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NARRATORS IN HORROR AND DETECTIVE STORIES BY EDGAR ALLAN POE

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I would like to thank my thesis supervisor, doc. PhDr. Mariana Machová, Ph.D., for her patience and valuable advice.

I confirm that this thesis is my own work written using solely the sources and literature properly quoted and acknowledged as works cited.

V Českých Budějovicích, 8. 5. 2023

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Anotace

Cílem této práce je analýza vypravěčů ve vybraných hororových a detektivních povídkách Edgara Allana Poea. Diplomová práce je rozdělena do dvou částí. První část se zabývá definicí vypravěče a typologiemi vypravěčů předních literárních teoretiků jako jsou Wayne C. Booth, Franz K. Stanzel nebo Gérard Genette. Dále se zabývá nespolehlivostí ve vyprávění a Poeovou rétorikou a stylem. V druhé části se práce zaměřuje na analýzu vybraných povídek „Zrádné srdce“, „Černý kocour“, „Pád domu Usherů“, „Metoda doktora Téra a profesora Péra“, „Zlatý brouk“ a „Vraždy v ulici Morgue“.

Klíčová slova: vypravěč, Edgar Allan Poe, nespolehlivost, typologie, hororové povídky, detektivní povídky

Abstract

The aim of this thesis is the analysis of narrators in selected horror and detective stories by Edgar Allan Poe. The thesis is divided into two parts. The first part deals with the definition of the narrator and the typologies of narrators by eminent literary theorists such as Wayne C. Booth, Franz K. Stanzel and Gérard Genette. It also discusses the unreliability of the narrative and Poe's rhetoric and style. The second part of the thesis focuses on the analysis of selected short stories "The Tell-Tale Heart", "The Black Cat", "The Fall of the House of Usher", "The system of doctor Tarr and Professor Fether", "The Gold Bug" and "The Murders in the Rue Morgue".

Keywords: narrator, Edgar Allan Poe, unreliability, typology, horror stories, detective stories

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Introduction

This thesis focuses on narrators in selected horror and detective stories by Edgar Allan Poe. Poe wrote a number of short stories in the first-person narration, but with different kinds of narrators and narrative strategies, and I will examine them and their roles in the narrative.

My aim is to focus especially on the unreliable narrator and the whole concept of it. I will analyze how Edgar Allan Poe creates his narrators, how he works with them, and what effect this has on the reader. I will also look at the boundaries between madness and rationality from the narrator's point of view in selected short stories, because without seeming to, that line can be very thin.

The work will be divided into two sections. In the first one I will explore the more theoretical and general questions related to the topic of the narrator: I will sum up the major theoretical approaches to the narrator, the development of narrator typology, and the problem of the unreliable narrator. Furthermore, I will discuss the main features of Poe's style and his rhetorical strategies related to the ways he creates his narrators. The main sources for the theoretical part of my work will be *Vypravěč (The Narrator)* by Tomáš Kubíček, published in 2007, *The Rhetoric of Fiction* (1983) by Wayne C. Booth or *Handbook of Narratology* (2009).

The second part of the thesis will be a more detailed analysis of Poe's first-person narrators in selected short stories. Based on the theoretical tools I will summarize in the first part of the thesis, I will divide Poe's narrators into several groups. The first type is a crazy, mad, and unreliable narrator in chosen stories "The Tell-Tale Heart" (1843) and "The Black Cat" (1843). The second type is a narrator who observes madness, but he is fully rational and critical of madness around him. I chose the stories "The Fall of The House of Usher" (1839) and "The System of Doctor Tarr and Professor Fether" (1845) to illustrate this category. The third type of storytellers are the narrators of the detective stories, who are not the main characters. They help the protagonist with his investigation, as we can see in stories "The Gold Bug" (1843) or "The Murders in The Rue Morgue" (1841).

1. The narrator

1. 1. The definition of the narrator

It is essential for this thesis to define the concept of the narrator, to introduce the approaches of the major theorists, and to outline the history of the development of different typologies. It will help to understand the development of the theoretical understanding of the narrator and with Poe's short stories analysis, to understand his individual narrators, especially the unreliable ones. Based on these theories, I will divide Poe's narrators into several groups, describe them, and determine what typology describes this particular kind of narrator.

A narrator is a speaker. He¹ is the one who communicates with readers, he tells the whole story, and he has a certain relationship to it. The narrator is one of the central concerns in the development of narrative theory. He plays an important role in the meaning structure of the work (Kubíček 17). The same goes for E. A. Poe's narrators. They form a significant part of the stories; they tell the story from their point of view and communicate with the readers and affect them through it.

1. 2. Key concepts of the narrator

The first typologies of the narrator began to take shape by Percy Lubbock, who asked a fundamental question: What is the relationship of the narrator to the story? The narrator's stance is crucial for the distinction between the two basic types of narrative, showing and telling, and to help analyze the strategies that are used for narrative in such cases. Those strategies can be the description or the direct speech (Kubíček 47–48).

When the narrator disappears from the narrative and the readers feel that they are in the middle of the narrative, showing wins over telling. The opposite is diegetic narrative, in which the narrator guides the reader through the story (Kubíček 48). In Poe's stories, we most often see the diegetic narrative, however, we can also find parts of the stories with a narrator in, where he recedes into the background and the reader suddenly has the feeling of being in the middle of the story.

Lubbock was followed up in the 1940s by the French literary theorist Jean Pouillon in his book *Temps et roman* (1946). His typology of the narrator is based on the question of the narrator's knowledge or lack of knowledge of the inner world of the characters.

¹ Since Poe's narrators are all male, I will refer to the narrator in the masculine throughout the text, even when it is used in a general sense.

Pouillon created a three-part typology with the following categories: vision from behind (the concept of the omniscient narrator, when he knows everything about the characters, about the motivation behind their actions), vision with (the narrator knows only as much as the character knows) and vision from within (the narrator knows less than the character) (Kubiček 48 – 49). An omniscient narrator is not usually found in Poe's stories. Usually, we see narrators who know the same amount of information as the characters (like the narrator in "The Tell-Tale Heart" or "The Black Cat"), or even less (like the narrator in "The Gold Bug", "The Fall of the House of Usher", "The System of Doctor Tarr and Professor Fether" or "The Murders in the Rue Morgue").

Norman Friedman also dealt with the concept of the narrator. He links the question of the narrator to the question of the transmission of the story to the reader and formulates four basic questions to help grasp the issue of point of view in this context. Who speaks to the reader? It can be a third-person or first-person author, a first-person character, or even a nobody. From what angle is the story viewed? It can be viewed from the periphery, from the center, or from a variable position. What information path does the narrator use to convey the story to the reader? It can be the author's words, thoughts, feelings or perceptions. The last question is what position does the reader take towards the story? Close, distant, or shifting? (Kubiček 50)

Based on these four questions, Friedman then proposes a range of eight narrative types: Editorial Omniscience (the narrator can use any means to convey the story, he can enter the narrative with his own comments), Neutral Omniscience (it is a third person narrative, but the reader is aware of the presence of the narrator, the narrator does not interfere in the narrative), "I" as a Witness (the narrator is a character within the story and is more or less involved in it, he is an observer of the story), "I" as a Protagonist (the narrator is the main character of the novel), Multiple Selective Omniscience (elimination of any narrator, the plot is told through the mind of a character or several characters, it is a stage narrative), Selective Omniscience (presentation of the story through the mind of one character), Dramatic Mode (the absence of information about the characters' thoughts and feelings, which the reader can only infer from the dialogue and the characters' actions) and Camera (hypothetical example, it is a complete exclusion of the author) (51 – 52). "I" as a Witness and "I" as a Protagonist are Poe's most frequent narrators. The narrator in the short story "The Gold Bug" can be considered as a witness narrator who in some parts of the story intervenes less and sometimes more in the plot. "I" as a Protagonist is the narrator in the short story "The Black Cat" or "The Tell-Tale Heart".

Wayne C. Booth, one of the most important narrative theorists, questions the effect of narrative in his work *The Rhetoric of Fiction* (1961) and, based on this, defines several types of narrators. “Perhaps the most important differences in narrative effect depend on whether the narrator is dramatized in his own right and on whether his beliefs and characteristics are shared by the author” (Booth 151).

The first of these is called the implied author, which could be also defined as the author’s other self. The implied author differs from the real one, it is his better version he is creating by writing his work (Kubíček 54). The undramatized narrator by Booth has no personal characteristics. In this case, the reader is aware of the experiencing mind that comes between him and the events (Kubíček 54-55). “In fiction, as soon as we encounter an “I”, we are conscious of an experiencing mind whose views of the experience will come between us and the event. When there is no such “I”, as in “The Killers”, the inexperienced reader may make the mistake of thinking that the story comes to him unmediated. But no such mistake can be made from the moment that the author explicitly places a narrator into the tale, even if he is given no personal characteristics whatever” (Booth 151-152). The third type of Booth’s narrator is marked as the dramatic narrator, who enters the scene of the story (Kubíček 55). “In a sense even the most reticent narrator has been dramatized as soon as he refers to himself as “I”, or, like Flaubert, tells us that “we” were in the classroom when Charles Bovary entered. But many novels dramatize their narrators with great fulness, making them into characters who are as vivid as those they tell us about (Booth 152). According to this definition of Booth, we can say that most of Poe’s narrators are dramatic narrators. Indeed, in his stories, the narrators become living characters. An example of this is the narrator in the short story “The Fall of the House of Usher” or “The Black Cat”.

Booth divides dramatic narrators into observers and narrator-agents, “who produce some measurable effect on the course of events (ranging from the minor involvement of Nick in *The Great Gatsby*, through the extensive give-and-take of Marlow in *Heart of Darkness*, to the central role of Tristram Shandy, *Moll Flanders*, *Huckleberry Finn*, and—in the third person—Paul Morel in *Sons and Lovers*)” (Booth 154). Both of these categories of narrators can be in the first or third person. The narrators and the observers then convey the story to us by means of a so-called scene, or as a summary, or as a combination of both (Booth 154). “Cutting across the distinction between observers and narrator- agents of all these kinds is the distinction between self-conscious narrators, aware of themselves as writers (*Tom Jones*, *Tristram Shandy*, *Barchester Towers*, *The*

Catcher in the Rye, Remembrance of Things Past, Dr. Faustus), and narrators or observers who rarely if ever discuss their writing chores (Huckleberry Finn) or who seem unaware that they are writing, thinking, speaking, or “reflecting” a literary work (Camus’s *The Stranger*, Lardner’s “Haircut”, Bellow’s *The Victim*)” (Booth 155). In particular, Poe’s unreliable narrators could be considered narrators-agents. A typical example is the narrator of “The Tell-Tale Heart”, who can be said to be self-aware as a writer, addressing the reader directly. Booth’s unreliable narrator will be discussed in more detail in the next chapter.

The narrator’s typology of the Austrian literary theorist Franz K. Stanzel is called the typological circle. Stanzel placed three basic types of narrative situations on the circle. He named them auctorial narrative situation, first-person narrative situation, and personal narrative situation (Kubiček 58 – 59). Each of them having their specific definition.

A narrator in the auctorial narrative situation is a mediator in the narrative, which he actively comments. He stands between the fictional world of the book and reader’s reality. The narrative time of this narrator is the past tense (59).

A narrator in the first-person narrative situation differs from the first one by being involved in a story itself, in a fictional world of the narrative. He is one of the characters interacting with the others. The narrator experienced the story or observed it, it represents his personal experience (59). A typical example of this kind of narrator can be seen in most of Poe’s detective and horror stories. Narrators in “The Tell-Tale Heart”, “The Fall of The House of Usher” or in “The Gold Bug” are all experiencing the story and telling the reader their personal experiences. They are all the characters in the narrative.

In the personal narrative situation, a narrator recedes into the background, behind all the characters of the story. He does not comment a storyline, so the reader does not perceive his presence. This leads to the feeling that the reader finds himself in the middle of the plot and is part of it (60). We might see this type of narrator in Poe’s “The Masque of the Red Death”. From the beginning, the story doesn’t seem to have a narrator, but in the fourth paragraph the sentence suddenly appears: “But first let me tell of the rooms in which it was held” (Poe 269). This phrase obviously refers to the fact that someone is telling the story, however, in addition to the mentioned phrase the reader does not perceive the narrator’s presence.

Stanzel’s typology has faced criticism mainly because of the view that the narrative situation in a novel is highly variable and Stanzel’s typology cannot cover the whole novel as a defining and centralizing typology. Stanzel acknowledged the criticism as justified

and further elaborated his typology, resulting in his Triadic model of narrative situations. It is an extension of his Typological Circle to include *modus*, *persona* and *perspective*, which affect the narrative situation (Kubíček 61). *Modus* is the concept of the narrator as voice and character. The *persona* reflects the degree to which the narrator is present in the narrated story and the *perspective* is the relationship of the narrator to the consciousness of the characters. It is about the nature of the information the reader receives about the mental processes of the characters. In the narrative, then, one element dominates over the others (61 – 62).

