settings where all the characters in the world were not questioning fantastical weirdness around them and taking everything for granted. After several thorough researches through articles, blogs and film review websites, a commonly repeating term became the point of attention. When searching this so called “Magical Realism” term throughout online, everything that comes up is showing the evidence that this is a mostly literary genre where there are numerous popular books belonging to it. However, to make the search fruitful the next step was to look if this so called Magical Realism applies to the films, as that was how the term was found by trying to clarify the genre of the watched film. Surprisingly as soon as the search for the films with this genre ended, it was clear that even though this is not commonly or even formally accepted genre there are numerous examples from films too and those films were the ones that are very memorable and very unique with their visual language.

After through research for both the production of the short film and the writing process of the thesis it became clear that this literary genre of “Magical Realism” can be certainly used as the second part of the titular amalgamation to create an interesting

adaptation of an original work by giving and weaving its elements into the narrative of the short film. As Rajabi wrote: “In Magical Realism the elements of reality and imagination are so elaborately interwoven that the reader simply accepts them, in such a way that all artificial and imaginary incidents in the storyline seems completely real and natural” (2020). This idea of a world being presented to the viewer and them just taking for granted and accepting it for what is became compelling. Because, nowadays most of pieces of art always try to explain everything to its viewer, where the viewer may feel that the creator of this artwork treats them both as their inferior and someone who is in need of explanation without the space of understanding left. Arva’s assertion about this is compelling one where she mentions: “The deceptive simplicity of magical realist images, their coherence, vividness, and emotional charge, enables readers to see and to feel...” (2008). So this mutual understanding between creator and the viewer becomes an important relationship that the literary genre of “Magical Realism” creates even if it feels a little bit artificial at first.

“Magical Realism” is often linked to Latin America, leading to the misconception that it exclusively originates from tropical regions in Central America. However, it would be essential to note that while not all magical realism is Latin American, whereas as a location Latin America has played a significant role in its literary production and origin. Gabriel Garcia Marquez, who has become synonymous with magical realism, has influenced numerous writers to adopt this style due to his innovative techniques in his work called “One Hundred Years of Solitude.” As a result, he has strengthened the association between magical realism and Latin American literature where other significant examples for this genre would be "The House of the Spirits" by Isabel Allende, and "Like

"Water for Chocolate" by Laura Esquivel (Bowers, 2018, p. 34). What is interesting is that what started as an exploration of themes of identity, history, and social issues gradually changed into more symbolical and metaphorically wonderful but still grounded themes where it did not become limited only to Latin American literature where has since spread to encompass works from various cultures and regions.

Additionally, eventual appearance of this genre which was at first limited to adult narrative fiction can be noticed in different mediums too such as paintings of famous artists like Otto Dix, Georg Schrimpf, Alex Colville and Frida Kahlo, children's literature especially by Edith Nesbit and Michael Bond, and most recently to the narrative and visual language of the films (Bowers, 2018, p. 99). Fascinating advancement of this literary genre to the medium of the film, at first was only considered formally by a few critics, as there were less number of works that could be considered part of this genre at the time of its emergence; where mostly to categorize a film as part of "Magical Realism" it either should be an adaptation of an already established literature or have recognizable elements of the genre. Still as it is a visual medium all those elements become more engrossing to tell as a storyteller and experience as a viewer, which led to its inevitable emergence in the medium film too. As Frederick Jameson wrote about Magical Realism in film:

"All this may now seem distant enough from the conception of magic realism with which we began until we grasp the necessary and constitutive relationship between intensities of colors and bodies in these works and their process of de-narrativization which has ultimately been shown to be a process of ideological analysis and deconstruction" (1986).

Bowers concluded her study on “Magical Realism” with positive note toward its future with assertion that:

“This form of art relies more than most upon the belief, the perspective and the willingness to change these beliefs and perspectives of the reader or viewer. Magical Realism is an intimate affair between the reader/viewer and the text/film. As such, its future as a particular and identifiable narrative mode is vulnerable, but at the very least, discussion of Magical Realism during the past eighty years has opened up the debate concerning the relationship between reality and fiction, and the reader’s/viewer’s role within that relationship. Far from being simply a fashionable narrative device, Magical Realism has proved itself through the criticism it has generated to stimulate consideration of the relationship of fiction and representation to reality” (2018, p. 123).

This positive outlook into relatively obscure genre, additionally paves a way for hopeful collaboration that has already been started and going strong in different visual mediums and especially in the film.

Chapter 4

“EYE FOR AN EYE”

4.1 Thought Process Behind Developing The Short Film

So after discussing both elements of the proposed experimented amalgamation now is the time to discuss about the main purpose and reason for this study – the final produced short film called “Eye for an Eye” that is the product of the above mentioned amalgamation. To be honest the short film itself was written, filmed and finished before the thesis started to be written, even though the research of the possible sources for the paper was already started. Personally it was important to see the finished short film at first and after then start working on the paper itself, because even though it was already settled on the elements of the visual and narrative language of the short film there were always expectations that something overlooked and unpredicted will come out of this said amalgamation, where previously mentioned unexpected association to the art house horror genre is a great example and evidence of that forbearing wait for the final short film. Nonetheless, the final product proved that experimenting an amalgamation between an accepted work of the past with the elements of relatively new literary genre could enhance both the visual and narrative languages of the final product where in overall it also paves a way for an academic research in the vein of this study.

