

Uncovered Secrets of Lost Souls (Common Attributes of Characters in Edgar Allan Poe's Short Stories)

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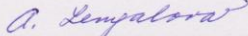
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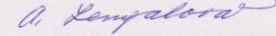
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ABSTRAKT

Tato práce se zabývá nejčastějšími společnými charakterovými vlastnostmi postav objevujících se v povídkách Edgara Allana Poa. Analyzuje tři základní elementy, jmenovitě zničitelskou touhu, vnitřní souboj duše a nemocnou duši. Rovněž se zabývá jejich příčinami. Práce dochází k závěru, že postavy tíží jejich temná tajemství a touží, aby je mohly prozradit, aby ulevili své duši, což je spojeno s vnitřním soubojem duše. Je nutné si uvědomit, že jejich duše jsou často nemocné, což potlačuje jejich racionalitu. V závěru je také zjištěna jistá spojitost mezi životem Edgara Allana Poa a postavami jeho povídek.

Klíčová slova: Edgar Allan Poe, americká literatura, povídky, zničitelská touha, vnitřní boj duše, nemocná duše, biografie

ABSTRACT

This thesis deals with the most frequent common attributes of characters that appear in Edgar Allan Poe's short stories. It analyzes three basic elements, namely the destroying desire, the inner fight of a soul and a diseased soul. It is also focused on their initiators. The thesis concludes that the characters are burdened with their dark secrets and they have a desire to uncover them to relieve their souls. This is followed by the inner fight of a soul. It is necessary to realize that their souls are often diseased which suppresses their rationality. There is also found out a connection between Edgar Allan Poe's life and characters in his short stories.

Keywords: Edgar Allan Poe, American literature, short stories, destroying desire, inner fight of a soul, diseased soul, biography

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INTRODUCTION

In my bachelor thesis, I will deal with short stories written by Edgar Allan Poe. I want to set the most frequent attributes of characters in his short stories. I will prove that the characters have some attributes in common and their souls are dark in a certain way. I will also try to explain the reason for the behavior of the characters.

The reason why I chose this topic was the fact that I was interested in reading of Edgar Allan Poe's short stories and I was fascinated by the complicatedness of his characters who act according to certain patterns. Despite they are perverted, they still have their conscience which forces them to reveal their committed crimes.

In the first part, I want to introduce Edgar Allan Poe's life in more detail to illustrate that his life wasn't full of lucky moments which was transferred to his characters, as well. He was moving a lot and lived with different families, so it didn't provide him a feeling of a complete loving family.

I will continue with the analysis of three basic attributes, namely destroying desire, inner fight of a soul and diseased soul. The short stories *The Cask of Amontillado*, *The Black Cat*, *Berenice*, *Morella*, *The Oval Portrait*, *The Oblong Box*, *A Descent into the Maelström*, *The Tell-Tale Heart*, *Hop-Frog*, *The Imp of the Perverse*, *Eleonora*, *The Fall of the house of Usher* and *The System of Doctor Tarr and Professor Fether* will be analyzed. There will be also the analysis of initiators of the characters' behavior.

The thesis will deal with proving that souls of the characters are dark in a way and that fact will be summarized in conclusion. It will be also dealt with the connection between the author and his literary characters. The life of Edgar Allan Poe will be briefly compared to these characters.

1 EDGAR ALLAN POE'S BIOGRAPHY

Edgar Allan Poe was born to Elizabeth Arnold Hopkins and David Poe in Boston on January 19, 1809. A year after this event, David Poe abandoned the family and in 1811, Elizabeth Poe died. That's why he was put in the custody of the family of Allans. John Allan, a young man from Richmond, was taking care of him. He was working as a partner in the company of Ellis and Allan which was considered to be a successful exporter of tobacco. In 1815, Allans were staying in England and Edgar attended schools there. In 1820, they came back. It is claimed that the behavior of John Allan to Edgar changed around 1824. They were quite distant to each other.^{1,2}

In 1826, Edgar was attending the University of Virginia. Although he was excellent in Latin and French at the university, he had some difficulties with gambling and it resulted in creating debts which John Allan rejected to pay. In 1827, Poe left for Boston and *Tamerlane and Other Poems* was published. He also joined the United States Army as a private soldier in the same year. In 1829, *Al Aaraaf, Tamerlane, and Minor Poems* was published at Baltimore. At that time, he became a cadet at West Point. But eventually, he didn't like the exhausting life of a cadet and he was discharged from the U.S. Army. In 1831, his collection *Poems* was published.^{3,4}

In 1831, Edgar started to live with his aunt Maria Clemm in Baltimore. They lived also with other family members in that household, for example with Maria's daughter Virginia (who was Edgar's future wife). The years 1832 and 1833 were quite successful for Edgar Allan Poe. In 1832, his 5 short stories were published in the *Philadelphia Saturday Courier* and in 1833, the *Baltimore Saturday Visiter* decided that Edgar's *MS. Found in a Bottle* was the best short story and he won a \$50 prize. In 1834, John Allan passed away.⁵

Poe wasn't really successful in finding a good job in Baltimore, so he was forced to move to Richmond in 1835 and started to write for Thomas Willis White's monthly

¹ See Baym, Nina. *The Norton Anthology of American Literature*. New York: Norton, 1995.

² See Quinn, Arthur Hobson. *Edgar Allan Poe: A Critical Biography*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press ; Paw Prints, 2008.

³ See Quinn, Arthur Hobson. *Edgar Allan Poe: A Critical Biography*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press ; Paw Prints, 2008.

⁴ See Thomas, Dwight, and David Kelly Jackson. *The Poe Log: A Documentary Life of Edgar Allan Poe, 1809-1849*. Boston: G. K. Hall, 1987.

⁵ See Thomas, Dwight, and David Kelly Jackson. *The Poe Log: A Documentary Life of Edgar Allan Poe, 1809-1849*. Boston: G. K. Hall, 1987.

magazine called *The Southern Literary Messenger*. He became an assistant editor of the *Messenger* with the year salary of 540 dollars, which was the average minimum for living in the 1830s in Richmond. At first he wasn't much respected and his stories were published anonymously, but later they were announced as by Edgar A. Poe.^{6,7,8}

In October 1835, he brought Mrs. Clemm and her daughter Virginia to Richmond and they all three lived together in a modest house. In May 1836, he married Virginia, who was just fourteen years old. His working for the *Messenger* was ended in 1837, because he was dismissed and he (together with Maria Clemm and Virginia) was moving to New York after this incident. Edgar hoped that the city of about 300 000 inhabitants will give him a wider opportunity than a city with just 20 000 inhabitants. He wrote some reviews and stories there, but with no success. He even decided to write a long story which was named *The Narrative of A. Gordon Pym*. But it didn't meet success at the readers again and it wasn't profitable for Edgar.^{9,10,11}

After his failure, he decided to find another city to succeed. It was Philadelphia this time. He and his family settled there in 1838. Already in autumn 1838, his tale *Ligeia* appeared in the *American Museum* (a Baltimore monthly), followed by his other stories and poems. Despite this fact, he was still struggling with poverty. In May 1839, he begged William E. Burton for a job. Burton was a well-known English actor with its own magazine called *Burton's Gentleman's Magazine*. He was its owner and editor, as well. In May - after pleading, he decided to employ Edgar as a coeditor with a salary of ten dollar a week. In September, his story *The Fall of the House of Usher* appeared there and in October, his tale *William Wilson*, as well. In December 1839, *Tales of the Grotesque and Arabesque* was published by a Philadelphian firm *Lea & Blanchard*. The two stories together with twenty-three other stories appeared there. Although this piece of work gained many positive responses from the critics, the marketability and profit were quite low. His

⁶ See Quinn, Arthur Hobson. *Edgar Allan Poe: A Critical Biography*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press ; Paw Prints, 2008.