French-Bulgarian philosopher, essayist and literary theorist Tzvetan Todorov named a separate theoretical discipline *narratology* in 1966. He defined that this discipline should deal with deep narrative structures. Attempts to capture the grammar of the narrator were not based on mediation, but on the question of the relationship of the narrator to the narrated world (Kubíček 65). At the center of Todorov's attention in relation to the narrator is the category of *vision*. It is the vision from where we observe the object and the quality of this observation, its truth, falsity and partial or complete nature. So Todorov comes up with categories that make it possible to distinguish between different kinds of the narrator's vision (66).

The first category is called the *direction category*. It is based on the narrator's relationship to the story, which can be either objective or subjective. In this context, the narrator is the one who reflects, and the basis of this category is the quality of the mediated world (66). Poe's stories are told from the subjective point of view of the narrator.

The second category is the *category of knowledge* which is associated with the quantity of information obtained. The mentioned quantity is expressed by the range of the angle of view and its depth. Another criterion is whether only one character or all characters (an omniscient narrator) are seen from the inside. The crucial criterion is the truthfulness of the information about the fictional world that we as readers receive from the narrator. Todorov's last category is the *category of evaluation of viewed events*. According to him, the description of events in a narrative work can be a carrier of moral evaluation (Kubíček 66).

All these categories are part of the constructive work of the narrator, who is present in the text as a voice. Todorov concludes that without a narrator there is no narrative. And this claim provides him with a starting point for exploring and diversifying the level of the narrator's presence in the narrative. On this basis, he establishes three primary levels of subjectification in the narrative: the implicit author (the potential self), the narrator as

one who narrates but does not act and is not part of the story, and the subject self, the character (67). Todorov's proposal is not a systematically arranged typology of the narrator. What is important is that instead of the question of mediation, the question of the relationship of the narrator to the narrated appears.

Another influential narratologist whose typology of the narrator is beneficial to this thesis is Gérard Genette. Genette comes up with the concept of focalization, which refers to the point of view from which a story is told. He distinguishes three categories of focalization. To understand them, it is first necessary to define what heterodiegetic and homodiegetic narrator is. A heterodiegetic narrator is one who is not part of the story he is telling. Its opposite is the homodiegetic narrator, who is a character in the story he is narrating (Kubiček 80). Heterodiegetic narration is almost absent in Poe's stories. Most of his narrators are characters in the story, some are the main ones.

Genette's first category of focalization is called the mode of non-focalization or zero-focalization. "In the mode of non-focalization or zero-focalization, events are narrated from a wholly unrestricted or omniscient point of view (as typically in Henry Fielding's *Tom Jones* (1749) and many other eighteenth- and nineteenth-century heterodiegetic [third-person] novels)" (Jahn 97). "The narrator has access to (in principle) limitless (i.e., unrestricted) information which clearly transcends what is accessible to ordinary humans" (Jahn 97–98). The second type of Genette's focalization is called the internal focalization. "In the mode of internal focalization the story's events are 'focalized through' one or more story-internal reflector characters, and narrative information is restricted to data available to their perception, cognition, and thought" (Jahn 98). The final category is the external focalization. "External focalization marks the most drastic reduction of narrative information because it restricts itself to 'outside views', reporting what would be visible and audible to a virtual camera. Externally focalized narratives typically consist of dialogue and 'stage directions' only" (Jahn 98). Genette adds to this typology that each category need not cover the whole text, but may occur in several sections (Jahn 99). As noted, the vast majority of Poe's narrators are homodiegetic. And in most of his stories we can find the internal focalization. It is especially evident with his unreliable narrators, who convey to the reader a story limited by their own perspective, their own truth, and it is up to the reader to decide what to do with such a story. But we can certainly find sections of external focalization, consisting of dialogue, in several stories. We can see a lot of direct speech, for example, in the short story "The System of Doctor Tarr and Professor Fether".

1.5 The unreliability

The unreliability is a big theme when it comes to Poe's stories. To analyze these stories, it is important to know what the unreliability in the narrative is, how to recognize it, and where to look for it. Kubiček says that signs of unreliability must be found in the text and must be so clear that the reader is able to recognize them. In many cases, it is the narrator himself who points out his unreliability (113).

The term "unreliable narrator" was introduced in 1961 by the above-mentioned American literary critic Wayne C. Booth in his work *The Rhetoric of Fiction*. Booth says in this work: "I have called a narrator reliable when he speaks for or acts in accordance with the norms of the work (which is to say, the implied author's norms), unreliable when he does not" (158). Booth also explains that the unreliability is a thing of lying, not just large amounts of the incidental irony of the narrators.

Unreliable narrators as main protagonists of novels and stories became very popular. "With the repudiation of omniscient narration, and in the face of inherent limitations in dramatized reliable narrators, it is hardly surprising that modern authors have experimented with unreliable narrators whose characteristics change in the course of the works they narrate" (Booth 156).

According to Booth, when the reader realizes that a narrator is somehow unreliable, it can dramatically influence his view on a story. "If he is discovered to be untrustworthy, then the total effect of the work he relays to us is transformed" (Booth 158). When the reader discovers that in the short story "The Fall of the House of Usher" the narrator, who all along thought his friend was a madman and a hypochondriac, discovers that the opposite is true, it changes his whole view of both the narrator and the story.

Handbook of Narratology differs three types of unreliability: "one can distinguish three axes of unreliability: facts and events of the narrated domain; the interpretation of such facts (i.e., supplied inferences, explanations or motivations); moral, practical, aesthetic, etc. judgments and evaluations of these facts" (359).

The unreliability of factual claims is extremely radical because it may prevent readers to recognize the real narrative world. The narrator can change the reliability of his claims by citing a lack of information or by disability to understand things. Signs of unreliability are for example inconsistency and contradiction between the narrator's claims about the same events, lack of evidence or illogicality. Conflict with moral or aesthetic norms held by the reader is also a red flag about the narrator's reliability. Unreliability is in some cases result of lack of knowledge or experience, limited intelligence, insanity, drug use

and following hallucinations or self-deception (Hühn, Pier, Schmid and Schönert 360). Contradiction between narrator's claims are typical of Poe's unreliable narrators. In "The Black Cat" the narrator tells us one moment that he has loved animals all his life, the next moment he admits to their abuse.

Kubiček talks about two principal types of unreliability. The first of these is to be found on the level of the story. It is the relationship of the narrator to the way the story is told. This type of storyteller is subjective in his narrative and therefore narrows the channel through which information about the fictional world flows to the reader. The reader faces incompleteness, he is denied some information, the narrator is unwilling or unable to provide some details. The second type of unreliability, according to Kubiček, is the unreliable narrator who stands outside the fictional world of the characters (the heterodiegetic narrator) (113-114). The unreliable narrator who stands outside the fictional world of characters is not typical of Poe's stories.

The unreliable narrator submits the narrated events to his own interest, he is subjective and creates his own version of the story. The first-person narrator's subjective statement can be found in his comments and remarks about the fictional world. He may also question some commonly known fact of our actual world (Kubiček 115).

As already mentioned, in many cases it is the narrator himself who provides the evidence of his unreliability. It is the narrator who chooses what will be told from the story, and it is his choice, the way the story is presented, and the content of the story itself that shapes his unreliability (115 –116). The narrator of "The Tell-Tale Heart" gives evidence that he is unreliable early in the story when he says he is not mad.

The question of the narrator's credibility is linked to whether he consciously or intentionally limits the reader's supply of information that might question the reader's conception of the story. It is possible to find that the narrator's testimony conflicts with that of another character, leading to a loss of the narrator's reliability. However, it is not possible to associate the narrator's reliability with the level of his knowledge of the story (Kubiček 116).

Wayne C. Booth dealt with the way in which the conditions and form of the communicative situation between the narrator and the reader are established and re-evaluated. To explain this change, Booth came up with the term "implied author". He closely associated the implied author with the unreliability of narrative. He said that the main means of creating narrative unreliability are tone, irony and distance (117). The implied author, which could be also define as the author's other self-differs from the real

one, is his better version he is creating by writing his work (Kubiček 54). “Narrators and third-person reflectors differ markedly according to the degree and kind of distance that separates them from the author, the reader, and the other characters of the story. In any reading experience there is an implied dialogue among author, narrator, the other characters, and the reader. Each of the four can range, in relation to each of the others, from identification to complete opposition, on any axis of value, moral, intellectual, aesthetic, and even physical” (Booth 156). For example, the reader will be very morally distant from the violent narrator in the short story “The Black Cat”. Booth adds “that most of the great reliable narrators indulge in large amounts of incidental irony, and they are thus ‘unreliable’ in the sense of being potentially deceptive” (159). “Unreliable narrators thus differ markedly depending on how far and in what direction they depart from their author’s norms; the older term ‘tone’, like the currently fashionable terms ‘irony’ and ‘distance’, covers many effects that we should distinguish” (Booth 159).

After Booth, several other theorists attempted to define unreliability in narrative, but none of their definitions were sufficient. For example, professor Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan has defined an unreliable narrator as one whose narration of a story and commentary on it gives the reader reason to doubt. She added that “the main sources of unreliability are the narrator’s limited knowledge, personal involvement, and problematic value schema” (Rimmon-Kenan 107).

The American academic and literary theorist Gerald Prince’s definition was also unsatisfactory. He distinguished between an unreliable narrator and an implied author. He said that the norms and behaviors of the unreliable narrator conflict with those of the implied author (Prince 101).

German Americanist Ansgar Nünning attempted to make the category of unreliability as complex as possible. He says that the basis for understanding the category of unreliability is the difference between the reader’s and the narrator’s perception of the world and he provides a list of signals by which unreliability can be recognized (Kubiček 121).

Nünning’s list consists of fourteen signals. These include the narrator’s apparent contradictions, inconsistencies between the narrator’s attitudes and his behavior, differences in how the narrator describes himself and how other characters describe him, inconsistencies in how the narrator describes events, addressing the reader to gain his sympathy, and the narrator’s emotional involvement, such as exclamations, repetition, and breaking the flow of the narration. There are also obvious deficits of unreliability

such as lapses of memory (121 – 122). All these signals can be found among Poe's narrators.

Others who examined narrator unreliability were James Phelan and Mary P. Martin, who defined six types of unreliable narrators. The first one is *misreporting*, when the narrator may falsely report fictional events. The second is *misreading*, the narrator's perception may be incorrect. The third category is called *misregarding* or *misevaluation*. As the term suggests, the narrator may misjudge events. The fourth is *underreporting*, when the narrator doesn't talk enough about what happened. The fifth is *under-reading*, which means that the narrator unable to perceive events in their complexity. And sixth is *underregarding*, the narrator's value judgments are poorly thought out (Kubiček 124). This division can be seen as another proposal for a typology of unreliability. It may seem that Poe's narrators are a combination of all these six types.

2. Poe's narrators, rhetoric and style

Poe's narrators are specific and have been researched and examined extensively. In many cases, they betray features of unreliability. This chapter serves as a summary of what has been said about Poe's narrators in general, what is his rhetoric and style in creating narratives, how other authors see them, what Poe's intent was in creating them, and how he wanted to impress the reader.

Discussing Poe's work, Agnieszka Soltysik Monnet speaks about Poe's Aestheticism. According to her, Poe believes that "art should be concerned with 'effect' (rather than meaning, by implication) and with an 'elevation of the soul' rather than 'intellect' or 'heart'" (33). To put it in another way, "art should not be concerned with truth or morality but with a specifically aesthetic effect that Poe locates in the idea of 'soul' and which corresponds roughly to Kant's autonomous sphere of aesthetic judgment" (Monnet 33).

Monnet argues that Poe's aestheticism was actually much less extreme and detached from ethics than the critics of the twentieth century came to believe. In his period, Poe was clearly an oppositional figure. His public identity gave him the advantage of being able to defend the right of the writer and his artistic freedom and value (34). "Poe's public identity was that of a literary provocateur, nicknamed 'the Tomahawk' for his iconoclastic and merciless reviews" (Monnet 34). Rachel Polonsky has an entire chapter on Poe's aestheticism ("Poe's aesthetic theory") in the *Cambridge Companion to Edgar Allan Poe*, where she says, that "the word 'aesthetic' and its cognates have clung to the name of Edgar Allan Poe" (42).

Towards the end of his life, Poe wrote a lecture, "The Poetic Principle", in which he summarizes his thinking on aesthetic issues and draws on the conceptual vocabulary of Romantic criticism (Polonsky 43). "In 'The Philosophy of Composition,' however, Poe discards the Romantic organic metaphors for poetry which envisages artistic creation as a process of spontaneous growth, and redirects critical attention onto technique, to art as a clever illusion which the artist controls like a mathematical or mechanical problem. Poe's imagination was constantly drawn towards elaborate technical systems and deft scientific tricks that promise to solve the mysteries of existence" (Polonsky 43). Poe's passion for science and technology can be seen, for example, in the short story "The Murders in Rue Morgue", where he introduces the genius Auguste Dupin, who thanks to his art of deduction solves an unsolvable murder. Moreover, the whole story is preceded by a section in which Poe, through the narrator, details the art of analytical thinking.