Before talking about the short film itself, it would be great to delve into the thought process that went into choosing a short story to adapt for this short film. As it was mentioned above, the idea was to have a combination between a commonly known short story and the elements of the literary genre “Magical Realism”, where it was apparent that

chosen short story would need to have possible narrative space for the planned and intended usage of the elements from the literary genre of “Magical Realism.” Additionally, the chosen short story needed to be copyright free for usage of adaptation and be in the public domain, even if this is a student short film made as a case study for a thesis it needed to be right in copyright usage context where interestingly this also leads to the narrowing down of the time period of the released short stories. While doing research on possible narrative’s in those short stories, the idea of the mind was settled to be the main theme. Why mind? As mind is defined as “the element of a person that enables them to be aware of the world and their experiences, to think, and to feel; the faculty of consciousness and thought,” it would be interesting to experiment on the notion of mind being puzzled or being questioned both by the characters’ and the audience at the same time. As the narrative being told should have its characters’ consciousness’ and awareness’ of the surrounding world being broken. Where additionally the strong visual language shown throughout the film would create and add to the feeling of a mind being fragmented. Excessive and thorough research has been led so to find a possible short story to be inspired from that has an idea of mind being challenged without being too explicit about it, as it to give enough space for adding one’s own elements without harming the original piece.

When the research was slowly coming to its natural end, the number of possible short stories to be inspired from was narrowed down to three. They were: *The Yellow Wallpaper* written by Charlotte Perkins Gilman (1892), *Piper in the Woods* written by Philip K. Dick (1953) and *The Tell Tale Heart* written by Edgar Allan Poe (1843). *The Yellow Wallpaper* is about the deterioration of a woman's mental health while she is on a

"rest cure" in her family estate. Her obsession with the yellow wallpaper in her bedroom marks her descent into psychosis from her depression throughout the story; Piper in the Woods is about an army doctor at a garrison on Earth is puzzled by a case of a soldier who returns from the asteroid Y3, and claims that he's a plant; and to shortly summarize already discussed The Tell Tale Heart, it follows an unnamed, unreliable narrator who insists on his sanity after murdering an old man with a "vulture eye" respectively. All these three possible short stories have in common several elements such as: small limited locations, that usually could be substituted to one room; little to no on screen dialogues, instead a narration that acts as a passageway to characters' mind; an unreliable narrator, that could make the viewer question the legitimacy of the narration which effectively could lead to a subjective interpretation of the story by the audience; and importance of visual language, in the sense that usage of more visceral images would create a feeling of questioning from the viewer to the meaning of all these visuals. Eventually as it is already apparent from the final produced short film and the title of this study Edgar Allan Poe's short story The Tell Tale Heart has been chosen as the basis of the inspiration and adaptation for the narrative of the short film.

As soon as the short story has been chosen and settled, and as the literary genre of "Magical Realism" was already chosen to be the other basis of the main amalgamation the creative process of figuring out the visual and narrative language was started. Main idea behind the description of this literary genre of "blurring of the lines between fantasy and reality" was accepted as the primary tenet and principle to the narrative and visual language of the film as where this fragmented mind concept would need to make the audience question the validity of the things happening, which hopefully could lead them

to have their own subjective interpretation and basing their own meaning behind the ideas, imageries and symbolism presented in the final short film. Then afterwards having all these main components being settled, the natural next step was to sit down and start writing the script of the film. However, before that it was also important to re-read The Tell Tale Heart thoroughly so to be in control of the whole narrative and know clearly what can be added, taken out or even recontextualized so that it would be beneficial for creating a new original piece without disrespecting and discrediting the original story.



4.2 Scripting, Filming & Finishing

The scripting process was done the same way all the scripts that have been written for projects of oneself where the visuals were the first thing to be thought about. As the approximate narrative structure is somewhat being already known because of it being an adaptation, the process of the writing the script through the visual elements helped to figure out the stylistic choices of the usage from the elements of literary genre of “Magical Realism”. First visual idea that was envisioned was the inclusion of the element that became the most important part of the short film – the eye. As there is already an unrelenting usage of “a vulture eye” as a plot device in the short story by Poe, it was compelling to make it more crucial to the narrative. Afterwards the idea of having the narrator hating the eye became apparent, where the eye would be part of the house and that’s how the elements of “Magical Realism” started to form up in the narrative (Figure 1). This pushed the narrative of the film to possibly consider the house that the narrator was living in, into becoming representation of another human character’s body both figuratively and literally. The goal was to continue writing the narrative the way that everything that happens to the narrator, is accepted and taken for granted without even being questioned by the viewer, where this way the “blurring of the lines between fantasy and reality” of the literary genre of “Magical Realism” is being respected.

Additionally, after the house was considered representation of the another human character’s body where above mentioned element of the eye would come out of the wall to look at the narrator or when repeated the heart beating sequence from the original story besides the sound now visually a heart will be coming out of the wall to show the fear of the character that has been represented by the house itself (Figure 2).



Figure 1. The eye is part of the house and can come out of the walls



Figure 2. The heart beating sequence has real heart coming out of the wall

Talking about the characters, original story had the narrator, old man and commonly two police officers. One of the most essential parts of the original story was taken granted while writing the screenplay which is the main character being an unreliable narrator and was used to the advantage of the newly forming narrative. Where everything said by the narrator could become suspicious to the viewer at first, but when those said details start to be shown on the screen the validity of both this unreliable narrator and the viewer's perception becomes questionable and examinable. So to make this artificial skepticism less straightforward and more dubious, besides having intentionally symbolical details it was also determined to make all the characters in the film a representation of the narrator in different way such as the old person and police officers. Understandably, this idea could lead the viewer to have the most common and easiest interpretation given, which is having the whole story happening in the head of one character. However, because already overlooking this issue the choice of breaking the fourth wall with the help of an unreliable narrator was pondered to be added to the narrative. Where as soon as the narrator is introduced to the viewer, all the monologues and narrations done by an unreliable narrator is addressed not to a character off-screen but directly to the viewer. Then eventually it was settled that if every character represents the narrator, then there should be an implicit referral to the logic behind this choice. Because if its written that way, then it needed to be shot accordingly where all the characters are played by the same performer (Figures 3-6). Furthermore, there needed to be an original addition to the narrative to support this "implicit referral to the logic behind the choice" mentioned above. So eventually it became perceptible that after the ending of the original story, where narrator confesses to the crime and cries out, the narrative of this film should not stop but continue on. That's where the idea of having this whole narrative of the film

having a circular or in this case looping plot was asserted. Where instead of confessing the narrator of this film would have their character replace the one they murdered themselves, being replaced by another one that resembles them albeit belonging to the opposite gender and inevitably implying that the whole plot of the narrative is being started all over again with all the same plot points and beats.