⁷ See Thomas, Dwight, and David Kelly Jackson. *The Poe Log: A Documentary Life of Edgar Allan Poe, 1809-1849*. Boston: G. K. Hall, 1987.

⁸ See Baym, Nina. *The Norton Anthology of American Literature*. New York: Norton, 1995.

⁹ See Baym, Nina. *The Norton Anthology of American Literature*. New York: Norton, 1995.

¹⁰ See Thomas, Dwight, and David Kelly Jackson. *The Poe Log: A Documentary Life of Edgar Allan Poe, 1809-1849*. Boston: G. K. Hall, 1987.

¹¹ See Quinn, Arthur Hobson. *Edgar Allan Poe: A Critical Biography*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press ; Paw Prints, 2008.

career at the *Burton's* was finished in May 1840 by his dismissal. But William Burton recommended him to *Graham's*, a George Graham's magazine. Poe worked there as a coeditor. His story *The Murders in the Rue Morgue* appeared in the April issue and *A Descent into the Maelström* in the May issue.^{12,13,14}

In January 1842, doctors found out that Virginia Poe was suffering a pulmonary hemorrhage which indicated a beginning of tuberculosis. She lived only five more years. By that time, he abstained from alcohol, but now he was drinking under the stress which was caused mainly by his wife's illness. In the same year he resigned unhappily from *Graham's*. While he was working at *Graham's*, he ran his own project called *Penn Magazine*, but then it was renamed to *The Stylus*. In 1843, he started to work for *Saturday Museum*, the Philadelphia weekly.^{15,16,17}

In June 1843, his short story *The Gold Bug* was put in a contest organized by the *Dollar Newspaper* and Poe won the first prize – one hundred dollars. The tale was very popular in a moment and was loved by the readers. It was been reprinted even three times in the *Dollar Newspaper* and dramatized at the Walnut Street Theatre. It might seem that his financial situation got better, but despite that, he remained quite impoverished. He tried to create a new additional career as a lecturer. He lectured American Poetry on William Wirt Institute and later on Wilmington and Newark, Delaware, in Baltimore and in Reading, in Pennsylvania, but he and his wife Virginia moved to New York City in April 1844.^{18,19,20}

He wrote for some newspapers in New York City and he was also a subeditor of the *Sunday Times*. The year 1845 was certainly one of his best years. A laudatory article

¹² See Baym, Nina. *The Norton Anthology of American Literature*. New York: Norton, 1995.

¹³ See Thomas, Dwight, and David Kelly Jackson. *The Poe Log: A Documentary Life of Edgar Allan Poe, 1809-1849*. Boston: G. K. Hall, 1987.

¹⁴ See Quinn, Arthur Hobson. *Edgar Allan Poe: A Critical Biography*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press ; Paw Prints, 2008.

¹⁵ See Baym, Nina. *The Norton Anthology of American Literature*. New York: Norton, 1995.

¹⁶ See Thomas, Dwight, and David Kelly Jackson. *The Poe Log: A Documentary Life of Edgar Allan Poe, 1809-1849*. Boston: G. K. Hall, 1987.

¹⁷ See Quinn, Arthur Hobson. *Edgar Allan Poe: A Critical Biography*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press ; Paw Prints, 2008.

¹⁸ See Baym, Nina. *The Norton Anthology of American Literature*. New York: Norton, 1995.

¹⁹ See Thomas, Dwight, and David Kelly Jackson. *The Poe Log: A Documentary Life of Edgar Allan Poe, 1809-1849*. Boston: G. K. Hall, 1987.

²⁰ See Quinn, Arthur Hobson. *Edgar Allan Poe: A Critical Biography*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press ; Paw Prints, 2008.

on Poe written by James Russell Lowell appeared in February issue of *Graham's*. In February, *The Raven* was also published in *American Review*, after appearing in the *New York Evening Mirror*. It became a sensation instantly and it was reprinted by journals all over the country and some parodies were created, as well. He was considered to be a new literary celebrity. He started to lecture again. He lectured on Poets of America and even about three hundred New Yorkers attended his lectures. An important fact for Poe was that he became a principal reviewer of the *Broadway Journal*, which was a new weekly. A selection of Edgar's short stories called *Tales* was published by *Wiley & Putnam*, such as *The Raven and Other Poems*. His great achievement in his *Broadway Journal* career was that he became its sole owner. But he failed due to some financial difficulties in 1846. However, he was marring his successes by drinking in the meanwhile. In 1846, Poe started to be appreciated in Europe. For example, his *The Murders in the Rue Morgue* and some other stories attracted some very good translators as E. D. Forgues and Isabelle Meunier, both from France. Although he was successful in Europe, his life at home was rather unhappy. His health wasn't good as well as his wife's health. He struggled with poverty, quarreled with minor literati and was drinking continually. He was working at *Eureka*, a prose piece of work. In December 1846, the *New York Morning Express* even published a report about his bad condition. In January 1847, a miserable situation happened to Edgar. His wife Virginia Poe died of tuberculosis in the age of twenty-four and five months. He slowed the tempo after her death and became to be ill. He was nursed by Mrs. Marie Louise Shew who was a nice lady with medical training. Fortunately, she improved his health situation. In December 1847, he came back with publishing a poem *Ulalume* in the *American Review*.^{21,22,23}

The year 1848 was quite wild for him. Helen Power Whitman attracted Edgar and he sent his verses *To Helen* to her. He tried to commit a suicide, but he was unsuccessful in that. He finished writing a story *Hop-Frog* and a poem *Annabel Lee*. His *Eureka* was published by a New York publisher George P. Putnam and some mixed reviews appeared. It was sold just in limited amount. In September, he asked Helen to marry him, but she

²¹ See Baym, Nina. *The Norton Anthology of American Literature*. New York: Norton, 1995.

²² See Thomas, Dwight, and David Kelly Jackson. *The Poe Log: A Documentary Life of Edgar Allan Poe, 1809-1849*. Boston: G. K. Hall, 1987.

²³ See Quinn, Arthur Hobson. *Edgar Allan Poe: A Critical Biography*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press ; Paw Prints, 2008.

refused him. Edgar's age and his poor health were her reasons. He was solving his problems by drinking alcohol. Later, Helen agreed to a conditional engagement, but the condition was complete abstaining from alcohol. In December, she agreed to immediate marriage, but she found out that Edgar began to drink again, so she canceled their engagement immediately. He left New York that evening.^{24,25,26}

In June 1849, he was staying in Richmond for 2 months. He met his early love, Sarah Elmira Royster Shelton, who was widowed now. Thereafter, he was engaged to her. In these days, was giving lectures and readings, but he continued drinking. In August, he joined the *Sons of Temperance*, a group of people who wanted to stop people drinking alcohol. In September, he left Richmond for New York, but he was planning to come back soon. When he stopped in Baltimore, he started to drink again. On 3 October 1849 - Election Day, he was found in a comatose condition at the polling place for Baltimore's Fourth Ward. He died of congestion of the brain at the Washington College Hospital on 7 October, 1849.^{27,28,29}

²⁴ See Baym, Nina. *The Norton Anthology of American Literature*. New York: Norton, 1995.