“Poe consciously positions readers to play psychologist and detective—to see the texts before them as a condition to be identified and difficulty to be solved. Poe elicits fascination, skepticism, and finally judgment from his readers by asking that they analyze the veracity of his tales, the sanity and moral fitness of his narrators, and their own proclivities as seemingly rational human beings in a bid to piece together narratives capable of revealing truths about the human experience” (Puckett 205). It is the narrators of E. A. Poe who make his stories attractive. By using them, Poe draws the reader into the story; it can be a kind of game for them. They become detectives, and at the same time a bit of psychics, in the process of trying to figure out how much we can rely on the claims of the storytellers and what is going on in the story.

“Poe was keenly aware of the abilities of the strange, macabre, and mysterious to attract readers’ attention, and he routinely exploited those very abilities in an effort to secure a devoted readership. Ever the showman, his ‘narratives are designed to appear too crazy not to be believed’ and too disturbing to be ignored” (Puckett 206). He was also interested “in exploring the dimensions of identity and the margins of reason, all the while creating a highly participatory art of unmistakable aesthetic merit” (Puckett 206). The line between sanity and madness is very thin in Poe’s stories. For example, in the short story “The Fall of the House of Usher”, the narrator observes his friend and questions his sanity, but in the end, it turns out that his friend was right all along. A similar case can be seen in the short story “The System of Doctor Tarr and Professor Fether”.

Poe works with an unreliable narrator in his short stories. His “stories typically follow a pattern with the narrator confessing to be in some unusual state of mind, a remark which is the prelude to the strange behavior detailed in the story, and which functions as a warning to the reader about his reliability as interpreter of the fictional world depicted in the tale” (Puckett 206). Typically, unreliable narrators can be seen in the short stories “The Tell-Tale Heart”, “The Black Cat” or “The Cask of Amontillado”. At the beginning of “The Tell-Tale Heart”, the narrator basically admits his unusual state of mind by exclaiming how nervous he is and then talking about how his senses, especially his hearing, are sharpened so he can hear the heartbeat of the old man he killed. “This pattern does indeed serve as a warning, but it also functions as an invitation for readers to play a role in exposing the tale’s irregularities or outright falsehoods and in cobbling together its ostensible actualities” (Puckett 206).

For the purpose of this thesis and further research, and also on the basis of the theoretical part of the thesis, I have created my own typology of Poe’s narrators based on

Poe's short stories. I divided the narrators into three categories according to their characteristics. The first type of narrator is a crazy, mad and unreliable narrator in chosen stories "The Tell-Tale Heart" (1843) and "The Black Cat" (1843). These narrators are obvious fools and criminals from the beginning of the stories, they are at odds with moral principles and their statements are at odds with reality.

The second type are the narrators who observe madness, but they are fully rational and critical of madness around them. I chose stories "The Fall of The House of Usher" (1839) and "The System of Doctor Tarr and Professor Fether" (1845) to demonstrate this category. In these stories we can also see a very thin line between rationality and madness.

The third type of the storytellers are those in detective stories who are not usually the main characters. They often help with a kind of investigation, as we can see in stories "The Gold Bug" (1843) or "The Murders in The Rue Morgue" (1841).

3. The mad unreliable narrator

The mad narrator is typical of Poe. He appears in stories such as “The Tell-Tale Heart”, “The Black Cat” or “The Cask of Amontillado”. The narrators in these stories tell the story from their own point of view, often suffering from the mental disorders they point out. They are inconsistent in telling the story, contradicting themselves and giving the reader false or incomplete information. They are often criminals who have no moral principles, and they are completely unreliable to the reader.

Wayne C. Booth describes unreliable narrators as those who do not behave “in accordance with the norms of the work” (158). He adds that unreliability is associated with lying. In the case of the stories “The Tell-Tale Heart” and “The Black Cat”, which will be discussed later, the narrators really give incomplete information to the readers and try to influence the reader to believe their version of the story.

Handbook of Narratology distinguishes several types of unreliability. It mentions, for example, inconsistencies in the narrator’s claims, lack of evidence, illogicality or conflict with moral standards. In relation to unreliability, *Handbook of Narratology* also talks about insanity, drug use and hallucinations (Hühn, Pier, Schmid and Schönert 360). In the case of “The Tell-Tale Heart”, it is safe to say that there are signs of insanity present within the narrator. Right at the beginning of the whole story, the narrator is talking to the reader and trying to convince him that he is not insane, just very nervous. Furthermore, we can observe hallucinations in this narrator when he hears the heartbeat of the old man he murdered and hid under the floor, which is impossible. In the narrator of “The Black Cat” we can see not the use of drugs, but alcohol, which the narrator cannot moderate and fuels his anger and aggression. Both of these narrators are in conflict with moral values. The narrator of “The Tell-Tale Heart” because of a planned brutal murder and the narrator of “The Black Cat” because of the abuse not only of animals but also of his wife, whom he eventually kills in anger.

The German Americanist Ansgar Nünning created a list of fourteen signals by which one can recognize unreliability. It includes inconsistencies in the narrative, the difference in how the narrator sees himself and how others see him, the narrator’s emotional involvement in the story, which can be observed in the text in the form of exclamation marks or repetition (121–122). Emotional involvement can be observed in both of the mentioned narrators. In both Poe uses exclamation marks and repetition in the text. In the short story “The Black Cat”, the narrator describes and sees himself as a great lover of

animals, but as a result of his actions, those around him see him in a completely different light. Both narrators could also be described by James Phelan and Mary P. Martin's typology as *misreporting*, where the narrator gives us false and distorted information, or *misreading*, where the narrator's perception is incorrect (Kubíček 124).

In the stories "The Tell-Tale Heart" and "The Black Cat" we can see diegetic narrative as described by Percy Lubbock. This means that the narrator guides the reader through the entire story. It happens in some of Poe's other stories that the narrator recedes into the background, but that is not the case in these two stories.

Norman Friedman would refer to the narrators of "The Tell-Tale Heart" and "The Black Cat" as "I" as a Protagonist, which means they're both the main character of the story. According to Franz K. Stanzel, the narrators of both stories would fit into the category of a narrator in first-person narrative situation. Stanzel describes this category as narrators involved in the plot who have experienced the story and convey their personal experiences to the reader (59). The narrative in both stories is subjective, as Tzvetan Todorov would define it.

Gérard Genette defined heterodiegetic and homodiegetic narrators. In both of the short stories analyzed, these are homodiegetic narrators who are characters in the story they are telling. Genette also focused on focalization. In these cases, it is the so-called internal focalization. Internal focalization is typical of unreliable narrators who convey a story to the reader from their own limited perspective.

In addition to the unreliable narrator, Booth also described several kinds of narrators. His typology suggests that the narrators of "The Tell-Tale Heart" and "The Black Cat" are dramatic narrators. That means they enter the scene of the story. Dramatic narrators are divided into observers and narrator-agents. In the two short stories under discussion we can observe narrator-agents who produce some measurable effect on the course of events.

3. 1 The Tell-Tale Heart

Edgar Allan Poe's "The Tell-Tale Heart" is a classic short story that has been read and analyzed by countless readers over the years. Brett Zimmerman describes the text as "Poe's confessional tale features a psychologically ill protagonist who recalls his grisly murder of an old man, his living companion, and who tries to explain the reasons for both this abominable act and his ultimate confession" (342). He adds that "The Tell-Tale

Heart' is an extended example of what classical Greek and Latin rhetors called *antirrhesis* (the rejection of an argument or opinion because of its error, wickedness, or insignificance)" (35).

One of the most fascinating aspects of the story is the unreliability of the narrator, who tells the story from the first-person point of view. As the story unfolds, it becomes clear that the narrator's perceptions and judgments are not entirely trustworthy, creating a sense of tension and uncertainty for the reader. One of the most striking examples of the narrator's unreliability is his insistence that he is not insane, despite overwhelming evidence to the contrary. The narrator's denial of his own madness creates a sense of tension and unease for the reader, who must question everything that the narrator says.

The narrator of "The Tell-Tale Heart" is an unnamed character and the main protagonist of the story. According to Norman Friedman, we could classify this narrator as an "I" as a Protagonist, which means that he is a character in the story being told. Franz K. Stanzel calls this a first-person narrative situation, where the narrator is a character in the story and relays his or her personal experiences to the reader.

The story itself begins with the following sentence. "True! — nervous — very, very dreadfully nervous I had been and am; but why will you say that I am mad" (Poe 303)? We can already sense from this first sentence that the narrator's mental health will play a role in the story. The *Handbook of Narratology* mentions mental health and insanity in the context of unreliability. At the same time, the narrator tries to defend himself from the beginning of the story, which usually indicates his unreliability. The narrator's immediate denial of madness suggests that the narrator may be trying to hide something. The fact that he feels the need to protest so strongly against the accusation of madness implies that he is aware of the stigma attached to mental illness, and that he is trying to distance himself from it. In this opening section, the narrator also uses emotional involvement, repetition and an exclamation mark, which, according to Ansgar Nünning, shows his unreliability.

"Poe's madman in 'The Tell-Tale Heart' particularly employs reason not only to carry out irrational acts but also to justify them. He behaves like an orator striving to convince an audience to take up a cause or like a defence attorney advocating a point of view. We have to acknowledge that Poe's depraved rhetoricians - like Ahab, many of Shakespeare's evil characters, and the Satan of Milton's *Paradise Lost*- have fairly impressive powers of argument even while we recognize the absurdity of their attempts to justify themselves,

or recognize at least the pathos of their attempts to explain the events in which they have played a role” (Zimmerman 34).

In the following paragraph, the narrator continues his defense and speaks of an illness that did not dull or destroy his senses, but rather helped him to sharpen them, and he seems quite convinced of this. This statement is clearly at odds with the narrator’s actions and thoughts, and it is clear to the reader that he is not in a sound mental state. It is interesting that “he wants to demonstrate, rhetorically, that they were the actions of a sane rather than an insane man, wants, therefore, to refute not the charge that he committed the crime but the charge that he is mad” (Zimmerman 36).

As the story progresses, the narrator’s unreliability becomes more apparent. His most powerful sense was hearing. “I heard all things in the heaven and in the earth. I heard many things in hell. How, then, am I mad? Hearken! and observe how healthily — how calmly I can tell you the whole story” (303). However, it quickly becomes clear that the narrator’s hearing is not trustworthy, as he hears not only the beating of the old man’s heart, but also a “low, dull, quick sound” (Poe 305) that he interprets as the old man’s terror. This sound is likely a figment of the narrator’s imagination, and serves to further undermine his credibility as a narrator. That he hears the old man’s heartbeat after his death can be taken as a hallucination, because it is impossible. The authors of *Handbook of Narratology* consider it as one of the signals of the narrator’s unreliability.

These sentences can also leave the reader with an overwhelming sense of madness. The narrator who will tell the story is a madman who is trying to convince the reader otherwise and wants to tell the story from his own point of view. According to the first sentences of the story, the reader may approach the story itself with skepticism and be cautious when reading it, knowing that he cannot be sure what is true and what is false. As Wayne C. Booth says about the narrator: “when he is discovered to be untrustworthy, then the total effect of the work he relays to us is transformed” (158).

“It is impossible to say how first the idea entered my brain; but once conceived, it haunted me day and night” (Poe 303). The narrator explains that he does not know where the initial idea to kill the man came from. He says he had no reason to do it, there was no passion, and he loved the old man. He never hurt him or insulted him, but his pale blue eye, which resembled that of a vulture, made the narrator mad. “Whenever it fell upon me, my blood ran cold; and so by degrees — very gradually — I made up my mind to take the life of the old man, and thus rid myself of the eye forever” (303).

The narrator claims that he is not insane, despite his actions and thoughts suggesting otherwise. He is obsessed with the old man's eye. He believes that the eye is evil and that he must kill the old man to rid himself of the eye's presence. This fixation on the eye is a clear indication of the narrator's mental instability. Brett Zimmerman who explores paranoid schizophrenia in "The Tell-Tale Heart" says of the narrator's fixation on the old man's eye that "although it might be argued that the madman's comments about the 'Evil Eye' constitute his rationalization about his decision to murder, the way he describes the object suggests that the 'Eye' was indeed what drove him to commit his atrocities" (Zimmerman 343).

Zimmerman has collected several pieces of evidence to say with certainty that Poe's narrator is a paranoid schizophrenic. He described that hallucinations are a key sign of schizophrenia's active phase, specifically auditory hallucinations of paranoia (343), which fully corresponds with the fact, that the narrator's most powerful sense was hearing, as he describes at the beginning of the story. Based on these claims, Zimmerman says that even though he is insane, he is not fully an unreliable narrator because of the way his faith in the "Evil Eye" caused stress or "overwhelming stress", which, according to modern ideas, can result in a complete breakdown of his mental health (343).