Figure 3. Default state of the narrator



Figure 4. The reincarnated old woman

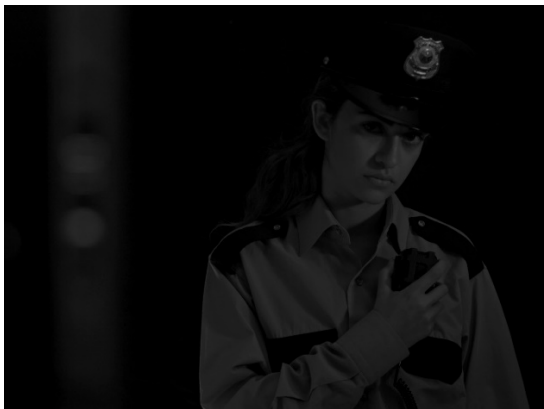


Figure 5. Police officer



Figure 6. Opposite gender narrator

After finishing the first draft of the script, three essential points were needed to be dealt with. They were: who will be the performer, the location and how the magically visual elements will be done. Firstly, dealing point with the performer was naturally being thought of casting a male actor who would perform the roles of the narrator, old man, the police officer, plus two new added characters. However, in a fortunate turn of events while casting process was continuing an actress came in with the actor just to accompany him to the meeting. Where it became apparent that this actress even though being Turkish has studied acting abroad in Canada, which was good news because the desired way of shooting of the film would have been in English language instead of Turkish. However, there was a small dilemma according to the script of the film. The narrator was written to be a male, as it was intended that each character will played by same performer which also meant respecting the original piece's old man character. Nevertheless, with the intention to get an audition from that actress the whole script was rewritten to have the gender of the character changed from male to female. Where after the audition tape came from the actress, it was apparent that she is the correct choice for the film and in actuality the swapping of the genders could be beneficial to the film by making yet another distinct change. After settling on the actress second important point was to figure out how the setting will be, in this film's case what would the house that the narrator lives in looks like. It was accepted that the main idea behind the house should be its timelessness, as if this house could both exists from the past and in the present. Fortunately, a house that was found with elements which easily went well with the idea of timelessness where minimalistic and intentional production design choices supported that idea to a greater extent. Also after choosing the house the idea of geometrically pleasing and mostly two dimensional shots with only intentional depth in specific one was asserted to be the part

of the visual language displayed in the final short film. Third and the last essential point before starting the filming was to figure out how would those “Magical Realism” elements from the screenplay would be filmed and shown. The easiest way to go was to hire a computer generated imagery (CGI) artist and have it done in the post-production. However, as this was still a student film and the allocated budget needed to spent wisely, it was established that most of the “Magical Realism” visuals would be captured in camera with practical effect instead of using computer generated imagery (CGI). One of those mentioned practical effect would be a heart coming out of the wall, where a wall has been created to give feeling that it may be a skin of character that it represents where an anatomically correct heart prop starts popping and beating out of it in front of the camera, the visuals would be more effective for the viewer instead being rendered with computer generated imagery (CGI). Additionally, a minor detail to mention in this paper but an essential part of the film’s visual elements would be also usage of the practical make-up effects to convey different character’s played by the same actress and in this case the old woman, police officer, commonly accepted representation of the narrator from the original short story in the imagery of Edgar Allan Poe in small reference moment and a gender swapped version of the narrator at the end of the film (Figures 7-8). Subsequently, after all these essential elements were resolved, the final script was finished and two-month pre-production stage was finished the planned three-day filming started.



Figures 7&8. The narrator as a reference to Edgar Allan Poe

Because of the thorough and effective preparation in the pre-production stage over two-month period, the filming went very smooth and well. To shortly talk about the filming, it was essential to work and direct the actress in the most correct possible way so as to help her perform all these characters while making them feel distinct from each other. All the narration was recorded on the location while letting the actress to be in character and in costume so to help her with delving into the mindset of the role much more easily. Additionally, living in the location throughout the filming period was beneficial for the actress so to not lose the feeling of the role after finishing a day of shoot. Furthermore, having those “Magical Realism” visual elements done practically on the set in front of the camera was very beneficial for the performance. Evidently, all the overall intentional choices done throughout both the pre-production and production stages also helped immensely with the post-production stage too. While editing the film it was important to settle on sound design of the film because even if the visual language and acting has been achieved in desired level, the ambiance and tone of the soundscape should complement all the other elements. It was determined that the whole film would have continues record player crackling sound that will go well with the black and white grainy cinematography. Eventually a piece of music has been selected to be used throughout the film which is Giuseppe Tartini’s composition called Violin Sonata in G minor or Devil’s Trill Sonata. The fortunate part of this selection is the period of time that the composer was living which was through 1692-1770, so the piece is already in public domain. However, it was also equally important to find a performance of the piece that is in the public domain where Franz Von Vecsey’s performance was selected which was performed in 1910’s and already belongs to the public domain. The haunting piece which itself has an interesting story behind it, where according to John Henken “Tartini had a dream in which he imagined a