²⁵ See Thomas, Dwight, and David Kelly Jackson. *The Poe Log: A Documentary Life of Edgar Allan Poe, 1809-1849*. Boston: G. K. Hall, 1987.

²⁶ See Quinn, Arthur Hobson. *Edgar Allan Poe: A Critical Biography*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press ; Paw Prints, 2008.

²⁷ See Thomas, Dwight, and David Kelly Jackson. *The Poe Log: A Documentary Life of Edgar Allan Poe, 1809-1849*. Boston: G. K. Hall, 1987.

²⁸ See Quinn, Arthur Hobson. *Edgar Allan Poe: A Critical Biography*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press ; Paw Prints, 2008.

²⁹ See Baym, Nina. *The Norton Anthology of American Literature*. New York: Norton, 1995.

2 DESTROYING DESIRE

Concerning this issue, the following citation may be effective. In Poe's short story *The Black Cat*, Poe claims: "Who has not, a hundred times, found himself committing a vile or a silly action, for no other reason than because he knows he should not?"³⁰ This statement proves that even Poe knew that his characters were driven by certain desires that ruin them and they had to fight with them to not succumb to these devious calls. The characters have to keep fighting inside their souls, because they simply have the choice. Most of Edgar Allan Poe's characters struggle with their desire which leads them to fall into bad ways.

2.1 The Cask of Amontillado

Namely, it is well marked in *The Cask of Amontillado*. Fortunato's passion for wine causes that when he hears about this special kind of wine known as Amontillado, he has to own it and it doesn't really matter what will be the price for it. He is so blinded by his desire that he is not able to recognize that Montresor is just playing with him and that he would want to kill him to revenge or because of another purpose. The blind desire distracts him and drives him to death.

The initiator of Fortunato's behavior is not obvious here. It might be considered Fortunato's loneliness, so he wants to focus himself on something else than friendships and family. It's because he is considered to be an influential man from higher society. That's the reason why too many people don't want to be friends with him. He is too distant for them. In addition, he is mean to them, so it drives the people away from him.³¹

More interesting fact here is considering the initiator of Montresor's behavior. An essay by Jordan Cernek named *Reasons for Murder*³² summarizes two different attitudes researched by J. Rea³³ and Charles A. Sweet, Jr.³⁴ in their essays. Cernek suggest

³⁰ See Poe, Edgar Allan, and Davin Van Leer. *Selected Tales*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998, 232.

³¹ See Poe, Edgar Allan, and Davin Van Leer. *Selected Tales*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998.

³² See Cernek, Jordan, James W. Gargano, Daniel Hoffman, J. Rea, and Charles A., Jr. Sweet. "http://gct.greenville.edu/~bshaw/eng340/edgarsweb/jcernek/Reasons%20for%20Murder.pdf." Reason for Murder. <http://gct.greenville.edu/~bshaw/eng340/edgarsweb/jcernek/Reasons%20for%20Murder.pdf> (accessed February 18, 2012).

³³ See Rea, J. "Poe's 'The Cask of Amontillado'." *Studies in Short Fiction* Fall 1966, 57-69.

³⁴ See Sweet, Jr., Charles A. „Retapping Poe's 'Cask of Amontillado'." *Poe Studies* June 1975, 10-12.

that the reason why Montresor killed Fortunato wasn't for revenge and both essays prove that fact. However each of them introduced different probable hypothesis.³⁵

The first point is that J. Rea claims that the reason of killing is caused by perversity. This theory of perversity is introduced in Poe's short story *The Imp of the Perverse*. It simply means that a person can be overpowered by some kind of fits of perversity and these fits cause that this person does things that are wrong and that wouldn't be done by the person if he could keep having his common sense.³⁶ J. Rea provides the strongest moment of this fit of perverseness, as well. It is the situation when Montresor laid the fourth tier of bricks and when he heard the rattling of a chain. Montresor stopped working in that moment and just enjoyed listening to the rattling. After this act he continues working and eventually he stopped for the second time. Fortunato made horrible noises. As he yelled, Montresor answered him by yelling, as well. This moment is considered the best impulse of perversity according to Rea.^{37,38}

The following point, suggested by Charles A. Sweet, Jr., is that the killing is caused by Montresor's destroying desire. He provides an explanation of Montresor projecting himself into Fortunato. He lists some similarities between Montresor and Fortunato. The short story has a logical implication that both characters are Italian noblemen with many ancestors, they are wine enthusiasts and their names refer to wealth. As it was already stated in E. Bruce Kirkham's article *Poe's Amontillado, One More Time*, Montresor refers to treasure and Fortunato means fortune.³⁹ Sweet claims: "The physical act of walling up an enemy in one's home duplicates the mental act of repressing a despised self in the unconscious.... As a Catholic Montresor knows that suicide (the potential murder of Fortunato) is a mortal sin; thus, his unconscious dictates that if suicide is impossible,

³⁵ See Cernek, Jordan, James W. Gargano, Daniel Hoffman, J. Rea, and Charles A., Jr. Sweet. "http://gct.greenville.edu/~bshaw/eng340/edgarsweb/jcernek/Reasons%20for%20Murder.pdf." Reason for Murder. <http://gct.greenville.edu/~bshaw/eng340/edgarsweb/jcernek/Reasons%20for%20Murder.pdf> (accessed February 18, 2012).

³⁶ See Poe, Edgar Allan, and Davin Van Leer. *Selected Tales*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998.

³⁷ See Rea, J. "Poe's 'The Cask of Amontillado'." *Studies in Short Fiction* Fall 1966, 57-69.

³⁸ See Cernek, Jordan, James W. Gargano, Daniel Hoffman, J. Rea, and Charles A., Jr. Sweet. "http://gct.greenville.edu/~bshaw/eng340/edgarsweb/jcernek/Reasons%20for%20Murder.pdf." Reason for Murder. <http://gct.greenville.edu/~bshaw/eng340/edgarsweb/jcernek/Reasons%20for%20Murder.pdf> (accessed February 18, 2012).

³⁹ See Kirkham, E. Bruce. "Poe's Amontillado, One More Time." *American Notes & Queries* May/June 86, Vol. 24 Issue 9/10, 144-145.

then only repression (the premature burial) is possible.”⁴⁰ There is no other choice of getting rid of Montessor character’s bad side than getting rid of the same bad characteristic displayed by Fortunato, as well.^{41,42}

2.2 The Black Cat

Apart from *The Cask of Amontillado*, another remarkable evidence of destroying desire is obvious in the short story *The Black Cat*. Although the narrator claims at the beginning that he loved animals and he took care of a great variety of pets, when he owns a black cat Pluto, he discovers that the cat is too kind to him, so this fact even irritates him. He cannot stand the huge kindness of the animal. It bothers him so much that the black cat disgusts him and he is pushed by his destroying desire to get rid of the roots of all the kindness. He is forced to kill the black cat in agony and anger that drives him mad. He was possessed by more than irritated hate along with perversity. It induced him to do bad things, or in other words to hurt more.