"Now this is the point. You fancy me mad. Madmen know nothing. But you should have seen me. You should have seen how wisely I proceeded — with what caution — with what foresight — with what dissimulation I went to work" (Poe 303)! The narrator here points out that the reader thinks of him as a fool at this stage. But he now shows and tells everyone how clever and prudent he was while committing his crime.

He describes in detail the whole process of preparing the murder. During the whole week before the murder, he was very kind to the old man and every night, seven times in total, he quietly opened his bedroom door at midnight. He silently slipped a darkened lantern inside so as not to wake the old man. "Oh, you would have laughed to see how cunningly I thrust it in" (Poe 303)! The narrator says in this section that readers would surely find it funny how he carefully pushed a lantern inside the old man's room. But his actions are likely to provoke even greater horror and contempt in the readers. By this stage of the story, the reader is absolutely certain that the narrator is at odds with moral values.

The reason for smuggling the lamp into the old man's bedroom was that the narrator subsequently uncovered it to shine its beam on the old man's pale blue eye. But the old man's eye was closed for seven nights, so the narrator could not perform his deed. On the

eighth night, he finally managed to catch the old man's eye open. "It was open — wide, wide open — and I grew furious as I gazed upon it. I saw it with perfect distinctness — all a dull blue, with a hideous veil over it that chilled the very marrow in my bones; but I could see nothing else of the old man's face or person: for I had directed the ray as if by instinct, precisely upon the damned spot" (Poe 304–305). The narrator's inability to control his emotions and thoughts during the murder suggests that he was not as careful in his planning as he claims to be. His obsession with the old man's eye and his desire to rid himself of it seems to have clouded his judgment and made him more impulsive. Here again he shows emotional involvement as Nünning talks about it.

"And now have I not told you that what you mistake for madness is but over acuteness of the senses" (Poe 305)? Again, the narrator tries to convince the readers that what they consider madness is the excessive acuteness of his senses. And the beating of the old man's heart increased his fury, yet the narrator still claims to have remained calm.

"Do you mark me well? I have told you that I am nervous: so I am. And now at the dead hour of the night, amid the dreadful silence of that old house, so strange a noise as this excited me to uncontrollable terror" (Poe 305). In one sentence, the narrator claims how calm he is, how his act was very well thought out and well executed. And in the next sentence, he claims that he told the readers that he was nervous, and he is. This inconsistency in the narrator's story adds to the sense of unreliability and makes it difficult for the reader to trust anything he says. Many theorists including Nünning, Hühn, Pier, Schmidt and Schönert speak of inconsistency in narrative in relation to the unreliability of the narrator.

The beating of the old man's heart is an important part of the story, it teases the narrator into his actions. In the first case, the old man's heartbeat drives the narrator to murder him because the narrator is seized with anxiety and fears that the neighbor will hear the beat. The second time the narrator hears the heartbeat is when the police come to the old man's room.

Perhaps the most striking example of the narrator's unreliability comes in the final paragraphs of the story, when he confesses to the murder of the old man. At first, he seems to be rational and in control, calmly describing how he dismembered the body and hid it beneath the floorboards. However, as he continues to speak, his language becomes more and more irregular, until he is shouting and incoherent. He seems to be hallucinating, because the cops can't hear the heartbeat. But he feels that they hear it too and are making fun of him, wanting to have him shaken, leading the narrator to confess to the murder in

a moment of confusion and fear. “‘Villains!’ I shrieked, ‘dissemble no more! I admit the deed! — tear up the planks! — here, here! — it is the beating of his hideous heart!’” (Poe 306). This outburst is the culmination of the narrator’s descent into madness and is a clear indication that he cannot be trusted as a reliable narrator.

In addition to his questionable actions and thoughts, the narrator’s description of the sound of the old man’s heart beating after he has been killed is also evidence of his unreliability. He claims that he can hear the sound of the old man’s heart even though he is dead, but this is clearly impossible. The sound is likely a product of the narrator’s guilt and his own rapidly beating heart. The fact that the sound of the old man’s heart beating is impossible suggests that the narrator’s perceptions are not entirely accurate. His guilt and fear are distorting his perceptions of reality.

The language used by the narrator in “The Tell-Tale Heart” is another important aspect of his unreliability. Throughout the story, the narrator uses exaggerated language and vivid imagery to describe his thoughts and feelings, which creates a sense of tension and unease for the reader. For example, when describing the old man’s eye, the narrator says it is “a dull blue, with a hideous veil over it that chilled the very marrow in my bones” (Poe 304–305). This description is vivid and unsettling, but it also suggests that the narrator’s perceptions may not be entirely accurate.

Furthermore, the narrator’s language is often contradictory and inconsistent. At times, he speaks with a calm and rational tone, describing his actions in a matter-of-fact way. At other times, he becomes emotional and irrational, using hyperbolic language to describe his thoughts and feelings. For instance, when describing the sound of the old man’s beating heart, the narrator says that it “grew louder, I say, louder every moment! - do you mark me well I have told you that I am nervous” (Poe 305). This use of hyperbole and repetition creates a sense of urgency and desperation in the narrator’s words, but it also suggests that he may not be a reliable narrator.

In addition, the narrator’s language is often self-contradictory, as he frequently contradicts himself within the same sentence or paragraph. For instance, when describing his own mental state, the narrator says “True! - nervous - very, very dreadfully nervous I had been and am; but why will you say that I am mad?” (Poe 303) This use of dashes and repetition creates a sense of instability and confusion in the narrator’s words, which adds to his unreliability as a narrator. The language used by the narrator in “The Tell-Tale Heart” is an important aspect of his unreliability. His use of exaggerated language, contradictory statements, and vivid imagery creates a sense of tension and unease for the

reader, who must question everything that the narrator says. All these features are considered by many literary theorists as evidence of unreliability.

Throughout “The Tell-Tale Heart”, Poe uses a variety of techniques to create an unreliable narrator. These include the narrator’s denial of his own madness, his unreliable hearing, his repetition of certain phrases, his fixation on the old man’s eye, and his final descent into incoherence. Together, these techniques create a sense of uncertainty and instability in the reader’s mind, forcing us to question the narrator’s version of events and to consider alternative interpretations of the story. We can think of this story as a metaphor for the power of guilt and conscience or as a commentary on the human tendency to deny our own flaws and weaknesses. The narrator’s insistence that he is not mad, despite all evidence to the contrary, may be seen as a metaphor for our own unwillingness to confront the darker aspects of our own selves. In this interpretation, the story becomes a cautionary tale about the dangers of denial, and a reminder that we must always be vigilant in our efforts to confront and overcome our own weaknesses.

“Like another American literary psychologist, Herman Melville, Poe recognized that victims of mental diseases do not appear to be psychologically ill all the time - that hysterical ravings and incomprehensible babblings do not always identify the insane (also the lesson in ‘The System of Dr. Tarr and Professor Fether’)” (Zimmerman 34).

In conclusion, “The Tell-Tale Heart” is a masterful example of Edgar Allan Poe’s ability to create a sense of horror and suspense through the use of language and narrative techniques. The narrator’s unreliability is a key part of this effect, forcing the reader to question the veracity of his account and to consider alternative interpretations of the story. According to Gérard Genette, the narrator can be described as homodiegetic with internal focalization. This means that he is a character in the story he tells and conveys it to the reader from his perspective, which may be limited.

3. 2 The Black Cat

The short story “The Black Cat”, like “The Tell-Tale Heart”, is told in the first person by an unnamed narrator. Along with “The Tell-Tale Heart”, it belongs to a group of short stories in which the unreliable narrator is an apparent madman with violent tendencies.

At the beginning of the story, the narrator tries to convince readers to trust him. He doesn’t pressure them to believe him, he says he doesn’t expect or ask for understanding and faith. “Yet, mad am I not -- and very surely do I not dream” (Poe 223). He assures

readers that he is certainly not crazy, which may be the first indication of his unreliability. He adds: “But to-morrow I die, and to-day I would unburthen my soul” (223). He goes on to say that he is going to give the world information about how the events unfolded, and the word “world” here seems almost theatrical and exaggerated. He tells the story from his limited perspective, while also being a character in the story he is telling. Therefore, according to Gérard Genette, we can define him as a homodiegetic narrator with internal focalization.

“My immediate purpose is to place before the world, plainly, succinctly, and without comment, a series of mere household events” (Poe 223). “One wonders what he means by ‘without comment,’ for - as other scholars have noted (James W. Gargano, McElroy, Richard Badenhausen, Matheson) — he does more than simply relate the events: he explains throughout the effect they have had on him; as well, he theorizes about such things as the ‘imp of the perverse’. Thus, we seem to have here an extended instance of the figure of thought *paraleipsis*, pretending not to mention something while mentioning it. The narrator promises that he will not comment - but he cannot help commenting; he wants to come off as nonchalant but it quickly becomes evident that he cannot keep up the appearance, so emotionally overwrought is he” (Zimmerman 42).

In the very second paragraph, the narrator puts himself in the position of a victim. “From my infancy I was noted for the docility and humanity of my disposition. My tenderness of heart was even so conspicuous as to make me the jest of my companions” Poe (223). And since he knows how the story will continue, unlike the reader, whom he wants to convince that what happened to him was not natural, he says at the beginning of the story that he has always loved animals and all his pets. “With these I spent most of my time, and never was so happy as when feeding and caressing them” (Poe 223). He is trying to draw readers into the story, he wants them to empathize, and in doing so, he wants to justify what is yet to come in the story. “To those who have cherished an affection for a faithful and sagacious dog, I need hardly be at the trouble of explaining the nature or the intensity of the gratification thus derivable. There is something in the unselfish and self-sacrificing love of a brute, which goes directly to the heart of him who has had frequent occasion to test the paltry friendship and gossamer fidelity of mere Man” (Poe 223). In this part of the text we can see the difference in how the narrator sees himself and how others see him. He says he is an animal lover but in the following paragraphs he admits to abusing them. According to Ansgar Nünning, this is one of the fourteen signals from his list that can be used to identify the narrator’s unreliability.

Zimmerman (42) comments on it that “this narrator seems more concerned with convincing not so much his readers but himself of something. What is that something? that he has not been duped by a witch-cat into murder or exposed by a vengeful witch-cat; that he is not doomed by an angry Jehovah to eternal punishment. He wants desperately to believe that the narrative he is about to relate is not one of supernatural retribution; rather, he insists on calling it a homely (ordinary, unremarkable) narrative”.

In “The Black Cat”, the narrator gradually prepares the reader for what happens around his black cat. Not coincidentally, he recalls how his wife always said that all black cats are considered witches in disguise, so that the cat would be perceived by the reader as something not good. He adds: “...I mention the matter at all for no better reason than that it happens, just now, to be remembered” (Poe 224), however, the reader can sense that this is not the real reason, and the narrator wants to influence the reader’s judgment. According to Booth, the unreliable narrator gives inaccurate to false information and tries to influence the reader’s judgment. This is also the case here.

We first learn about the narrator’s mental state in the sixth paragraph, where he describes how his temperament and character have worsened rapidly, primarily due to his excessive alcohol use. Over time, he becomes violent towards his wife and animals. His alcoholism contributes to his unreliability as a narrator. He frequently drinks to excess, which causes him to black out and forget what has happened. He describes his alcoholism as a “fiend intemperance” (Poe 224) that has taken over his life, and it is clear that he has lost control over his drinking. This means that his memories of events may be incomplete or inaccurate, and he may not be able to distinguish between reality and his own delusions. *The Handbook of Narratology* considers the use of drugs as well as alcohol and the consequences associated with it as one of the signs of the narrator’s unreliability.

One of the signs of an unreliable narrator is also the tendency to distort the truth. Throughout this story, the narrator frequently exaggerates or lies about his actions, often in an attempt to justify his behavior. He initially claims that he loves animals and would never harm them, but later admits to torturing and killing his pets. He even goes so far as to describe his first black cat, Pluto, as his favorite pet. However, as the story progresses, he admits to mistreating and ultimately killing Pluto. While he’s telling how he first hurt the cat, he keeps trying to defend himself: “I blush, I burn, I shudder, while I pen the damnable atrocity” (Poe 224). He constantly blames circumstances and avoids responsibility for his actions. And when he has a guilty conscience about his actions, he drowns it in alcohol: “I again plunged into excess, and soon drowned in wine all memory

of the deed” (Poe 224). He also suggests that his wife is responsible for his violent behavior, even though it is clear, that he is the one who is abusing her. By distorting the truth in this way, the narrator attempts to paint himself in a more sympathetic light and absolve himself of responsibility for his actions.

It is interesting that in both the short story “The Black Cat” and in “The Tell-Tale Heart” the motif of the eye is involved in the story in some way. The motif of an eye is a commonly used symbol in literature, often representing themes such as perception, observation, and surveillance. In short stories, the use of an eye motif can be a powerful tool for creating atmosphere and conveying meaning. In “The Tell-Tale Heart”, the protagonist is haunted by the “vulture eye” of his elderly roommate, which eventually drives him to murder. The motif of the eye in this story may represent the protagonist’s guilt and fear, as well as the power of observation. Perhaps it’s no coincidence that when the narrator in “The Black Cat” first hurts the cat, he cuts out its eye. “I took from my waistcoat-pocket a pen-knife, opened it, grasped the poor beast by the throat, and deliberately cut one of its eyes from the socket” (Poe 224)! The description here is very specific. The narrator could have harmed the cat in any way he wanted, but Poe chose the eye he had already used in “The Tell-Tale Heart” which was written in the same year, a few months before “The Black Cat”.