deal with the Devil, who proceeded to demonstrate the best solo Tartini had ever heard. Upon waking up Tartini wrote down this music...” worked really well as it was fully used in the soundscape of the film and eventually became the ambiance with its eerie violins while also being the complimentary inseparable part of already mentioned record player crackling and black-white grainy cinematography (2017). Lastly to talk about the editing process before going thoroughly into the details of the short film, it was naturally important to have pace of the short film work well with previously mentioned elements such as acting, cinematography, sound design etc. Even though the expected final product was the short film, so assumingly the pace should be faster, where on the contrary while editing it became clear that the pace will be slower than expected. This slower approach to the editing and overall pace of the short film became indispensable part, because of how it added needed gravity and weight to the narrative being told. As the most shots of the short film were static, where each of them have an intentional geometrical, symbolical and visual language that adds more to the narrative, now seemingly deliberately selected slower pace allows the viewer to sink into the visuals without being pulled out of the viewing experience with more out of place quick edit. After finishing the first rough draft of the short film and having a screening with producers, from their enthusiastic reactions it was evident that the execution was fortunate and successful. Where even there were distinct interpretations presented by giving the evidence from the visual, symbolical and narrative stand point. In due course, this encouraged a confidence over the final product’s strength from both visual and narrative standpoints respectively, where after finishing the final cut the intention of having to produce a short film concerning an amalgamation of two elements which can be considered worthy of being written a thesis on was successfully achieved.

4.3 Narrative & Elements Of The Amalgamation

As it was clear that the intention behind producing this short film was to have a thesis written based on it, where besides of experimenting with the titular amalgamation additionally all the visual and narrative elements were chosen intentionally so that there would be a possible scope for an analysis both in academic and filmic sense. While it was mentioned above numerous times that Edgar Allan Poe's *The Tell Tale Heart* was the basis and the main inspiration behind the short film's narrative, still there were intentions to add distinct elements so to make the final product original and smidge distinct from the other adaptations of the same work. So if to summarize the plot of the short film it would be that: "It follows an unnamed, unreliable narrator who insists on her sanity after murdering an old-woman with a "vulture eye. She endeavors to convince the viewer of her sanity while simultaneously describing the murder she committed." Even though, the summary sounds too similar to the original piece eventually while the film goes on it starts to distinguish itself with new plot elements and most importantly with a continuation of narrative from the ending of the original piece.

The most major change from the original work was to make the narrative continue on after the ending of the original piece, where originally the narrator confesses of the crime and the story ends. The intention of not ending and continuing of the narrative goes with the idea of pushing to close out the implicit circular or looping nature of story being told in the short film. As it was mentioned in previous chapters how one of the most commonly accepted interpretations of the original piece is that final scene of confession is somewhat a result of narrator's guilt. Whereas the whole feeling and tone of the short film is done with the idea of "blurring of the lines between fantasy and reality" of the

literary genre of “Magical Realism”, so the above mentioned feeling of guilt could be examined on how it is shown more explicitly through visuals such as an example of a character entering the scene and representing that feeling of guilt while aforementioned heart sound that comes in the original final scene is replaced by the real beating heart. There was a specific idea that was presented to the producer while pitching the possibility of producing this short film. It was at its core the consideration of an idea of personal purgatory of a woman that committed a crime in the context of this short film a sin done long time ago and how all the circular nature of the events happening is the punishment of this aforementioned purgatory. A Divine punishment in its purest form. A form of Contrapasso which if roughly translated to modern Italian stands for suffering the opposite, which was first referenced in Dante Alighieri’s epic Divine Comedy Volume 1: Inferno. As mentioned by Mark Musa in the commentary notes on the 1984 Penguin Classics version of the epic: “It’s a suffering inflicted by God in a process either resembling or contrasting with the sin itself.” But it also in the context of a punishment functions not merely as a form of divine revenge, but rather as the fulfillment of a destiny freely chosen by each soul during his or her life. Thus also naturally coinciding with the long held religious belief of “Who so ever kills a person ... it shall be as if he has killed all off mankind”. This includes the killer herself in this short film’s case the narrator. Thus if narrator’s attitude and behavior is examined closely, then it represents her being stuck in a loop of paranoia, wrath, self-mutilation and finally unconscious sorrow for the act she has committed. Possibly considered interpretation of a circular or looping nature of the narrative is supported by all the characters being played by the same actress, where in the end the murdered old woman is replaced by narrator herself where another version of the narrator comes into the house to repeat this cycle of life and death. This major plot point

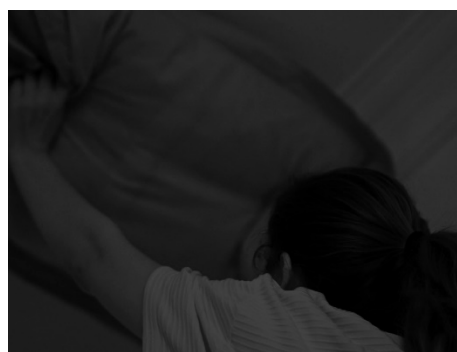
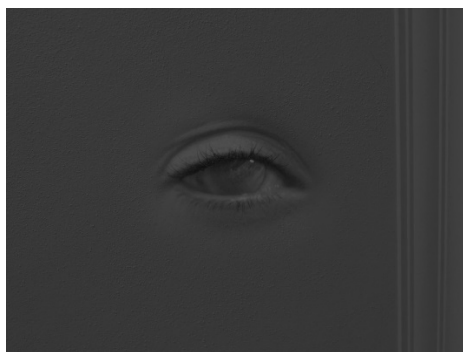
which is the cycle of life and death, wouldn't be possible to achieve and execute correctly without all the other intentional elements that made up the narrative such as the symbolical imagery, metaphors, allegories and references. However, it is important to note that all those intentional choices belong to oneself own desired interpretation of the narrative being told and will undeniably be different of the interpretations that viewers could have throughout their viewing and eventual analysis of the short film.