As well as Fortunato was blinded in *The Cask of Amontillado* by destroying desire, the narrator in *The Black Cat* is blinded too. When the second cat appears it reminds the narrator the former existence of Pluto and he can’t stand it. When he and his wife are going into their cellar, the new cat gets entangled in their legs. This event drives the narrator furious. He is blinded by hate, distraction and his ruining desire to get rid of the cat. He raised his axe to end his misery by killing the cat, but the hand of his wife stopped him. His blind furiousness led him to murder his wife, despite the fact that she wasn’t the irritating element, it was the cat.

The initiators of the murders and all the killing can be thought over, as well. In the first case of murder – Pluto, it could be the alcohol addiction that pushed him to behave that way. However in the following cases of killing, it was completely different initiator. The element was rather the reminding of Pluto. This means that it drove him mad and he longed

⁴⁰ See Sweet, Jr., Charles A. „Retapping Poe’s ‘Cask of Amontillado’.“ *Poe Studies* June 1975, 10-12.

⁴¹ See Sweet, Jr., Charles A. „Retapping Poe’s ‘Cask of Amontillado’.“ *Poe Studies* June 1975, 10-12.

⁴² See Cernek, Jordan, James W. Gargano, Daniel Hoffman, J. Rea, and Charles A., Jr. Sweet. "http://gct.greenville.edu/~bshaw/eng340/edgarsweb/jcernek/Reasons%20for%20Murder.pdf." Reason for Murder. <http://gct.greenville.edu/~bshaw/eng340/edgarsweb/jcernek/Reasons%20for%20Murder.pdf> (accessed February 18, 2012).

for getting rid of the reminders. The initiators of the following murders were then the destroying desire, the perversity and narrator's agony and anger.⁴³

2.3 Berenice

Besides *The Black Cat*, the destroying desire appears also in the short story *Berenice*. Egæus lived with his cousin Berenice and in addition, he promised to marry her. Before the promise was made, she was lively and lovely, but after the promise, she became emaciated and there was no life in her eyes. Egæus suffered from a mental disease called monomania. It means that something drove him to distraction and his mind was obsessed by thinking of the thing. It was the perfect teeth of Berenice. It was blinding him so strongly that his destroying desire forced him to murder Berenice and he wasn't even able to remember this event. It was the evidence that made him find out the truth. He knew that he committed such a horrible crime just in that convicting moment.⁴⁴

The reason of this behavior can be considered Egæus's monomania and the change which Berenice has been going through. It is quite apparent thanks to the following evidence. Since Berenice changed in this described way, things started to change and monomania began to manifest. Before that, they lived rather normal life without any serious apparent problems.⁴⁵

2.4 Morella

Destroying desire as an instrument of self-destruction is clearly visible in Edgar Allan Poe's short story *Morella*. She longed for the love of her husband so much that she had to die. It happened, because she didn't feel the love from her husband and she had just some kind of special affection in his heart. She predicted that he will love their daughter and this prediction was really fulfilled. After giving birth to her baby, she died. As was predicted, Morella's husband took care of their child very well and loved the child with all his warmth and kindness.

The initiator here can be the feeling of loneliness and no love, because there was just the feeling of understanding and favour. The friendly love occurs, but not the love

⁴³ See Poe, Edgar Allan, and Davin Van Leer. *Selected Tales*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998.

⁴⁴ See Poe, Edgar Allan, and Davin Van Leer. *Selected Tales*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998.

⁴⁵ See Poe, Edgar Allan, and Davin Van Leer. *Selected Tales*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998.

between lovers. And just these kinds of love can't fulfill her life. This led to some changes which had to be done. She had to gain the love in certain way and the only way how she was able to do that was to die and somehow transform into their daughter. Her husband has been recognizing that fact right from the beginning, but he believed that the similarity of his daughter and her mother is common, so he wasn't so concerned about that. The most interesting happening appeared in the end of the story. While raising his child, Morella's husband didn't give a name to his daughter. He addressed her only as my child or my life and he didn't call her a real name. But the ceremony of baptism gave him the opportunity to name his daughter. He was thinking about it, but he felt really strange. All of the sudden a name completely slipped his mind – Morella. The following extract of description of Morella's husband proves the evidence that Morella transformed into her daughter. "What more than fiend convulsed the features of my child, and overspread them with hues of death, as, starting at that scarcely audible sound, she turned her glassy eyes from the earth to heaven, and, falling prostrate on the black slabs of our ancestral vault, responded - 'I am here!'

Distinct, coldly, calmly distinct, fell those few simple sounds within my ear, and thence, like molten lead, rolled hissing into my brain. Years – years may pass away, but the memory of that epoch – never! Nor was I indeed ignorant of the flowers and the vine – but the hemlock and the cypress overshadowed me night and day. And I kept no reckoning of time or place, and the stars of my fate faded from heaven, and therefore the earth grew dark, and its figures passed by me, like flitting shadows, and among them all I beheld only – Morella. The winds of the firmament breathed but one sound within my ears, and the ripples upon the sea murmured evermore – Morella. But she died; and with my own hands I bore her to the tomb; and I laughed with a long and bitter laugh as I found no traces of the first, in the charnel where I laid the second – Morella."⁴⁶

The fact that there was no body of Morella in her grave proves that she might have been transformed into the daughter which solved Morella's situation. Eventually she got the feel of real love, but in disguise of her daughter.⁴⁷

⁴⁶ See Poe, Edgar Allan, and Davin Van Leer. *Selected Tales*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998, 25.

⁴⁷ See Poe, Edgar Allan, and Davin Van Leer. *Selected Tales*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998.

2.5 The Oval Portrait

Another form of destroying desire is reflected in the short story *The Oval Portrait*. The destroying desire here is the fact that the painter wants to have a perfect painting. He dedicated everything to completing his task. So he even isn't really able to see the surroundings and what is going on with other people. He doesn't even notice that there is something wrong with his girl who is dying slowly, but certainly. When he finishes his painting, it is visible that the liveliness was shifted from the girl to the painting. The soul of the girl transformed into the painting. To conclude, in this case, the destroying desire didn't ruined the person who is obsessed by it, but the person who was close to this obsessed painter – the painter's girl.⁴⁸

The initiator can be the excessive avocation in painting here. Painter's emotional bond to his emerging masterpiece was so strong that he transferred the soul of the girl into the painting, so there was left just a corpse on the ground and the painting was lively. The liveliness was fading away slowly, but surely.⁴⁹

2.6 The Oblong Box

Apart from *The Oval Portrait*, a destroying desire occurs in the short story *The Oblong Box*, as well. However it significantly differs from other short stories analyzed here due to being a detective story and also because of the distinct form of destroying desire. It caused that the main character is forced to die for his love.

It is narrated by a man who travels by boat and discovers secrets of the Wyatts who travel with him. In short, the narrator knows Mr. Wyatt and is curious about his huge luggage – an oblong box. About month after the ocean voyage, the narrator found out the truth about the oblong box thanks to the captain who told him the whole story.