The narrator speaks of “the spirit of PERVERSNESS” (Poe 225) that possessed him. “This spirit of perverseness, I say, came to my final overthrow. It was this unfathomable longing of the soul to vex itself — to offer violence to its own nature — to do wrong for the wrong’s sake only — that urged me to continue and finally to consummate the injury I had inflicted upon the unoffending brute” (Poe 225). Here again, the narrator fails to take responsibility for his actions and blames the spirit, which shows his compromised mental health and contributes to his unreliability. At this point the reader gets the feeling that the narrator is a complete fool and cannot be trusted to say a word. In this section, the reader can also be sure that the narrator is in violation of absolutely all moral principles, which, according to the authors of the *Handbook of Narratology*, is again one of the signs of unreliability.

One day, despite his guilty remorse, despite the fact that he knows he is committing a sin, a mortal sin, and despite the fact that he knows he might not meet God one day because of it, the narrator kills the cat. And as a result of his act, a fire broke out in his house at night, from which he barely escaped and lost his property. As a consequence of his sins, as with the narrator of “The Tell-Tale Heart”, punishment comes. “I approached

and saw, as if graven in bas relief upon the white surface, the figure of a gigantic cat. The impression was given with an accuracy truly marvellous. There had been a rope about the animal's neck" (Poe 225). The figure of the cat in the burnt house represents his guilt, which is slowly catching up with him for months. The narrator's guilt over his mistreatment of his pets, including his beloved black cat, Pluto, consumes him. And when he brought home a new black cat and wanted to hurt it, he always remembered his previous crime and was very afraid of the new cat. His guilt fell on him more and more. He begins to have vivid nightmares and hallucinations, including seeing a spectral image of the cat with a noose around its neck. Later, he claims to see a second black cat, which he believes is a supernatural manifestation of Pluto seeking revenge. The narrator's hallucinations and delusions become more intense and vivid as he continues to drink heavily and sink deeper into his guilt and paranoia. Overall, the narrator's hallucinations are a manifestation of his inner turmoil and the psychological consequences of his actions and another sign of unreliability. The story is a chilling exploration of guilt, madness, and the dark side of human nature.

As the story progresses, the reader learns that the narrator is not only a bully and an alcoholic, but also a murderer when he kills his wife with an axe while she is trying to save the other cat. The black cat will not let the narrator go unpunished. When he bricks his wife in the basement, he accidentally walks in the cat in there, which starts making noises when the police search the house. "Upon its head, with red extended mouth and solitary eye of fire, sat the hideous beast whose craft had seduced me into murder, and whose informing voice had consigned me to the hangman. I had walled the monster up within the tomb" (Poe 230). And so, as with the narrator in "The Tell-Tale Heart", his downfall is the hidden sound.

The language used by the narrator in "The Black Cat" is an important aspect of the story's overall effect. The story is written in the first person, from the perspective of the narrator, and as a result, the language reflects his own mental state, emotions, and attitudes. Norman Friedman would describe this type of narrator as "I" as a Protagonist. One of the most noticeable features of the narrator's language is its emotional intensity. The narrator frequently uses vivid and dramatic language to describe his feelings and experiences. For example, he describes the "fiend intemperance" (224) that has taken over his life in vivid, almost poetic language, and he speaks of the "spirit of perverseness" (225) that he claims is responsible for his violent behavior in similarly dramatic terms. This emotional intensity serves to heighten the horror and suspense of the story, and it

creates a sense of unease in the reader that is central to the Gothic genre. According to Nünning, the emotional involvement in the story adds to the narrator's unreliability.

Another key feature of the narrator's language is its use of irony and contradiction. Throughout the story, the narrator makes statements that are ironic in light of his actions. For example, he claims to be a devoted animal lover and a loving husband, even as he mistreats and ultimately kills his pets and abuses his wife. This use of irony serves to underscore the gap between the narrator's perception of himself and the reality of his behavior, and it creates a sense of unease in the reader, as they are forced to confront the narrator's hypocrisy.

The narrator's language is also notable for its use of Gothic imagery and symbolism. The story is full of references to darkness, death, and decay, which serve to create a sense of foreboding and dread. For example, the narrator describes the black cat as having "the fury of the demon" (Poe 224) and "long and sharp claws" (Poe 227), which gives the cat an almost supernatural quality. Similarly, he describes the act of killing his wife as "hideous", (228) which serves to underscore the horror of the narrator's behavior. He also uses repetition and circularity. Throughout the story, he frequently repeats phrases and ideas, such as his claim that he is not mad, which serves to emphasize his own instability and irrationality. The circularity of his narrative, in which he repeatedly returns to the same themes and ideas, also serves to underscore his own lack of control and coherence.

The narrator also uses meiosis (a lessening) in his rhetoric, which in some cases can sound almost ridiculous. For example when he talks about "series of mere household events" (Poe 223). "Anyone who has read 'The Black Cat' knows that the mutilation and hanging of a cat, the murder of a wife (uxoricide) with an axe, and the attempt to hide the corpse behind a brick wall in a basement are anything but mere household events. The narrator's ridiculous use of meiosis is a foregrounded stylistic feature that differentiates him from other Poe narrators (who tend to use hyperbola and adynata — figures of exaggeration), and through meiosis he attempts to de-emphasize the events and their possible implications for his soul" (Zimmerman 43).

Overall, the language used by the narrator in "The Black Cat" is an important aspect of the story's overall effect. Through his use of emotional intensity, irony, Gothic imagery and symbolism, repetition, and circularity, the narrator creates a sense of horror and unease that is central to the Gothic genre, and that makes the story both compelling and unsettling to read.

“Supernatural are typically balanced by natural explanations of the events in a Poe tale of terror, but the narrator in ‘The Black Cat’ seems unable - despite his best rhetorical efforts - to convince himself of the validity of rational interpretations. No wonder he has such difficulties, for this time Poe seems to have weighted the story on the side of the genuinely supernatural. For instance, as in one of Hawthorne’s New England Gothic tales, here Poe uses the folkloristic belief about black cats being disguised witches. During the New England witchcraft trials of 1692, one of the accused, Martha Carrier, was charged with appearing before her daughter in the shape of a black cat. Martha was hanged on 19 August, along with the alleged ‘wizards’” (Zimmerman 43).

In conclusion, the narrator in “The Black Cat” is an unreliable character due to his tendency to present conflicting information, exaggerate and embellish his story, use irony, and offer a subjective perspective on events. While this unreliability makes it difficult to discern the truth of what happened, it also serves to create a sense of uncertainty and horror that is central to the Gothic genre. Booth regards this kind of narrator as dramatic and narrator-agent because he enters the scene of the story and has an influence on the course of events.

4. The narrator who observes madness

This type of narrator is not mad himself, but he observes madness. He is a minor character in the story and tells the story from his perspective. He is rational and critical of the madness he sees. In these stories, we can also see through the narrator how thin the line between rationality and madness is. One moment the narrator thinks everything is fine and the next it turns completely insane and vice versa. To demonstrate this category, I have chosen the short stories “The Fall of the House of Usher” and “The System of Doctor Tarr and Professor Fether”.

From Percy Lubbock’s perspective, we can say that this is a diegetic narrative, as the narrator guides the reader through the entire story. According to Jean Pouillon’s typology, which is based on the narrator’s knowledge of the characters’ inner world, we can say that in this case we have a narrator from the category of vision from within. They both know less than the characters in their story and only learn the whole truth at the very end.

Friedman would define the narrators in “The Fall of the House of Usher” and “The System of Doctor Tarr and Professor Fether” as “I” as a Witness. In fact, unlike the narrators in “The Tell-Tale Heart” and “The Black Cat”, they are not the main characters. They are secondary characters who are more or less involved in the story and observe the whole plot.

Both narrators can be defined as dramatic narrators, according to Booth. They enter the scene of the story and identify themselves as “I” and become living characters. The category of narrator-agents also falls under dramatic narrators, who have some influence on events, whether minor or major, which we can also observe in these narrators.

In the typological circle of the Austrian literary theorist Franz K. Stanzel, these narrators stand in a first-person narrative situation. This is because they are a part of the fictional world, they are characters who interact with other characters. They tell a story that they themselves have experienced.

According to Gérard Genette, we can determine that these are homodiegetic narrators who are characters in the story they tell. As for focalization, it is internal focalization, where the narrative is limited to the narrator’s perspective and the reader receives limited information.

There is some debate about the reliability of the narrators of “The Fall of the House of Usher” and “The System of Doctor Tarr and Professor Fether”. The theoretical part of this thesis shows that they are both partially unreliable. They are not narrators with a

mental disorder, who are hallucinating or addicted to drugs or alcohol, but they give the reader incomplete and very subjective information. At the end of both stories, the reader learns that the whole story was completely different from how the narrator presented it, which is what Booth is talking about when he says that the effect of the work on the reader is transformed by it (158).

4. 1 The Fall of the House of Usher

The narrator in the short story “The Fall of the House of Usher”, unlike the previous ones, is not one of the obvious fools. He is an unnamed character who serves as the story’s protagonist and narrator. He is a childhood friend of Roderick Usher, the last surviving member of the Usher family, whom he visits and observes the madness going on around him. Norman Friedman defines this category of narrator as “I” as a Witness, where the narrator is a character and an observer in the story.

The narrator is characterized as rational and objective, in contrast to the highly emotional and sensitive Roderick Usher. He is a man of science and reason, and he tries to use his rationality to explain the strange events that occur in the story. However, he is ultimately unable to fully comprehend the horrors that unfold around him.

The reliability of the narrator in “The Fall of the House of Usher” is a subject of debate and interpretation. While he appears to be a rational and objective observer, there are certain aspects of his behavior and perceptions that suggest his reliability is not absolute. John C. Gruesser describes the narrator in the same way. In his article “Madmen and Moonbeams: The Narrator in ‘The Fall of the House of Usher’”, he says that Poe has created “a speaker who differs from both the author’s anonymous narrators who are wholly reliable, such as the person telling us the story in the Dupin tales, and those who are pervasively unreliable” (80) such as in the previous tales “The Tell-Tale Heart” or “The Black Cat”.

“I know not how it was — but, with the first glimpse of the building, a sense of insufferable gloom pervaded my spirit. I say insufferable; for the feeling was unrelieved by any of that half-pleasurable, because poetic, sentiment, with which the mind usually receives even the sternest natural images of the desolate or terrible” (Poe 231). Throughout the story, the narrator experiences a sense of dread and unease, even before he arrives at the Usher mansion. He is unable to explain the source of his anxiety, and this irrational fear undermines his credibility as a reliable narrator. He compares his feelings to “the after-dream of the reveller upon opium” (Poe 231), which may make the

reader wonder if the narrator has any experience with this. This feeling of the narrator permeates the whole story and intensifies more and more after Madeline's death. "An irrepressible tremor gradually pervaded my frame; and, at length, there sat upon my very heart an incubus of utterly causeless alarm" (Poe 241). *Handbook of Narratology* (360) talks about drug use in relation to the narrator's unreliability, so the reader may take this as an indication of the narrator's unreliability in "The Fall of the House of Usher".

When the narrator arrives at the Usher mansion, he vividly describes its appearance and the surrounding landscape, the sad impression it leaves on him. "...and gazed down — but with a shudder even more thrilling than before — upon the re-modelled and inverted images of the gray sedge, and the ghastly tree-stems, and the vacant and eye-like windows" (Poe 231). He influences and prepares the reader for what is to come. He takes the reader through the story as Percy Lubbock describes the diegetic narrative. The reader can be sure that something unusual and scary is going to happen in the story and expects what it will be. He becomes the detective in the story, as Poe often does with readers, drawing them into the story, and waiting to see what crime or supernatural event will happen.

We learn early on that the narrator in this story is not going to be a madman. The reason for his visit to the Usher house is a letter from Roderick Usher, the narrator's childhood friend. In the letter, he describes his disturbance and the mental disorder that haunts him. And the narrator goes to help Roderick and find out what's wrong with him. When the narrator meets Roderick, it only reinforces that something is really going on with him. "It was with difficulty that I could bring myself to admit the identity of the wan being before me with the companion of my early boyhood" (Poe 234). The narrator hardly recognizes Roderick, describing his pale face and glossy eyes, which frightened him, and he slowly begins to admit that his friend might really have some kind of mental disorder.