So the film's opening starts with a dark room and a figure that comes closer to the screen. That figure tries to reach towards the viewer and it could seem as if that figure wants strangle them, where jail bars appear as if stop her which then she places her hands on the bars. This is the first time viewer is introduced to the narrator who is somehow created jail bars as if to protect the viewer from being strangled by her. Jail bars seems like an intentional imagery to convey that the character is feeling imprisoned which in a way is the purposeful introduction of the main considered personal purgatory idea of the narrative. The narrator starts to talk to the viewer, where now the idea of breaking the fourth wall is being introduced. One of the most important details to mention is that while writing the screenplay it was essential to respect the original works monologues, so even if the language was recontextualized to sound more modern the monologues still had their original meanings. So as in the original the narrator talks about her sense being heightened and acute. To prove her assertion, she catches something out of thin air and shows it to the viewer. She has a bug that resembles a death beetle, which is a reference to another common interpretation of the original work where the sound that the narrator hears in the final scene wasn't of the heart but in actuality this was of death-beetle. Then she releases the bug, which turns into a butterfly and flies away (Figures 9-10).



Figures 9&10. Bug turns into butterfly

This intentionally visual transformation of insects, could be considered as to first show fantastical element and then to disapprove the insanity of the narrator by confusing the viewers too. Because in the next scene she talks about how she can hear the sounds from heaven and hell, where the viewer also can hear it as a non-diegetic sound. This leads the narrator to directly address the viewer about their sanity too, by explicitly using this as evidence because if they saw the insect transformation and heard the sounds that the narrator was talking about then it means it that either they are both sane or insane. This could implicitly show how the narrator directly influences the viewer's perception, meaning everything being told must be taken at face value and granted. Purpose behind this narrative choice could be considered as a way to force the viewer accept what is going without questioning it, where the "blurring of the lines between fantasy and reality" of the literary genre of "Magical Realism", where the natural reaction becomes an unconscious response and acceptance. Then as the narrator begins to narrate with the voice over how she planned to kill the old woman because of the immense hate she has for the Eye, the viewer is introduced to that titular Eye through it coming out of the ceiling in the narrator's room and looking directly at her. The most common character reaction to this event would have been fear and terror, whereas the narrator's reaction is more of annoyance and just plain acceptance of this fantastical event as something that is plainly ordinary.



Figures 11&12. Eye comes through ceiling and narrator's reaction is annoyance

This important element of the Eye at first could seem like a cheap horror gimmick, however upon acknowledgement of it by the narrator it destroys the concept of voyeurism alluding to the fact that the Eye is a natural part of the surrounding world and she is not weirded out by it supporting one of the main tropes of the literary genre of “Magical Realism”. In the subsequent scene, the viewer is introduced to the old woman when she crosses paths with the narrator in the corridor of the house. This is where the viewer could notice that the old woman's both eyes have peculiarities, where one is gouged out and the other looks similar to the Eye that was coming through the ceiling in the narrator's room. Her eye also has discerning feature of looking like a cataract eye, which makes the vision problematic.



Figure 13. Old woman has both a cataract eye and a gouged one

This could lead to the idea of the narrator blindly hating the Eye of an old woman which in actuality can't possible see her because of the cataract. The literal eye of the old woman could also be interpreted as a symbolic eye. First and foremost, being respectful to the original work's *pale blue vulture eye* itself by being again the reason of hate which leads to the murder. Secondly it seems like a an intentional reference to the long held superstitious belief of the Evil Eye (Nazar). Additionally, it easily represents a catalyst that is the reason for boiling pot of emotions in the narrator which evokes emotions such as anger, jealousy and loathing. Eventually, the narrator starts to talk about the seven days that it took to torture and murder the old woman. This scene is presented and executed through the technique of montage. However, there is reason behind this creative choice as through the help of montage passage of time could be shown in the context of the short film a seven-night trip to the old woman's room to torture her by directing a beam of light towards The Eye to goad it. Specificity of seven-night trip to the old woman's room, first could be examined as a reference to the original work where similarly the narrator had seven-night trip and secondly each day was shown visually in the short film to convey the difference each days with minor changes in the appearance of the both the narrator and the house itself. This intentional choice of a montage supports the cyclical nature of the events happening throughout the film, and just have another respectful reference to the original work a scene with narrator resembling Edgar Allan Poe was added to the seven-night trip montage. Additionally, it also is an implicit reference to the another commonly accepted interpretation of the narrator's appearance being based on Edgar Allan Poe himself. Even though, at first it could seem just an out of place reference, in actuality it also serves to the purpose of adding and strengthening the idea of cyclical nature of the

story and its timelessness as if this looping punishments in the purgatory of the narrator has started long ago and hasn't been stopped. The montage concludes when narrator continues to narrate the seventh night which is the night that murder happens. Even though the final product is a short film, it was decided to have a small intermission before the murder scene and the intermission shows a moon in darkness of the night. Purpose of the moon seems to be used as its symbolical meaning from the commonly accepted Raider Waite tarot card reading of the Moon from Bidly Tarot that says: "Your fears and illusions often come out when you are projecting them into your present and your future, based on your past experiences. You may have a painful memory that caused emotional distress, and rather than dealing with the emotions you pushed them down deep into your subconscious" (Figures 14-15).



Figure 14&15. An intermission as an image of a moon with eye on it.

After a small intermission, the narrator is standing next to the old-woman's bed, where in a moment the old-woman wakes up in fear. She asks out if someone is there, and after there is no reply, The Eye that has appeared near the wall where the narrator stands goes back into the wall where a heart comes out in its place and starts beating slowly to show the old-woman being afraid. While the heart continues beating, if examined and listened thoroughly there was an intentional stylistic choice done to the way the narrator's narration

is heard of the specific remark. When the remark "I stood quite still. I did not move. She was just there, listening..." is heard, each sentence is actually said both by the narrator and the old-woman so to begin to imply both of them are the same person. Finally, the narrator lunges to murder the old woman by strangling her. Where the face of the narrator changes to different versions of her, which supports the idea of the cyclical nature of narrative where in a blink and you will miss it moment there is also a male version of the narrator that is strangling the old woman(Figures16-20).