Just before the voyage, Mrs. Wyatt became ill and died all of the sudden. Her husband was grief-stricken. However in spite of these recent events, he couldn't postpone his journey to New York due to some unavoidable reasons. It was necessary to transport the body to Mrs. Wyatt's mother, but there was a universal prejudice which did not allow to do

⁴⁸ See Poe, Edgar Allan. *Complete Edgar Allan Poe*. Herts: Wordsworth Editions Ltd, 2009.

⁴⁹ See Poe, Edgar Allan. *Complete Edgar Allan Poe*. Herts: Wordsworth Editions Ltd, 2009.

it publically. That is the reason why there was this oblong box as a luggage – to transfer the corpse secretly. Mrs. Wyatt's servant was introduced as fake Mrs. Wyatt for perfect covering. There appeared a hurricane after some days of the voyage. All the passengers were desperate to find some help. The passengers were evacuated by life rafts. Mr. Wyatt with his accompaniment boarded to the life raft, but Mr. Wyatt insisted that the oblong box has to be got on board. Captain explained to him that it is a mad idea, because they would all go down, but Mr. Wyatt was desperately uncompromising. After this announcement, Mr. Wyatt didn't hesitate and jumped to the water and swam back to the boat. Then he passed a rope around himself and the box. Afterwards he was falling down into the sea. His destroying desire was the devoted genuine love to his wife that forced him to be with her forever. He was not able to abandon her even when she was dead.⁵⁰

The initiator of his behavior is his faithful honest love to his wife. It was pushing him to stay with his wife forever. As she died and he couldn't transfer the body, he died, as well - to be with her.⁵¹

2.7 A Descent into the Maelström, The Tell-Tale Heart and Hop-Frog

Other examples of short stories, where it is visible that someone is dealing with destroying desire, are *A Descent into the Maelström*, *The Tell-Tale Heart* and *Hop-Frog*. But in these cases the effect of destroying desire is not so strong as it was in the case of the previous short stories. In *A Descent into the Maelström*, the narrator didn't want to get into the whirlpool called Maelström, but he did due to his acquisitiveness. He wanted to have a bigger catch in shorter time. He could fish in a safer area in the south, but he risked. He got into the whirlpool and he thought that he will not survive. He was in awe of Maelström. But then it seemed beautiful and exciting to him and he wanted to explore the whirlpool. Simultaneously he regretted that he can't describe this to his friends, because he will not be alive anymore. As he was approaching to the end, his interest was growing more and more. His fear wasn't taking control over him, but he was excited by the hope. The destroying desire is then the narrator's curiosity. The acquisitiveness was the initiator of the narrator's destroying desire which led him to the danger.⁵²

⁵⁰ See Poe, Edgar Allan. *Tales of Terror and Detection*. New York: Dover Publications, 1995.

⁵¹ See Poe, Edgar Allan. *Tales of Terror and Detection*. New York: Dover Publications, 1995.

⁵² See Poe, Edgar Allan, and Davin Van Leer. *Selected Tales*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998.

Concerning *The Tell-Tale Heart* the destroying desire is the lust to get rid of the old man, because he is too irritating for the narrator and he is not able to stand it more. The narration in the beginning of the short story proves that it was too hard to deal with this desire. "I loved the old man. He had never wronged me. He had never given me insult. For his gold I had no desire. I think it was his eye! yes, it was this! One of his eyes resembled that of a vulture – a pale blue eye, with a film over it. 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."⁵³ He has no reason to harm the old man, because the old man behaves really nice to him, but there is this disturbing irritating element – the unbearable look of the old man's eye which couldn't be stood. This element is the initiator of the narrator's desire for destroying the man.⁵⁴

As far as the short story *Hop-Frog* is concerned, the destroying desire is displayed in a form of longing for revenge or justice. But in this case, it is not the main protagonist who is ruined by it, but it is the subject of Hop-Frog's hate who is being destroyed – the king with his ministers. He considered destroying them as some kind of revenge and justice for him and for all people who was hurt by the king and the ministers. The initiator of Hop Frog's behavior is the fact that the king with his ministers are not behaving well and it all culminates by the fact that the king hits Hop Frog's friend – a girl. Hop Frog could stand the humiliation all the time, but he couldn't stand hurting to his friend.⁵⁵

⁵³ See Poe, Edgar Allan, and Davin Van Leer. *Selected Tales*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998, 193.

⁵⁴ See Poe, Edgar Allan, and Davin Van Leer. *Selected Tales*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998.

⁵⁵ See Poe, Edgar Allan, and Davin Van Leer. *Selected Tales*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998.

3 INNER FIGHT OF A SOUL

The inner fight of a soul can be considered to be another element which is closely connected with destroying desire. Although Edgar Allan Poe's characters have almost always the choice of acting in a good way or in a bad way, there appear some initiators and the characters are pushed into the bad way by them. Then the inner fight inside their souls arises. They want to remain good at heart, but mostly they have not enough strength to overpower their bad thoughts.

3.1 Hop-Frog

One of the visible inner fights is represented in the short story *Hop-Frog*. Hop-Frog has always tolerated all the king and ministers' humiliation and jokes, but when a girl is hit, he had run out of patience and struggles with his desire for revenge. He supposes that there could be some kind of fairness and that the king should be punished. He knows that hurting people is a bad thing, but he does not know what else he should do. The result of his inner fight is a humiliation of the king as well as the ministers in front of all the people in the ball.

The initiator of this inner fight was the fact that the king and the ministers did not treat well with Hop-Frog and his friend which could not be stood. So desire for justice can be considered the cause of his inner fight.⁵⁶

3.2 The Black Cat

The following evidence of an inner fight is clearly visible in the short story *The Black Cat*, as well. The narrator claims that the fury of a demon possessed him and is putting bad ideas into his head to continue hurting. In fact, the initiator of this fury is the wine, due to his passion for being drowned in this kind of alcohol. Therefore, there is a war between consciousness and subconsciousness. Susan Amper pointed this fight out in her article *Untold Story: The Lying Narrator in "The Black Cat"*.⁵⁷ She claims that there are some situations where it is not so clear if the narrator tells the readers the truth or lies. It is not

⁵⁶ See Poe, Edgar Allan, and Davin Van Leer. *Selected Tales*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998.

⁵⁷ See Amper, Susan. "Untold Story: The Lying Narrator in "The Black Cat"." *Studies in Short Fiction* 29 (1992), 475.

clear if it is a case of narrator's common sense or just confusion of his mind. He is constantly fighting with his consciousness and subconsciousness.⁵⁸

For instance, a situation that can be considered as such case can be recognized when the fire broke out in the house and just one wall was untouched by the fire. It is the wall where the narrator's bed was situated. There appears the imprint of a hanged cat on the wall. It can be considered real, because it was told that the people who were there were astonished by this phenomenon, but as well as this, it can be just the figment of narrator's imagination. Susan Amper has also doubts about this situation in her article. She states there: "What are we to make of this figure? We could call it imaginary, the product of the narrator's guilty conscience. But the figure seems the most real thing in the story, one of the few that we are told has been observed by others. Calling this imaginary, then, is tantamount to dismissing the whole story as a dream. On the other hand, if the figure was really there, where did it come from? There would seem to be two possibilities: natural causes and supernatural. The narrator favors the former, yet he offers an explanation so preposterous that it ranks among American literature's all-time whoppers. First, he tells us that some unidentified neighbor, "probably" in order to awaken the narrator when the fire broke out, "must have" thrown the cat's body through an open window of his bedroom. This concerned neighbor, we must assume, in that he rejected the obvious expedient of hurling a stone at and shattering the bedroom window, was one of that large group of people who believe that the best sound for waking people is a dull thud."⁵⁹ Susan Amper also states many other doubts, for example about the movement of the cat's body in defiance of gravity.