Interestingly, the narrator uses a definition close to that of an unreliable narrator when describing Roderick. "In the manner of my friend I was at once struck with an incoherence — an inconsistency" (Poe 234). He describes his incoherence and inconsistency, his behavior being alternately lively and sullen and "that leaden, self-balanced and perfectly modulated guttural utterance, which may be observed in the lost drunkard, or the irreclaimable eater of opium, during the periods of his most intense excitement" (235). Roderick even suffered from a sharpening of the senses, just as we could see in the narrator of the short story "The Tell-Tale Heart". And so the reader may feel that all the madness is happening around Roderick. Not just the madness, but the whole plot,

Roderick is the main character, and the narrator recedes into the background, into the role of the observer.

The narrator in “The Fall of the House of Usher” stands out in describing his surroundings and feelings. “If ever mortal painted an idea, that mortal was Roderick Usher. For me at least — in the circumstances then surrounding me — there arose out of the pure abstractions which the hypochondriac contrived to throw upon his canvass, an intensity of intolerable awe, no shadow of which felt I ever yet in the contemplation of the certainly glowing yet too concrete reveries of Fuseli” (Poe 237). His thoughts and reflections often sound almost philosophical. However, although his description of these things is vivid, his descriptions of the events that occur in the story are often vague and subjective, leaving the reader uncertain as to what is really happening. Despite these concerns, the narrator’s rational and objective observations lend credibility to his account of the events. He provides detailed descriptions of the physical environment of the Usher mansion and the deteriorating mental state of Roderick Usher, which help to build the atmosphere of horror that characterizes the story. Furthermore, the narrator’s connection to Roderick Usher and his willingness to participate in the burial of Madeline Usher suggests a potential bias or conflict of interest that could impact his reliability as a narrator.

In the narrator’s sentences we can notice the frequent use of “I”. He identifies himself as a character in the story. Wayne C. Booth calls this category of storytellers narrator-agents. They are those narrators who have some influence on the events of the story.

“Such opinions need no comment, and I will make none” (Poe 239). In this sentence, the narrator says that he will not comment on his friend’s opinions. This may seem a bit strange because up to this point the narrator has commented on everything that has happened. But even though he says he does not want to comment on the situation, it is clear from his description that he does not fully agree with Roderick’s views.

It is also interesting that Roderick, who is his good friend, is described by the narrator as a hypochondriac more than once, despite the fact that there is nothing in the story to prove him right. The reader may perceive this as insulting and derisive towards Roderick. This is contrary to the words of the narrator, who says at the beginning that he has come to help his childhood friend and how terrible the illness has affected him. These contradictory statements do not add to his credibility.

The narrator is initially skeptical of the strange rumors surrounding the Usher family and their ancestral home. However, as he spends more time with Roderick, he becomes

increasingly affected by the oppressive and gloomy atmosphere of the house, which seems to permeate everything and everyone within its walls. The narrator also becomes increasingly disturbed by Roderick's eccentric behavior and his seemingly preternatural sensitivity to his surroundings. As the story progresses, the narrator becomes more and more emotionally and psychologically entangled with Roderick and his family history. After Madeline's death, the narrator talks about being infected by his friend's gloom. "It was no wonder that his condition terrified — that it infected me. I felt creeping upon me, by slow yet certain degrees, the wild influences of his own fantastic yet impressive superstitions" (Poe 241). He may have become infected by Roderick's madness, making it difficult to discern where his perceptions end, and Roderick's begin.

The narrator in this short story tries to explain the supernatural events that happen in the Usher house rationally until the very end and tries to reassure even Usher. "These appearances, which bewilder you, are merely electrical phenomena not uncommon — or it may be that they have their ghastly origin in the rank miasma of the tarn. Let us close this casement; — the air is chilling and dangerous to your frame" (Poe 242). In one of the most tense moments, the narrator attributes the strange events to electrical phenomena. In doing so, he lightens the situation and the reader's tension, and once again calls Usher a hypochondriac. "It was, however, the only book immediately at hand; and I indulged a vague hope that the excitement which now agitated the hypochondriac, might find relief (for the history of mental disorder is full of similar anomalies) even in the extremeness of the folly which I should read" (Poe 242 - 243). However, the narrator's rational theories begin to crumble the moment he reads aloud a book to Usher and hears the sounds he is reading about from deep inside the house. "Oppressed, as I certainly was, upon the occurrence of this second and most extraordinary coincidence, by a thousand conflicting sensations, in which wonder and extreme terror were predominant, I still retained sufficient presence of mind to avoid exciting, by any observation, the sensitive nervousness of my companion" (Poe 244).

The final events of "The Fall of the House of Usher" are moving fast, but give more than one reader shivers. The same narrator who all along spoke of Usher as a hypochondriac with a vivid imagination is himself a witness to insane events. He sees with his own eyes Madeline Usher rising from the grave, Roderick dying of terror, and the Usher house collapsing into the swamp. And suddenly he does not doubt what he sees, and he does not try to explain it. He is horrified in the same way that Roderick has been horrified throughout the story. And all the events he was minimizing, the fact that he

called Roderick a hypochondriac, suddenly go away. What the reader discovers at the very end of the story is that the events as told by the narrator were not entirely true. All along, Roderick Usher has been viewed through the narrator as a madman, an insane man, suffering from a psychotic disorder. But the reader learns at the end that Roderick was really frightened by real events. This fact does not add to the narrator's credibility and the reader may begin to question everything the narrator has said. John H. Timmerman comments on this that "the only problem with this narrator is that, even having been given ample signs and warnings (as happens to Fortunato in 'The Cask of Amontillado'), he is too inept to put the clues together. Poe has designed this deliberately, of course, for the reader is far more deductive than the narrator but has to wait for him to reach the extreme limit of safety before fleeing. However dull the narrator's mental processing, it is altogether better than being trapped in insanity" (160).

All the time the reader is reading the narrator's homodiegetic narrative with internal focalization, which according to Gérard Genette means that the story the narrator tells is limited to his own perspective.

Thus, at the very end of the story, the reader discovers that all along the narrator has been giving him incomplete or even erroneous information, only his own perspective and not taking into account Usher's.

The language used by the narrator in "The Fall of the House of Usher" is notable for its poetic quality, vivid imagery, and gothic sensibility. The narrator's language is used to create a sense of atmosphere and to evoke the emotions and sensations experienced by the characters in the story. One of the key features of the narrator's language is its use of vivid, sensory detail. The narrator describes the physical environment of the Usher mansion in rich detail, emphasizing the gloomy, oppressive atmosphere that pervades the house. He also uses imagery to create a sense of decay and decline, such as the "crumbling condition" (233) of the mansion.

Another important aspect of the narrator's language is its use of symbolism and metaphor. The repeated references to the "melancholy house" (Poe 231) and the "fissure" (245) in the Usher family's lineage suggest the decay and dissolution of the Usher family and the broader themes of isolation and decline. According to the German Americanist Ansgar Nünning, repetition in the narrator's speech indicates the emotional involvement of the narrator, which, according to him, can be a sign of unreliability.

The narrator's language also contributes to the overall sense of ambiguity and uncertainty that characterizes the story. His descriptions of the events that occur within

the Usher mansion are often vague and open to interpretation, allowing the reader to draw their own conclusions about the nature of the horrors that befall the Usher family.

Overall, the language used by the narrator in “The Fall of the House of Usher” is a crucial element of the story’s gothic aesthetic and its exploration of themes such as decay, isolation, and madness. The narrator’s use of vivid, sensory detail and symbolic imagery helps to create a sense of atmosphere and to evoke the emotions and sensations experienced by the characters in the story.

The narrator’s role in the story is to provide an outsider’s perspective on the events that occur within the Usher mansion. He is the reader’s guide to the eerie and unsettling world of the Usher family, and he serves as a contrast to the intense and eccentric Roderick Usher. Through his observations and interactions with Roderick, the narrator helps to build the sense of tension and impending doom that permeates the story.

Ultimately, the reliability of the narrator is left open to interpretation. While his observations and perceptions are crucial to the story, his potential biases and irrational fears raise questions about the accuracy of his account. Overall, the narrator is a crucial element of the story, as he serves as the reader’s connection to the world of the Ushers and provides a grounded and objective perspective on the terrifying events that unfold.

4. 2. The System of Doctor Tarr and Professor Fether

“The System of Doctor Tarr and Professor Fether” by Edgar Allan Poe is another story narrated by an unnamed protagonist who is a guest at a private insane asylum run by Dr. Maillard. Like the narrator in “The Fall of the House of Usher”, he is one of those who witnesses unusual and sometimes almost insane and supernatural events. In this story, the reader can also observe how thin the line between rationality and madness is, which the narrator experiences first-hand. Like the narrator in “The Fall of the House of Usher”, according to Friedman, he can be defined as “I” as a Witness, as he is a secondary character and observer in the story that he passes on to the reader.

The reliability of the narrator in “The System of Doctor Tarr and Professor Fether” is called into question throughout the story. At the beginning of the story, the narrator seems to be a reliable source of information, as he describes his experiences at the insane asylum in a straightforward manner. However, as the story progresses, it becomes clear that the narrator’s perceptions may be unreliable and easily manipulated.

In the first paragraph of the story, the reader learns of the narrator's interest in visiting a psychiatric hospital in France near where he is staying. He is very passionate about this visit, which sounds almost humorous. It is not the narrator, unlike the narrator in the short story "The Fall of the House of Usher", who brings a gloomy, almost haunting atmosphere to the story. It is his companion, whom the narrator has met only a few days before, who is not inclined to visit the sanitarium. "To this he objected; pleading haste, in the first place, and, in the second, a very usual horror at the sight of a lunatic" (Poe 307). Poe mentions in this sentence "the sight of a lunatic" (307). Which, after reading the whole story, has a completely different dimension. The whole story is a look at the madness. This is foreshadowed by the testimony of the narrator's companion, who does not intend to enter the sanatorium: "For himself, he added, he had, some years since, made the acquaintance of Maillard, and would so far assist me as to ride up to the door and introduce me, although his feelings on the subject of lunacy would not permit of his entering the house" (Poe 307). The narrator ignores this warning and enthusiastically insists on his trip. The horror catches up with the narrator when he sees the "Maison de Santé" with his own eyes. "Its aspect inspired me with absolute dread, and, checking my horse, I half resolved to turn back" (Poe 307).

The narrator arrives at the asylum and is taken aback by the unorthodox methods used to treat the patients. He already heard about this method called the "system of soothing" back in Paris. This system means that any punishment is avoided in the sanatorium and patients are left with apparent freedom. Right at the entrance to the sanatorium, the narrator meets a patient who looks very presentable, but he is very cautious and talks to her in a very refined and careful way. "She replied in a perfectly rational manner to all that I said; and even her original observations were marked with the soundest good sense; but a long acquaintance with the metaphysics of mania, had taught me to put no faith in such evidence of sanity, and I continued to practice, throughout the interview, the caution with which I commenced it" (Poe 308). At this point, almost at the very beginning of the story, the patient does not seem completely insane to the narrator, but he is looking for a rational explanation. However, he soon learns that the woman is Mr. Maillard's niece and apologizes for thinking otherwise. Here again we can see the similarity with the narrator in "The Fall of the House of Usher", who tries to rationally explain everything that happens in the house because he refuses to believe in supernatural events. It is a paradox that it was this woman that the narrator assumed was the patient; as we later learn, he was right, even about the woman's ability to play the part. At the end of the story, the reader

then learns that the narrator was not quite as reliable, which completely changes his perception of the whole story as Booth describes it.

Subsequently, the narrator receives information from Mr. Maillard that the famous “system of soothing” is not practiced in the house anymore. It might seem somewhat strange that a highly praised and respected system should have been discontinued in the hospital, but not from the mouth of Dr. Maillard himself. He explains to the narrator that the system was overrated. At this point, the narrator might find it strange. But instead of asking about the reason for the abolition of the previous system, he starts to wonder how it worked and what its principles were. At one point, the narrator does become a bit suspicious. “‘I am very much surprised’, I said, ‘at what you tell me; for I made sure that, at this moment, no other method of treatment for mania existed in any portion of the country’” (Poe 310). But then it is explained to him that he is still young, he should not believe everything he hears, and he is intrigued by the new methods that Dr. Maillard is about to present to him. He receives a rational explanation for his doubts and abandons them. The narrator’s actions may seem naive to a reader who knows the whole story. But for someone reading the story for the first time, this may seem like a common situation in the life of a young and inexperienced man.

As the narrator spends more time at the asylum, he becomes increasingly intrigued by the patients and their behavior. They seem to be in a state of perpetual excitement. There are several moments throughout the story where the narrator suspects something is wrong, but somehow explains it to himself in the end. One of these moments is the narrator’s first dinner in the sanatorium. He is struck by the strange clothing of those at the table. Many of the women are tastelessly dressed, revealing too much skin, and their clothes do not match their size. “There was an air of oddity, in short, about the dress of the whole party, which, at first, caused me to recur to my original idea of the ‘soothing system’. And to fancy that Monsieur Maillard had been willing to deceive me until after dinner, that I might experience no uncomfortable feelings during the repast, at finding myself dining with lunatics; but I remembered having been informed, in Paris, that the southern provincialists were a peculiarly eccentric people, with a vast number of antiquated notions; and then, too, upon conversing with several members of the company, my apprehensions were immediately and fully dispelled” (Poe 311). The strange dress of the guests will eventually attribute to the fact that these people are southern provincialists, who are said to be very eccentric. The narrator also wonders about the strange sounds the band makes during dinner, but again explains it by the different preferences and culture

of these people. “Upon the whole, I could not help thinking that there was much of the bizarre about everything I saw; but then the world is made up of all kinds of persons, with all modes of thought, and all sorts of conventional customs” (Poe 311- 312). The narrator is not horrified even after a lady tells a story about a former mad patient, Madame Joyeuse, and the host addresses her as Madame Joyeuse. And the same thing happens with Miss Salsafette.