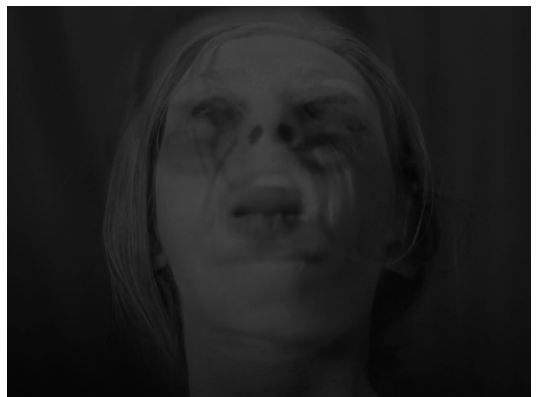
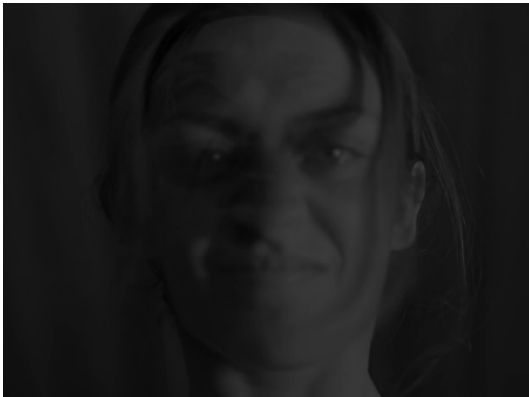


Figure 16-21. Different version of the narrator repeating actions, to show the cyclical nature of the events.

After the murder the heart beating stops and the heart goes back into the wall of the house. As in the original work the narrator cuts the old-woman in pieces, places her remains under the floorboard and gets an unexpected visit from police officer. However, in the case of the short film the police officer looks uncannily like the narrator and when the police officer is first visually introduced standing outside in front of the door there is a very peculiar continuing darkness outside. This could be visually done to show that there is no possibility of leaving this house to outside, as this numerous mentioned personal purgatory is located in a metaphysical space or like a pocket dimension which also makes the existence of the police officer as symbolical representation of the narrator's guilt as soon as she murders the old-woman. As in the original work the narrator brings the police officer to the old-woman's room being very proud and confident of the secrecy of their crime. However eventually the narrator starts to hear gradually increasing sound of a beating heart. Ignoring the police officer the narrator tears up the floor, takes out the beating heart and holds it in her hands (Figure 22). This is where the aforementioned major difference between the original work starts to convey itself. Instead of confessing the crime the narrator gets frustrated and sorrowful over the beating heart, then drops the heart into the floor which resembles an endless darkness similar to the outside again implying the setting being a metaphysical space or a pocket dimension (Figure 23). Then the narrator finds herself in the same endlessly dark room from the opening, where she looks around while several superimposed after images of her repeat her actions and she gouges out both of her eyes (Figure 24). This is a clear reference to the oedipism or self-

enucleation which as Aung wrote is a rare form of self-mutilation, and most often described in acutely psychotic patients, who have religious or sexual delusions additionally caused by psychosis, paranoid delusions or drugs. As she gouges her eyes the narrator says the last spoken line of the film which is “Now come closer, I will let you in on little secret”, where the camera comes closer to the narrator as if to represent the viewer’s unconscious acceptance of the narrator’s request (Figure 25).



Figure 22: Narrator holding a heart



Figure 23. Narrator in the dark room



Figure 24. Narrator gouges her eyes

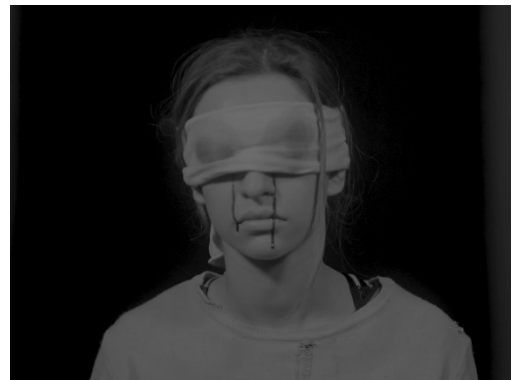


Figure 25. Fully blind narrator

In the succeeding scenes there are still several superimposed after images of the narrator that either are a little bit late or soon but still repeat the narrator's actions such as climbing up the stairs, going through the corridor and entering old woman's room (Figure 26). This intentional visual superimposition is implicitly shows the circular nature of the story as all these actions have been done before and will be done in the future too. When the narrator arrives into the old woman's room, she takes out the floorboard which underneath has the cut pieces of the old woman's body. She takes over the piece of cloth and unveils a skull which has a glass eye in right socket (Figure 27). The next shot unveils that there are numerous other skulls under the floorboard each older and crushed than the one before, which shows and means that the murdering and hiding of the bodies has been done numerous times before (Figure 28). She takes the glass eye and as several scenes ago she gouged both of her eyes she inserts it into her right socket where she resembles the old woman (Figure 29).