The narrator experiences the inner fight of his soul almost all the time from the very beginning of the story. Although the cat is very kind and nice to him, it drives him mad and he does not want to be in the presence of the cat. As the cat goes to him more and more often, he is angry and mad and he starts thinking of getting rid of the cat. He is not quite sure if he can handle this distaste for his cat. He tries, but he is solving his problems with alcohol which is not really good. Owing to this fact, he fails and eventually kills the cat. He is not able to recognize what represents his common sense and what is just his

⁵⁸ See Poe, Edgar Allan, and Davin Van Leer. *Selected Tales*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998.

⁵⁹ See Amper, Susan. „Untold Story: The Lying Narrator in „The Black Cat“.“ *Studies in Short Fiction* 29 (1992), 475.

bewilderment. Drunkenness makes him touchy and peevish, so it overshadows his mind and consciousness. He took into his head that the cat tries to avoid him on purpose and it's because his mind was suppressed and he couldn't think reasonably and sensibly. He fought with this defocusing to stay rational, but he was too weak and subconsciousness took control over his mind.⁶⁰

It can be presumed that the cause of these inner fights is the addiction to alcohol, which led the main character to do things that he wouldn't do thinking clearly with his common sense, and also the annoying kindness of the animal that was really driving the narrator mad.⁶¹

3.3 Berenice

Another similar kind of the inner fight of a soul is recognizable in the short story *Berenice*. There was a case of the inner fight of a soul between feelings or emotions and the common sense. Egæus was situated on the border between these two elements.

There were also temptations which should be resisted and which made him to be inclined to the wrong side – to the side of emotions without uncluttered mind. He was pushed to tend to these feelings due to elements such as his suffering from monomania which was badly influencing his mind. Reading of books can be considered another possible element of inclining to the wrong side, because their library numbers many books of unusual and peculiar content. It deepens his illness and makes him to tend to dreaming and fantasizing.

Eventually, this fight was not very successful for Egæus, because he was not able to overpower his wicked side and to incline to the side of his common sense. He failed in his inner fight, because he did not try to curb these initiators enough. He could give up the reading of peculiar books, he could just follow the sound of his mind and follow facts as an alternative to doubts. Moreover, he could fight more with his mental illness by taking his attention away to not focus on Berenice's teeth.

Egæus's monomania can be considered the initiator of his inner fight. The main reason is that it was making his common sense weaker and weaker. The reading of peculiar

⁶⁰ See Poe, Edgar Allan, and Davin Van Leer. *Selected Tales*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998.

⁶¹ See Poe, Edgar Allan, and Davin Van Leer. *Selected Tales*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998.

books also deepened his disease. If he would not have monomania, he could think clearly and Berenice's teeth wouldn't be so irritating to him. He could stand it.⁶²

3.4 The Imp of the Perverse

The inner fight in the form of bothersome thoughts, which can't be rid of by the narrator, is expressed in the short story *The Imp of the Perverse*. First, the narrator tries to defend himself by explaining that the kinds of crimes, what for example he committed as well, are caused by some kind of perverseness. He claims that from time to time people suffer from fits of perversity that overpower them and make them to do things that are not right and things that would be never done by people if they would be able to keep having their common sense.

In addition to this information, he also said that he met with this kind of perverseness as well. He is telling his story while he is situated in jail as a victim of the imp of the perverse. He murdered his victim by substituting a candle for a poisoned one, because he knew that the man really likes reading books in his bed while candles are shining. The victim's room was not well aired, so narrator's action had a success indeed. His crime was covered perfectly without a possible mistake. But covering the crime is not all when the inner fight occurs. He caught himself thinking of his security and something forced him to say this. He found himself repeating that he is safe. First it was done by his lower voice, and then it was intensified. He knew that if he doesn't make a confession out of his foolishness, he will be safe. But he started to feel some kind of an icy chill creep to his heart which he considered to be a fit of perversity which had to be fought with.

He longed for the revelation of his secret to get rid of his burden. He fought with the revelation, but he felt lost and empty, as well as desperate. He even claimed that if he could to cut his tongue, he would do it, no matter what. He knew that he is weakened much by all these bothering elements, but he was still trying to fight with these ones and not to give up. He was so paralyzed and numb that he even doesn't remember his confession which was described to him later by people who were present there. The burden of his sin reached him and he was not able to overpower that. The interesting thing is that according to the statements of people present, he talked clearly with certain enthusiasm and rash. It looked

⁶² See Poe, Edgar Allan, and Davin Van Leer. *Selected Tales*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998.

like he didn't want to be interrupted at all. After he finished his confession, he fainted. He finished his inner fight by a failure.

The cause of the narrator's inner fight was certainly the burden of hiding a secret. Since he murdered his victim, he couldn't tell anyone about this and he was not able to bear the secret just by himself. That's why the inner fight began to occur – he had to think if he will reveal his secret or not.⁶³

3.5 Eleonora

If we consider the inner fight of abandoning everything and deciding to start living in a completely different way, we may remember Edgar Allan Poe's short story *Eleonora*.

The narrator lives in a complete isolation from the surrounding world in a valley with his cousin Eleonora and her mother. They lived there in the connection with nature and without the knowledge of outside world. Every really important change in their lives was also expressed by nature which changed in certain way, as well. Whether it was expressed by some plants of flowers which came into bloom or whether they withered away. The narrator together with Eleonora were living in this magnificent environment, until they fell in love when she was about 15 years old and he was about 20 years old. Subsequently, this change had to have an impact on nature. Some flowers withered away, but some strange ones appeared. Also the life arose. Animals, which had never been there before, appeared.

After some time, Eleonora started to sense that her live will not be really long and she knew she will die soon. She was unhappy and worried about the narrator. She was afraid that he will abandon the valley and he would pass their love on to some other girl from the outer world. As he saw how worried and unhappy she is, he made a pledge that he will not fall in love with someone else and he will always have Eleonora in his mind. If he breaks this promise, he would be cursed.

After she died, another change in the valley occurred. Eleonora's lover felt emptiness which could not be fulfilled. Everything in the valley was remembering Eleonora to him and it made him to feel unhappy. And in this moment, the inner fight started to come through. On one hand, he was tied down by living in the valley and he wanted to hold

⁶³ See Poe, Edgar Allan, and Davin Van Leer. *Selected Tales*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998.

to his promise done to Eleonora, but on the other hand, he was not able to move on without starting an entire new life and leaving the valley. Living in the valley was a thing of the heart for him, because he had lived here for his whole life and he had good memories connected with this area. He also felt that if he would leave the valley, it would be like he would abandon Eleonora. The narrator simply did not know what to do to be happy and how to get out of this unpleasant situation. Maybe falling in love with somebody would make him happy, but he was under a vow done to Eleonora. Time dragged and eventually he was forced to do something with his emptiness. He wanted to experience something that he had never seen in his life. He made the important decision to move on and to abandon the valley. Even when he was in another place, he was still faithful to his promise to Eleonora and he wasn't interested in meeting other girls. He lived his new life, but it wasn't enough for him. He needed love and to be loved, because he wasn't fulfilled and satisfied. After some time he met a girl named Ermengarda and his emptiness faded away.