The narrator is initially taken in by Dr. Maillard’s explanations for the unorthodox methods used at the asylum. He tells him that this is the so-called system of Doctor Tarr and Professor Fether, who are highly respected experts. The narrator is embarrassed that he does not know these two gentlemen, and he accepts Dr. Maillard’s explanations without question. This suggests that the narrator is not particularly discerning or skeptical, which could make him susceptible to manipulation.

Next, the narrator asks why exactly the previous system, where patients were free to move around, was so dangerous. And Doctor Maillard tells him a story about a patient revolution. It must be perfectly clear to any reader at this point in the story that the tale of the great insane asylum revolution that Doctor Maillard tells is about him and his companions, and that the narrator is part of it. But the narrator is still clueless and asks Maillard all sorts of questions. He is very naive and too trusting. The reader is on suspense in this section, waiting for the narrator to figure out what is going on. It is almost humorous. Eventually, the narrator learns that Dr. Maillard and his staff are actually the inmates of the asylum, and the patients are the ones running the place, after the staff has retaken control. “After lying there some fifteen minutes, however, during which time I listened, with all my ears, to what was going on in the room, I came to some satisfactory dénouement of this tragedy. Monsieur Maillard, it appeared, in giving me the account of the lunatic who had excited his fellows to rebellion, had been merely relating his own exploits” (Poe 320). The narrator here talks about “satisfactory dénouement of this tragedy” and gives the impression that he’s proud to have solved this mystery.

The revelation at the end of the story that the staff are actually the inmates of the asylum may call the narrator’s reliability into question. If the narrator could be so easily deceived by the inmates, then it is possible that his perceptions throughout the story were also flawed or manipulated. It may seem that the whole story was a competition between the reader and the narrator and it is very clear that the reader wins all the way. This may have been unclear to the reader for a little while, as the information he was receiving was limited to the narrator’s perspective. Gérard Genette calls this internal focalization.

The narrator concludes the story with the sentence: “I have only to add that, although I have searched every library in Europe for the works of Doctor *Tarr* and Professor *Fether*, I have, up to the present day, utterly failed in my endeavours at procuring an edition“ (Poe 321). He concludes his entire story in such a comical way, leaving the reader in a state of wonder of not knowing whether the narrator is joking and meaning his words as a joke or being completely serious. In his chapter in *The Cambridge Companion to E. A. Poe*, Daniel Royot describes the narrator in the short story “The System of Doctor Tarr and Professor Fether” as “the ingenuous narrator who visits the place is only mildly surprised at the antics of madmen masquerading as sane individuals. One crows vociferously, another flaps his arms like wings and all demonstrate wild eccentricities. Ironically the naive visitor fears the keepers who strive to free themselves, while trusting his wrong assumptions and refusing the truth based on glaring evidence. Foolishly backing up sophisticated French experts who promote so-called “soothing system”, the narrator luckily survives the pandemonium but does not acquire the capacity to distinguish between common sense and madness” (65).

The language used by the narrator in “The System of Doctor Tarr and Professor Fether” is characterized by its descriptive and sometimes humorous tone. The narrator uses vivid and detailed descriptions to bring the setting and characters to life. One example of the narrator’s descriptive language can be seen in his description of the patients at the asylum. He describes them as “bizarre”, and goes on to describe their clothing, mannerisms, and behavior in great detail. His descriptions create a vivid picture of the patients and help to bring the story to life. Throughout the story, unlike the others, there is mostly direct speech, which adds a humorous atmosphere to the story. It is the speeches of the patients that are so funny. Unlike the narrator in the short story “The Fall of the House of Usher”, in this story it is not just the narrator who gives the whole atmosphere, but largely the other characters. His narrative is diegetic in the way Percy Lubbock describes it, guiding the reader through the story. In Stanzel’s typological circle, we find him in a first-person narrative situation. This is because he is part of a fictional world in which he interacts with other characters to tell a story he has experienced himself.

In conclusion, the narrator in “The System of Doctor Tarr and Professor Fether” is an unnamed guest at an insane asylum who becomes embroiled in the bizarre goings-on at the facility. Through his eyes, the reader is exposed to the unorthodox methods used by the staff and the strange behavior of the patients. Ultimately, the narrator’s own

perceptions are called into question, as he discovers that the roles of patient and staff have been reversed. While the narrator in “The System of Doctor Tarr and Professor Fether” appears to be a reliable source of information at the beginning of the story, his reliability becomes increasingly questionable as the story progresses. His gullibility, interplay with the patients, and susceptibility to manipulation all suggest that his perceptions may not be entirely trustworthy.

5. The narrator as an observer of the investigation

This type of narrator is a minor character in the story. He appears mainly in the detective stories of E. A. Poe and helps the main character with the investigation. In the short story “The Gold Bug” the narrator is the helper of Legrand, in the short story “The Murders in Rue Morgue” he is the assistant of Dupin.

In these stories it sometimes happens that the narrator recedes into the background and the reader has the feeling of being in the middle of the story. In “The Gold Bug”, this happens when Legrand navigates Jupiter to climb up a tree and correctly swap the bug through a skull. In “The Murders in Rue Morgue”, it happens when Dupin explains how he solved the murder mystery. So according to Percy Lubbock, showing wins over telling in some parts here.

We can also see here a typical example of Jean Pouillon’s vision from within, whose typology is based on knowledge or lack of knowledge of the inner world of the characters. In both of these narrators it is clear that they have much less information than the main characters of their stories. Both Dupin and Legrand save their explanations until the very end of the stories.

According to Norman Friedman’s typology, we can determine that both narrators fall into the category of “I” as a Witness. In this case, the narrator is a character in the story, an observer of the events that take place in the story and is more or less involved in the story.

The narrators in “The Gold Bug” and “The Murders in Rue Morgue” tell their version of the story they experienced. The story represents their personal experience. Franz K. Stanzel calls it a first-person narrative situation. In some parts, however, the stories can get into a personal narrative situation, in moments when the narrators recede into the background of the story and the reader is suddenly unaware of their presence.

The narrative is homodiegetic, according to Genette, since the narrator is a character in the story he is telling. As far as focalization is concerned, here we can see the mode of internal focalization. Both stories are told through one narrator and only what the narrator perceives reaches the reader.

Both narrators can be considered reliable as they show no signs of unreliability. They provide the reader with truthful information, there are no inconsistencies in their accounts, nor do they contradict themselves. None of them are in conflict with moral standards,

both are very intelligent and their narratives are not influenced by drug or alcohol use or hallucinations.

5.1 The Gold Bug

Poe's short story "The Gold Bug" is markedly different from the previous ones, as is the narrator. He is one of the narrators who are usually considered reliable. He is a part of an investigation or mystery, trying to find the truth and reach a certain goal. But madness and strange events also play a part in this story. According to Norman Friedman, the narrator can be identified as "I" as a Witness, since he is a character in the story and is more or less involved in it.

The narrator is an unnamed friend of the story's main protagonist, William Legrand. "He was of an ancient Huguenôt family, and had once been wealthy; but a series of misfortunes had reduced him to want" (Poe 42). He appears to be a curious and attentive listener to Legrand's adventures, and he provides a detailed account of the events that take place. The narrator's role is primarily to recount Legrand's story and to provide insights into his character. He is not a main participant in the action but is an observer who is present for much of the story's events.

He is considered to be a reliable source of information, as he is trustworthy and presents the events of the story in a clear and detailed manner. He is also somewhat skeptical of Legrand's claims and actions at times, which helps to provide a balance to the story and to prevent it from becoming too fantastical or unbelievable. Overall, the narrator serves as an important perspective through which the reader can experience the events of the story and gain a deeper understanding of the characters involved.

The narrator describes the setting of the story, Sullivan's Island, and its surroundings very vividly. Thanks to his description, the reader can very well imagine what the place might have looked like. "This Island is a very singular one. It consists of little else than the sea sand, and is about three miles long. Its breadth at no point exceeds a quarter of a mile. It is separated from the mainland by a scarcely perceptible creek, oozing its way through a wilderness of reeds and slime, a favorite resort of the marsh-hen" (Poe 42). He also adds more information about the vegetation and the old buildings that are inhabited by refugees in the summer, which is not important for the story itself but it nicely illustrates the picture of the whole landscape.

In some parts of the story, the narrator questions Legrand. The first of these situations occurs when Legrand draws him the bug he found. “‘Perhaps so,’ said I; ‘but, Legrand, I fear you are no artist. I must wait until I see the beetle itself, if I am to form any idea of its personal appearance’” (Poe 44). Legrand defends himself against this by saying that he had good masters and that he is no fool. The narrator tries to save the situation. Looks like he has got common sense, does not want to argue with Legrand, yet there is something wrong with his drawing. “‘Well, well,’ I said, ‘perhaps you have — still I don’t see them;’ and I handed him the paper without additional remark, not wishing to ruffle his temper; but I was much surprised at the turn affairs had taken; his ill humor puzzled me — and, as for the drawing of the beetle, there were positively no antennæ visible, and the whole did bear a very close resemblance to the ordinary cuts of a death’s-head” (Poe 45). The reader can sense from the text that Legrand must be handled very carefully at times, and that is exactly what the narrator does.

One day, the narrator learns that Legrand is delirious, talking in his sleep about gold, and his servant Jupiter thinks that he has fallen ill as a result of being bitten by the bug he found earlier. At the same time, Legrand asks the narrator in a letter to visit him. This may sound familiar to readers who have read the short story “The Fall of the House of Usher”. We can see that these motifs recur in Poe’s stories. In both stories we see a man asking his friend to visit him on the basis of some strange or supernatural event or disturbance in his mental health, some illness. In both stories, it turns out in the end that there was no mental illness involved.

When Legrand believes the beetle will bring him back his fortune, the narrator begins to doubt his friend again. “The weight of the insect was very remarkable, and, taking all things into consideration, I could hardly blame Jupiter for his opinion respecting it; but what to make of Legrand’s concordance with that opinion, I could not, for the life of me, tell” (Poe 48). He doesn’t know what to make of his friend’s opinion. “‘My dear Legrand,’ I cried, interrupting him, ‘you are certainly unwell, and had better use some little precautions. You shall go to bed, and I will remain with you a few days, until you get over this. You are feverish and’” (Poe 48). Interestingly, the narrator says his opinion out loud, directly to Legrand. In “The Fall of the House of Usher”, the narrator denigrates Roderick Usher behind his back, calls him a hypochondriac, but doesn’t say it to his face. The narrator in “The Gold Bug” tries to be transparent, which adds to his credibility.

By mentioning that Legrand may be insane, Poe puts the reader back in the role of detective. They find themselves in the middle of a contest between them and the narrator,

and it is only a matter of time before it is the narrator or the reader who first discovers that Legrand is not really mad at all.

The narrator is at first reluctant to take part in Legrand's mad expedition to the mountains. "Then, Legrand, I can become a party to no such absurd proceeding" (Poe 49). Eventually, however, he agrees and accompanies his friend, but he is still not convinced of the accuracy of this expedition. "When I observed this last plain evidence of my friend's aberration of mind, I could scarcely refrain from tears. I thought it best, however, to humor his fancy, at least for the present, or until I could adopt some more energetic measures with a chance of success" (Poe 49). By being a doctor, the narrator's judgment of Legrand's medical condition seems to be correct. The narrator thus judges according to certain symptoms and makes a diagnosis. He is an educated and intelligent individual who is able to provide insights and commentary on the events of the story. He is able to analyze the actions of the characters and provide explanations for their behavior, which suggests that he has a deep understanding of human nature and psychology.

The narrator in "The Gold Bug" is considered to be a reliable source of information for several reasons. First, he is an unbiased observer of the events that take place and does not have a personal stake in the outcome of the story. This means that he does not have a motive to misrepresent the events or to manipulate the reader's interpretation of them. He is the mediator between the story and the reader, he gives us all the information, describes the treasure hunt journey and all its circumstances. Sometimes he does not intervene in the story at all and is just a mere observer, receding into the background. For example, when Legrand asks Jupiter to climb a tree with a beetle. The narrator says nothing and so the reader only sees the two characters and their conversation. According to Franz K. Stanzel, we call the narrator's retreat into the background of the story a personal narrative situation and Percy Lubbock would add that in this part of the story showing wins over telling.