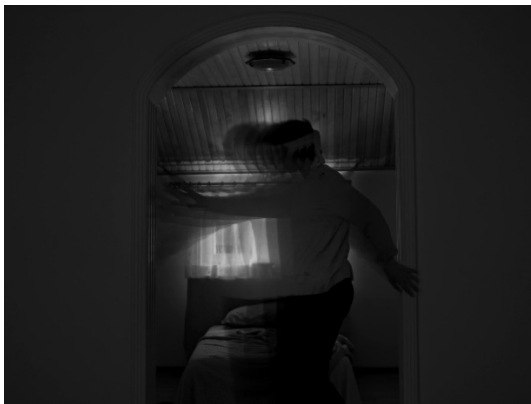


Figure 26. After imaged of narrator



Figure 27. Skull with a glass eye



Figure 28. Skulls each older than the other



Figure 29. Narrator inserts the glass eye

Then the narrator slowly descends into the bottom floor through the stairs. It could be important to show the narrator's descend uninterrupted, because in the following scene narrator will transform fully into the old woman. It took seven days for the narrator to reincarnate into the old woman. Number of seven days is also symbolic to the Islamic belief of the number of doors/gates of hell being seven, while for heaven the number of doors is eight. This supports the narrator's inability to exhibit patience, disallowing her to escape of this divine punishment where she never can't pass on to the eighth night having murdered the old woman in this case also herself. Which again also supports the philosophical idea of "when you murder someone you also murder a part of humane self. Additionally, on a purely meta theological side, the narrator's seven-day cycle could be seen as a heretical action worthy of invoking this aforementioned divine punishment or the personal purgatory. As soon as the narrator finished her descent through stairs, the next scene shows from outside her opening the door and now she has visually fully turned in the old woman that was murdered by her. While she turned into old woman, another version or iteration of the narrator arrives to the front door which in this case is a male version. After opening the door, the narrator who turned into old woman has trouble seeing who is in front of her, where the new male version of the narrator steps in forward and

they hug. It was again seems to be important to show a complete change in the attitude and behavior in the narrator who turned into old woman, where when she hugs her another iteration nothing has been left from the wrath that she had before which got replaced by melancholically filled facial expression of regret. Eventually both of them go into their respective rooms. The final scene shows the new male iteration of the narrator sitting in the previous narrator's room on the bed and feeling weird. Then a tear drops from the ceiling and the narrator looks up. This tear droplet seems to signify the emotional sorrow, which implies that the narrator that turned into the old woman is to some degree has become conscious of her actions and the overall cycle. Where the final shot of the short film is the new male iteration of the narrator looking up very perplexed and as the viewer already knows what is on the ceiling the screen slowly fades out as if an eye is being closed (Figures 30-31).



Figures 30&31. Final shot of the film as if an eye is being closed from the ceiling.

As a whole the narrative of the short film even though inspired by an original work and filled with the elements of a literary genre needed to have specific uniqueness to itself, where this cyclical nature and with the implications of possible meta theological reading adds needed distinction to this very compelling adaptation that engrosses aforementioned titular amalgamation while both doing it best to respect the original piece and themes that stood for.



Chapter 5

Art House Horror Or Elevated Horror As A Recent Genre

So as it was mentioned numerously above, the intention behind producing the short film was to experiment over the amalgamation of an original work and the elements of a literary genre. However, as soon as the filming concluded and the editing started it became apparent that this short film will have several common elements with recently popular genre of art house films. To be honest even though this discovery was surprising one, somewhat like this was expected because of how unconsciously the visual and narrative choices were being done which included inspirations from several films that can be considered as part of art house horror or elevated horror genre.

So what is this art house horror or elevated horror genre? First of all, before delving into specifics it can be simply described as a sub-genre of two other popular film genres those of which are horror and art film. Where according Britannica one is “calculated to cause intense repugnance, fear, or dread” and the other is about valuing artistic experimental nature of the medium respectively. The name that is given to this kind of films is relatively recent where it’s popularity can be credited to the immensely successful film studio A24 and their works starting from 2010s. As Ramella wrote in her article about popularity of the art house horror:

“This term began to see traction thanks to arthouse production company A24, which has become synonymous with bold and out-of-the-box movies in the past decade. As it churned out hit after hit, making it one of the most popular

brands in Hollywood. So, with as it was making horror movies, fans needed a term they'd be comfortable with — enter the concept of elevated horror” (2021).

Even though it is commonly accepted that this phenomenon has started in 2010s, it is important to clarify and assert that there are numerous films from the past that could be considered as part of this genre as they also share numerous visual elements, and narrative tropes. As there are numerous examples of horror films from the past such as Georges Franju’s *Eyes Without a Face* (1960), Herk Harvey’s *Carnival of Souls* (1962), Roman Polanski’s *Repulsion* (1965), Ingmar Bergman’s *Hour of the Wolf* (1968), Masaki Kobayashi’s *Kwaidan* (1964), and David Lynch’s *Eraserhead* (1977). These film including more were all mentioned by Ebiri in his article about rationally possible brief history of art house horror genre where he also briefly summarizes what makes an art house horror film as –

“...a type of film that represents a fascinating byproduct of the collision of art and commerce, of genre convention and personal vision. In the past, you could market a movie as a horror flick and get some unwitting viewers into the theater before they realized the film was something entirely different. That’s not quite possible nowadays, but art-horror does provide one way of giving audiences something new, in the guise of the familiar” (2014).

This idea of something being presented that is new and unique is what makes art house horror as a recently favorable genre by the audience even though without being a mainstream one. To add another important point besides this genre bringing something new, it is also essential to accept that the way of storytelling in the genre of horror has

been changed and enhanced for the sake of the presented material being meaningful instead of being just about calculated thrill of fear. That's why aforementioned term of elevated horror is used by the viewers and the fans of these kind of films as it elevates already established and accepted tropes of the horror genre. However, as there is always those who would disagree and interestingly one of those people who denounces this term of elevated horror is none other than Jordan Peele director of commonly accepted art house horror films such as *Get Out* (2017), *Us* (2019) and *Nope* (2022). In his interview with *The Verge* he says that:

“I don't want people to think that I'm trying to make 'elevated' films...I think that's a trap that I don't quite appreciate because I, you know, I like making fucked-up films. I like making weird movies that I'm really just not supposed to make — and sometimes challenge people on the other side of things as well” (Pulliam-Moore, 2022).