The interesting fact is that even in spite of finishing his inner fight by joining "the wrong side" and breaching his and Eleonora's vow, he got a blessing from Eleonora to live his new life with Ermengarda. It happened, because she found out that he was not happy with living an empty life without love and she rather sacrificed their binding relationship to make him happy again. She loved him so much, that she made him free and so there was no curse to punish her only love – a new love was blessed.

The initiator of the inner fight is here the loneliness and empty life of the narrator, which was caused by the death of Eleonora. He just wanted to stop being sad and then he started his inner fight of abandoning the valley and starting new life or staying in the valley and still being sad, lonely with the feeling of emptiness.⁶⁴

3.6 The Tell-Tale Heart

As it could be supposed from the previous chapter *Destroying Desire*, the inner fight emerges in the short story *The Tell-Tale Heart*, as well. Destroying desire and the inner fight of a soul are closely connected and this can be seen in this short story. Actually, there appear two inner fights of a soul in *The Tell-Tale Heart*.

⁶⁴ See Poe, Edgar Allan, and Davin Van Leer. *Selected Tales*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998.

The first one is definitely connected with the murder of the old man. The narrator finds him so annoying - respectively his eye (which he considers to be the eye of a vulture) and the heartbeat of the man. His desire to get rid of this eye is so strong that he has to fight with his thought about killing the old man. He knows that if he kills the man it will be a really bad act. This feeling is projected in his emotions – he is scared of the heartbeat. Eventually, he is beaten by his wrong side.

The second inner fight of a soul can be considered the narrator's fight with disclosure of his crime. It was perfectly covered, but he started to feel some strange emotions and to hear the old man's heartbeat and he supposed that the police commissioners will hear this sound, as well. He became to be pale, he had a headache, there was ringing in his ears and the heartbeat was constantly growing. These elements were so distracting and not bearable that he stopped with his inner fight and confessed.

The first inner fight was caused by an annoying element which appeared and couldn't be stand by the narrator – the old man's eye, whereas the initiator of the second inner fight was the burden of hiding a secret. When the secret began to occur, the inner fight started and also there appeared some physical symptoms which were making the narrator to reveal his secret.⁶⁵

⁶⁵ See Poe, Edgar Allan, and Davin Van Leer. *Selected Tales*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998.

4 DISEASED SOUL

It frequently occurs the situation that characters in Edgar Allan Poe's short stories are not acting with their common sense. They are often influenced by their mental illness which is pushing them slowly to become "their worse other selves" and to act insane. They are not able to think clearly and have their mind clouded. They suffer from certain mental diseases which cause for instance hallucinations and meetings with supernatural situations. Not all these situations are real. Their soul is often empty and without certain meaning of life. They often suffer from disunity of their soul. In most cases, they try to fight with their illness, but there is no success in the end. Eventually, they are defeated by their disease.

4.1 The Fall of the House of Usher

In the short story *The Fall of the House of Usher*, the main character called Roderick Usher writes to his friend a letter in which is stated that he suffers from some kind of mental illness and that Roderick doesn't feel very well. That is the reason why the narrator decided to go to Roderick's house to find out what is going on with his friend.

The environment where Roderick lives influences his character in a bad way. It deepens his illness. His house is very spacious and luxurious, but also derelict. He feels really lonely in his big residence, because there is nobody else left. His sister Madeline, which also suffered from a mental illness, was dead and he had to bury her in their family tomb. His feelings of sadness and nostalgia are caused by all the shabbiness. That is not good for getting out of his depressions. The fact that he is mentally disturbed even worsens everything.

Roderick told to his friend that he began to feel that he has changed somehow. He is now like a wreck, still pale. He suggests that he might have a split personality and is haphazard. He wants to overcome his feelings of anxiety, irritation, trembling and the oversensitiveness of his senses. He fights with fear. He wants to get over this somehow, so for instance he paints, but what he paints mostly are just some impressions. These are Roderick's feelings of reverential terror and dreamy imaginary illusions and hallucinations.

Roderick predicted that he will become the victim of horror and it happened in this way. All his sorrows led to the pressure of delusions and anxiety. He started to hear some noises and hallucinate. Eventually, he saw the figure of his sister Madeline, but she was bleeding and very skinny. She swooped on him and he died in his last mortal cramp. Roderick and the narrator supposed that Madeline was buried alive. But in spite of that fact

it is not clear if there were some supernatural events or if Madeline was just a projection of their confused, or rather insane mind.

In the end of the story the narrator is running away and sees how Usher's house is falling apart and then disappearing in the swamp. This incident might prove that there is the possibility that Roderick Usher was connected with his house in some peculiar way. Right from the beginning, the narrator found out that Roderick's soul is lost, and the house, as well. It is not well maintained and is really shabby. The house was changing in the same time as Roderick's soul. When he was dying, the house "was dying", too. It started to fall apart.⁶⁶

4.2 The System of Doctor Tarr and Professor Fether

The whole short story *The System of Doctor Tarr and Professor Fether* may be the perfect example of insanity, because the whole story proves how it is like to be mentally ill. The character which suffers from a mental disease is Monsieur Maillard here, the head of a private madhouse situated in France. His imagination forms his whole world. He doesn't live in reality at all.

The narrator is curious about the madhouse and wants to visit it and explore it. He is welcomed by Monsieur Maillard, who tells him about his patients and methods. Maillard explains the narrator that he was using the "system of soothing" for his patients. This means that the patients were quite free and they were treated like common sane people. They were distracted to never think of their insanity by some certain activities. There were no keepers, patients kept watching over them by themselves. Then Maillard added that this system can't be no longer used, because a serious danger might threaten and the advantages of this system are quite over-rated.

Another important event in this story is the dinner with Maillard, the narrator and other company. People there are acting really weirdly and their favorite theme of talking is mental illnesses. They are talking about some occurrences which happened in the madhouse to its patients – how they were acting and what happened to them. Eventually, Maillard tries to restrain them. This is the sign for the narrator that something is wrong there, because it looks like they were talking about themselves, not about their patients.

⁶⁶ See Poe, Edgar Allan, and Davin Van Leer. *Selected Tales*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998.

All of the sudden, someone screamed very loudly which really made all the society scared. They were shaking and their skin was pale. After finishing the screaming the society gathered their wits and it all got back in the groove. Maillard had an explanation for this commotion. He claimed that insane people sometimes howl together, one frightens another one and the idea of escaping and running away comes into their minds.