Second, the narrator provides a detailed and thorough account of the story, including descriptions of the characters, their actions, and their motivations. Third, the narrator is careful to present the events of the story in a logical and coherent manner, which helps to establish his credibility as a reliable source of information. He does not make any outlandish claims or statements that are inconsistent with the rest of the story.

The line between rationality and madness is very thin even in this story. Through the narrator's point of view, the reader can get the feeling that Legrand has really gone mad. And the storyteller really believes it and wonders how to get him out of this mess. "Could

I have depended, indeed, upon Jupiter's aid, I would have had no hesitation in attempting to get the lunatic home by force; but I was too well assured of the old negro's disposition, to hope that he would assist me, under any circumstances, in a personal contest with his master. I made no doubt that the latter had been infected with some of the innumerable Southern superstitions about money buried, and that his phantasy had received confirmation by the finding of the scarabæus, or, perhaps, by Jupiter's obstinacy in maintaining it to be a bug of real gold" (Poe 53). Over time, however, the narrator finds meaning in the treasure hunt. "I was dreadfully weary, but, scarcely understanding what had occasioned the change in my thoughts, I felt no longer any great aversion from the labor imposed. I had become most unaccountably interested — nay, even excited" (Poe 55). And once the men find the treasure chest, all the madness is forgotten. The narrator sees that his friend was right all along. "But your grandiloquence, and your conduct in swinging the beetle — how excessively odd! I was sure you were mad" (Poe 69). Eventually Legrand explains to the narrator that he knew he was suspected of madness, so he decided to punish the narrator and mystify him. That the narrator knows much less than the character calls Jean Pouillon's vision from within

The narrator is fascinated by the process of decoding the messages in the story. He helps to explain some of the technical aspects of the code-breaking process to the reader by asking questions to Legrand. Michael Williams describes the narrator of "The Gold Bug": "bewildered narrator recounts, first, a series of events the full significance of which escapes him, and then, in recursion, the events as explained to him by the ingenious central figure, Legrand, on whose intelligence the disclosure of meaning depends" (646).

The language used by the narrator in "The Gold Bug" by Edgar Allan Poe is formal and descriptive, reflecting the literary style of the time period in which the story was written. The narrator uses a variety of literary devices, such as metaphors and similes, to create vivid and engaging descriptions of the setting and characters. In addition, the narrator's language is precise and analytical, reflecting his objective perspective as an observer of the story's events. He carefully describes the actions and behaviors of the characters, providing a detailed analysis of their motivations and thought processes. The language used by the narrator in "The Gold Bug" is formal, descriptive, and technical, reflecting the literary conventions of the time period in which the story was written. The precise and analytical nature of the language adds a sense of realism to the story, making it more engaging and believable for the reader.

Overall, the narrator in “The Gold Bug” is a reliable and trustworthy source of information who presents the events of the story in a clear and objective manner. His attention to detail and analytical abilities make him a valuable perspective through which the reader can understand the story’s events and characters.

5. 2 The Murders in the Rue Morgue

“The Murders in the Rue Morgue” by Edgar Allan Poe is narrated by an unnamed narrator who is a close friend of C. Auguste Dupin, the main protagonist of the story. The narrator serves as a passive observer of Dupin’s investigation into the brutal murders of Madame L’Espanaye and her daughter in their Paris apartment. The narrator provides important context and details about Dupin’s character and his methods of deduction, as well as providing a contrast to Dupin’s eccentricities with his own more conventional perspective. He is portrayed as rational, but not particularly insightful, and serves as a foil to Dupin’s genius. According to Norman Friedman, the narrator can be defined as “I” as a Witness, which means that the narrator is a character in the story he tells, an observer of the story in which he is more or less involved.

The narrator in “The Murders in the Rue Morgue” begins the narrative in a very different way from all the other narrators that have been discussed in this thesis. He begins with a preface, that looks like an extract from a scholarly book. In this preface he talks about the analytical mind. He describes an analytical person who finds pleasure in solving and unravelling things, loves puzzles and takes care to follow a rigorous methodical process. An unusual and broad redefinition of analysis is attempted in the introduction. “Poe challenges the historical assumption that analysis was largely a mathematical process, for, as Thomas L. Hankins has observed, the eighteenth century defined analysis as the method of resolving mathematical problems by reducing them to equations” (Martin 31).

The narrator does not forget to add that he is not writing a treatise, but a few observations on such an unusual story. He also warns the reader not to confuse analytical skills with wit, because a witty person is often incapable of analysis. The whole preface ends with the sentence: “The narrative which follows will appear to the reader somewhat in the light of a commentary upon the propositions just advanced” (Poe 143). The narrator tells in advance what effect the narrative is likely to have on the reader. This allows the reader to make up his mind whether he is interested in this narrative at all or not. Some

might be put off by this theoretical part, but in this case it serves as a nice introduction to the following story, awakening the reader's curiosity and interest in what the story will actually be about.

“One of the best known and most intriguing passages in Poe's fiction occurs near the beginning of his first detective story, ‘Murders in the Rue Morgue’. The narrator has been describing Dupin's remarkable powers of observation and deduction” (Irwin 187). He demonstrates this in a situation where Dupin knows exactly what the narrator is thinking. Based on the fact that the men met a fruit seller, the fruit seller bumped into the narrator, the narrator slipped on a pile of rocks and from then on, he was thinking about paving, this led him to think of atoms, the Greek, the Orion Nebula and finally an actor named Chantilly. Gérard Genette describes this narrative as homodiegetic with internal focalization. This means that the narrator is a character in the story he or she is telling and only what the narrator perceives reaches the reader.

The relationship between the narrator and the main character is interesting. In the short stories “The Fall of the House of Usher” and “The Gold Bug”, the narrator was an acquaintance or friend of the main character, whom he saw from time to time. In this case, the narrator is a very close friend of the main character, Auguste Dupin. They share the same passion for books and one could say that the narrator admires Dupin. “I was astonished, too, at the vast extent of his reading — and above all I felt my soul enkindled within me by the wild fervor, and what I could only term the vivid freshness, of his imagination” (Poe 143). Their friendship goes so far that they decide to live together. “Had the routine of our life at this place been known to the world, we should have been regarded as madmen — although, perhaps, as madmen of a harmless nature” (Poe 144). Together they indulged in unusual entertainments, during which the narrator constantly admired Dupin's analytical skills. This begins to bring the reader to the connection between the preface and the story itself.

Throughout the story, the narrator is sometimes skeptical of Dupin's theories and methods, but ultimately comes to respect and admire his friend's intelligence and intuition. “I have said that the whims of my friend were manifold, and that — *Je les menagais*: — for this phrase there is no English equivalent. It was his humor now to decline all conversation on the subject of the murder, until after we had taken a bottle of wine together about noon the next day” (Poe 154). He serves to highlight the contrast between the rational and the irrational, the known and the unknown, and ultimately helps

to emphasize the power of human reason in solving even the most perplexing of mysteries.

When Dupin explains how he solved the case, the narrator recedes into the background. He doesn't enter Dupin's narrative, and so the reader doesn't get the sense that there is a narrator at all. The effect on the reader is that Dupin is speaking directly to him. Of all the six short stories analyzed in this work, the narrator is the least apparent in this one. He begins the story with a lecture on analytical thinking, describes the disaster that has befallen Madame L'Esplanade and her daughter, then recedes into the background of the story for a long time, letting the explanation of the Dupin mystery stand out, and finally summarises the results of the investigation. As the narrator recedes into the background of the story, Percy Lubbock says that showing wins over telling. Franz K. Stanzel calls the same phenomenon a personal narrative situation.

The narrator in "The Murders in the Rue Morgue" is not explicitly described or characterized beyond his role as a friend and observer of Dupin's investigation. However, it is possible to interpret his narration as indicative of a certain level of intelligence and discernment. That the narrator is gifted with intelligence the reader discovers already in the theoretical introduction. But as he himself says, there is a difference between an intelligent, witty person and a person with analytical thinking. It is analytical thinking that the narrator lacks, which is why he needs his friend Dupin to solve the murder. It is possible that the unnamed narrator may represent the average reader or audience member, providing a relatable perspective through which to view Dupin's deductive powers.

Despite initially being skeptical of Dupin's theories, the narrator is able to follow the logic of his friend's deductions and often provides valuable insights into the case. He is also depicted as being emotionally affected by the brutal murders, which suggests a degree of empathy and sensitivity.

The reliability of the narrator in "The Murders in the Rue Morgue" is a topic of debate among literary scholars and readers. Some argue that he is a reliable narrator, as he provides a straightforward account of the events he witnesses and his descriptions of Dupin's actions and deductions are generally accurate. Others, however, point out that the narrator's perspective is limited and that his reliability is therefore questionable. For example, his initial skepticism of Dupin's theories suggests a certain level of narrow-mindedness or lack of imagination. Additionally, his emotional reactions to the murders and the investigation may cloud his judgment and affect his ability to provide an objective account of events.

The language used by the narrator is formal and sophisticated, with an emphasis on precise details and logical analysis. Throughout the story, the narrator describes events in a meticulous and analytical manner, highlighting small details that may seem insignificant to others. This attention to detail is characteristic of the detective genre, as it allows the reader to follow along with the detective's thought process and attempt to solve the mystery alongside them. The narrator's language is also marked by a sense of detachment and objectivity, as they describe the events of the story without becoming emotionally involved, in most cases.

Overall, while the narrator in "The Murders in the Rue Morgue" may not be a fully fleshed-out character in his own right, his role in the story is crucial to the development and portrayal of Dupin's character and the overall themes of the narrative. While the narrator in *The Murders in the Rue Morgue* is not necessarily an unreliable narrator in the traditional sense, his perspective is limited and his reliability may be called into question depending on one's interpretation of the story.

Conclusion

The aim of this thesis was to analyze Edgar Allan Poe's narrators in chosen stories and explore their role in the narrative. I also focused on the unreliable narrators that are typical of Poe's horror stories and the whole concept of unreliability in narrative. I explored how Poe works with his narrators, how he creates them and what effect they have on the reader.

In the first, theoretical part of the thesis I defined narrators and looked at some typologies of well-known theorists such as Percy Lubbock, Jean Pouillon, Norman Friedman, Wayne C. Booth, Franz K. Stanzel, Tzvetan Todorov and Gérard Genette, whose typologies of narrators are applicable to the selected short stories. I devoted one subsection to the unreliable narrator. In it, the reader could learn what unreliability is, how to recognize it in the text, and which critics were interested in it. Wayne C. Booth came up with the term itself in his famous work *Rhetoric of Fiction* from 1961. Other critics who have dealt with narrative unreliability are Hühn, Pier, Schmid and Schönert in the *Handbook of Narratology*, or the German Americanist Ansgar Nünning. The last subchapter of the theoretical part of the thesis was devoted to E. A. Poe, his rhetoric and style, in which we learned that it is the narrator who makes Poe's stories interesting and also that Poe likes to put readers in the role of psychologists and detectives.

The second part of the thesis dealt with the specific narrators in six stories by Poe and the application of the theoretical part to the stories. From my research, it came out that Poe creates three types of narrators. Each type of this narrator has a different task and a different effect on the reader.

I referred to the first type of narrator as a crazy unreliable narrator. We can find him in the short stories "The Tell-Tale Heart" and "The Black Cat". The reader can see from the beginning that these narrators are very unreliable, suffer from mental disorders, use alcohol, are bullies and murderers. They tell the story from their own limited perspective, so the reader only gets what they want to convey, some of the information they do not give at all or in some cases they lie, because they try to convince the reader to take their side. They contradict themselves very often in the story and are emotionally involved, using repetition and exclamation marks in the text. Readers can clearly see that these narrators are in conflict with moral norms and do not conform to them. They are the villains in their stories, and create an atmosphere full of fear, horror, and suspense.

I conceptualized the second type of narrator that Poe created as a narrator who observes madness. This type of narrator can be seen in the short stories "The Fall of the House of

Usher” and “The System of Doctor Tarr and Professor Fether”. The reliability of these narrators is questionable. We do not find signs of unreliability in them such as disturbed mental health, drug use or hallucinations. Yet at the end of the story, the reader discovers that it was all very different from how the narrator presented it. So we can say that the narrator has given false information and thus the whole story has a completely different effect on the reader. If we did not learn about the denouement of “The System of Doctor Tarr and Professor Fether” it would just be a very strange story about a visit to a mental institution. Both narrators give us information limited to their point of view and complete the atmosphere. In the short story “The Fall of the House of Usher” it is an atmosphere of horror and fear, in “The System of Doctor Tarr and Professor Fether” it is more humorous. In these stories, the reader becomes a player in a game with the narrator to see who finds out what the story is really all about.

The third type of narrator is one who is part of a detective story investigation. This can be seen in the short story “The Gold Bug” and “The Murders in the Rue Morgue”. These narrators guide the reader through a story in which they are the observer and in some parts of the text they recede into the background and let the main characters, Legrand and Dupin, stand out, giving the narrator the feeling of being in the middle of the story. By receding into the background, very reliable information reaches the reader. They are guides rather than conveying their perspective and opinion.

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