This denouncement is understandable from the point of view of the Jordan Peele, because as he is the one who created the film from the scratch and wouldn't want people to categorize and label his films into only one specific group. Creation from the scratch mostly by one person is also important point to clarify about films that are considered art house horror. Because it is very evident that most of the popular and successful art house horror films have been created by one person who both wrote and directed the film. In his recently released book Gmelch wrote that:

“...Another notable aspect of many of these films is that the director and screenwriter are often the same person. These rather young filmmakers seek to have complete control over the story from start to finish, rather than working with

someone else's preexisting screenplay or story.... As all of this suggests that the filmmakers have very personal stories to tell, which undoubtedly noticeable while watching. The films seem as if it is their own experience as if they have experienced it themselves and now want to tell their story to a (still) abstract audience, with an often startling and fascinating penchant for detail" (2023).

This shows that special care given to the stories being told in these films of the art house horror genre. Even though sometimes the stories told may not concern personal stories, on the contrary they concern supernatural and fantastical there are still tinges of humanity included which what makes the viewers come back to screenings newly released films with the elements of the genre.

When the finished short film was being screened, it was apparent that even if unconsciously while preparing, filming and editing all the points discussed about the art house horror have been contemplated and reflected. In actuality to be honest there would be no denouncement of the produced short film if it's considered or labeled as an art house horror after viewing by any audience. Because while screening it was perceptible that all the inspirations both narratively and visually are accepted as great additions to the overall final short film. Even though as mentioned before at first the main intention was to have an amalgamation between Edgar Allan Poe's *The Tell Tale Heart* and the elements of the literary genre of "Magical Realism", the final of a short film is an evidence that something unexpected could come out of an experimental combination and unconscious choices of the ways to tell the story. If to discuss some of the choice to the ways to tell the narrative in this short film, the discussion would be divided into two categories visual choices and

narrative choices. To start with the visual choices, the first thing that comes into mind is the choice of making the film black and white or to be correct in the case of this film grainy grayscale. Some would ponder this was just aesthetic choice, however the intention was to have a minimal monotone colors so that viewers' attention wouldn't be filled with unnecessary care towards colorful colors and tone of color grading settles the viewer in the mood of the film from the first second. The other visual choice was to film the shots with an aspect ratio of 4:3, so to give a little bit of boxed in feeling to the shots in film with a claustrophobia effect which also translates well with what the narrator is going through the whole film. Also the selection to have geometrically asymmetrical shots with long takes was to make following of the actions happening in the film more easily while still being compelling to look at, where additionally some editing choices such as juxtaposition of several shots overreach other was to create new compelling shot out of that combination which still serves the purpose to move forward the narrative. Talking about the narrative, it was important to make it not simple in the sense that to more ambiguous but still comprehensible. It needed to be compelling so that the viewer should think about what has been presented to them and that ambiguity would push them to interpret what they just saw. Even if it sounds to elitist, the final short film as a whole needed to be thought provoking with its themes and messages. This intention is what also separates a plain horror film with a slasher character trying to kill others and an art house horror with somber but seriously provocative themes (Tsintziras, 2023).

Chapter 6

CONCLUSION

As the writer and director of this short film it is important to clarify that even if the narrative of the film is mainly inspired by Edgar Allan Poe's *The Tell Tale Heart* and the elements of the literary genre of "Magical Realism" has been added, what made this film personal is the choices to how present and tell the newly recontextualized narrative. Even if it was unconscious at first, eventual acceptance of the elements and the tropes of another genre which in this case the art house horror immensely helped to shape up the short film into what it is now. As an aspiring filmmaker it was important to not run away from possible opportunity of an experiment. Undoubtedly, the final product could have been awful because of several elements being included visually and narratively. However, the most important part of both producing this short film and writing this thesis was the research behind it. Without the through research done on all the elements that make up the intentionally experimented amalgamation, the results would have been lacking. Thankfully, an eager desire to experiment and to create something new led a way to a project which first became personal then secondly worthy of being proud piece of one's original work.

As it was mentioned numerous times, when thought about at first both of the main points of amalgamation between Edgar Allan Poe's *The Tell Tale Heart* and the elements of the literary genre of "Magical Realism" seem irrelevant. Where one is the pioneer of the popular genre of gothic horror where the other one is a relatively recent literary genre where a line between fantasy and reality is broken respectively. However, it became clear that both had possible uses for each other's elements as there were already interpretations

of Edgar Allan Poe's works as a possible early example of a piece of work with the elements of the literary genre of "Magical Realism". This assertion comes from the idea that Edgar Allan Poe's works have specific core of psychological study of the character's state of mind with the elements of supernatural, where in most cases there is no rational explanation to those supernatural events happening in the story which leads to interesting interpretations from the readers. So the amalgamation seemed like a logical experiment in the sense of making an enhanced work which would be both strong narratively and visually.

As the intentional medium of the final product was a short film, it was important to be precise with all of its elements and not overlook any possible lacking points. After a very fruitful research, the screenwriting of the narrative took place with the intention of respecting original work, adding needed elements and making something new as a worthy adaptation. While finishing up the screenwriting, it was becoming prominent that there are some unconscious inspirations both narratively and visually from all other different media that has been consumed by oneself. However, instead of ignoring those inspirations it was chosen to follow on those inspirations as they were becoming more and more logically intentional choices for the way of telling the story of the short film.

After a very compelling process of both producing this short film and writing this thesis, it was clear that titular chosen amalgamation was a satisfactory and adequate selection. As both Edgar Allan Poe's *The Tell Tale Heart* and the elements of the literary genre of "Magical Realism" work great on their own, their combination shows that there is no limit to possible experimentation in the name of creating of something new, feasible

and unique. The most important thing to assert about the final product is the sheer number of endless interpretations it will create in viewers' minds because of the strong back bone form the original work, supported by the fantastical elements with additional selection of meticulous narrative and visual choices.



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