After this incident Maillard was talking to the narrator about his new method which he uses for his patients, although he didn't say anything exact and specific. He just pointed out that it is a new method which is developing by professor Tarr and Fether and provided some details about inappropriateness of the previous method. Maillard was telling the narrator about an incident when the patients were behaving suspiciously well. The keepers were trussed, closed in cells and insane patients took care of them. His telling was interrupted by loud shouting. Some people tried to get inside. After all, the fact that Maillard was talking about the escape of his patients, was proven not to be entirely true. In fact, he was really a head of the madhouse earlier, but eventually he gone mad and he himself became a patient of the madhouse. 10 keepers who have been attacked were defeated due to superiority. The system of Maillard was used for the keepers. His procedure is well described in the end of the short story. "The keepers, ten in number, having been suddenly overpowered, were first well tarred, then carefully feathered, and then shut up in underground cells. They had been so imprisoned for more than a month, during which period Monsieur Maillard had generously allowed them not only the tar and feathers (which constituted his 'system'), but some bread and abundance of water. The latter was pumped on them daily."⁶⁷ Finally, one of prisoners escaped through a sewer and freed the others. The "system of soothing" was then reintroduced with some adjustments. The narrator admits that the procedure was excellent in some way, but considering this procedure from a different point of view, there was a mystery. He couldn't find out any information about the work of doctor Tarr and professor Fether in any European library. So this is a hint that Maillard's imagination was so enormous, that he even invented this whole method, too.

It can be seen in this short story what a mental disease can cause. Maillard was imagining his whole world, surroundings and had some hallucinations. He even made

⁶⁷ See Poe, Edgar Allan, and Davin Van Leer. *Selected Tales*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998, 281.

himself believe that he uses a method which was invented, not by him, but by some professor Tarr and doctor Fether. He wasn't able to recognize the difference between his imagination and reality.⁶⁸

4.3 Berenice

Other persons suffering from a mental illness can be recognized in the short story *Berenice*. The main character of the story Egæus revealed that his family was called a race of visionaries for a long time. This is the sign of the roots of his insanity. The illness didn't emerge itself, but it was encoded in his genes. His cousin Berenice can be considered the proof of this fact. It was not just him in his generation who was not really sane, but it was Berenice, as well. Egæus described in the short story that Berenice was insightful, charming and full of energy. But all of the sudden, an illness appeared. It was connected not only with her body, but with her soul, too. Egæus had the feeling that he doesn't know her anymore. He thought she was someone else. Her behavior was changed, such as her habits and character.

On the contrary, Egæus suffered from a specific type of mental illness called monomania. His attention was attracted by an element which was distracting him and which he couldn't stand. It was Berenice's teeth. The result of intensification of his illness was that he killed Berenice and he couldn't really remember it. His mind was somehow shrouded. He recognized that he committed this horrible crime only due to some clues which was left by him – his bloodstained muddy clothes, imprints of human nails on his hand, a spade at a wall and instruments of dental surgery with “thirty-two small, white, and ivory-looking substances that were scattered to and fro about the floor”⁶⁹. His memories were suppressed by the illness.

It is quite probable that it didn't have to end in this way. He was acting pushed by “his bad side” due to the way of his living and growing up. He was raised to learn the monastic thinking and gained a good education. He spent his boyhood in books and he was dreaming all the time. Unusual curious contents of his family library caused that Egæus's illness started to develop. He was living just in the world of his ideas and visions, not in a real world. Also the surroundings where he grew up had an impact on his illness. The hall

⁶⁸ See Poe, Edgar Allan, and Davin Van Leer. *Selected Tales*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998.

⁶⁹ See Poe, Edgar Allan, and Davin Van Leer. *Selected Tales*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998, 20.

where he lived was ancient and gloomy. He had no contact with other surroundings. This vast historic place might make him lonely and cut off from the rest of the world, so he was spending his time only with books and his family with their traditional monastic values. That means that his mind was influenced by these elements and he couldn't create his own independent opinions.⁷⁰

4.4 Morella

There is no mental illness as such in the short story *Morella*, but it might seem that Morella was not really sane and was acting in strangely many times. She avoided any company – she was living just with her husband trying to make him happy. She was well educated and had extraordinary endowments, but not in the common way. She was reading some mystical religious psychological works which were influencing her thinking.

She started to repel her husband somehow and he was keeping some distance from her. This fact changed her. Her soul was empty and she was becoming worse and worse. At the end of her life, her mind wasn't clear. She had some visions and predicted that her husband will love her after her death and he will love their little child. After giving birth to their child, she died. She told him that although she is dying, she will be alive all the time.

Their child was very similar to her mother. This fact, together with the happenings which occurred in the end of the story, may suggest that there was a transformation of a soul of the mother to the soul of her daughter, but it hasn't to be entirely true. Morella's mad words could make her husband think that it can be true. The similarity of Morella and her daughter was supporting this idea. The fact that Morella's grave was found empty has not to be due to transformation of her soul, but it might have been robbed or anything else could happen. To sum up, mad behavior of Morella influenced also thinking of her husband, which wasn't eventually really sane.⁷¹

4.5 Eleonora

There are no people suffering from a mental illness as such in the short story *Eleonora*, but their soul is diseased in different way. The narrator together with his cousin Eleonora and her mother live completely in isolation from other surrounding world, so they don't know

⁷⁰ See Poe, Edgar Allan, and Davin Van Leer. *Selected Tales*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998.

⁷¹ See Poe, Edgar Allan, and Davin Van Leer. *Selected Tales*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998.

what way of living is usual for most people and they live in an absolutely different way. Their thinking is also different, because they live in harmony with nature. The interesting fact is that when a significant change in their life occurs, the whole nature changes in some way. For instance, when the narrator is falling in love with Eleonora, many kinds of animals appeared in their valley and some flowers were in blossom. This fact doesn't prove that their soul is diseased, but that the surroundings influenced their thinking, such as their soul. I assume they didn't miss any affluence of surrounding world, because they were just happy that they could be together, but their thinking was a bit restricted.

I suppose that the death of Eleonora changed everything. The soul of the narrator was diseased in this period of time. He felt empty, because his only love passed away and left him alone. There was nothing, but her, that kept him in the valley and forced him to live in the harmony with nature anymore. Everything in the valley was reminding Eleonora to him and made him feel nostalgic and sorrowful. That is the reason why he eventually decided to cure his soul and ease his grief by leaving the valley and starting to live an entirely new life.

The narrator even admits in the beginning of his telling that he is considered to be insane, but he is not quite sure about it. He concedes that there are two different states of his mind. The first one is the state of his common sense which belongs to the first period of his life and the second one – the state of doubts and uncertainty which belongs to the present and the memory of his second period of living. So the indication of a mental illness emerged here. I assume that he assigns the doubts and uncertainty to the second period, because he was really missing Eleonora and he thought that she appeared to him many times to prove her presence. It can be thought that these happenings are just figments of his imagination. He could be thinking of her so much, that his imagination created some hallucinations and it made him think that she is communicating with him somehow.⁷²

4.6 The Tell-Tale Heart

“TRUE! – nervous – very, very dreadfully nervous I had been and am; but why will you say that I am mad? The disease had sharpened my senses – not destroyed – not dulled them. Above all was the sense of hearing acute. I heard all things in the heaven and in the

⁷² See Poe, Edgar Allan, and Davin Van Leer. *Selected Tales*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998.

earth. I heard many things in hell. How, then, am I mad?"⁷³ According to this initial extract of the narrator telling in the short story *The Tell-Tale Heart*, it can be assumed that the narrator really suffers from some illness that influences his senses. This influence clouded his mind and he wasn't able to think clearly. If his senses weren't sharpened, he wouldn't be so irritated by the old man's eye and by his heartbeat, as well. He had to kill the old man, because he was pushed by his illness.⁷⁴

4.7 The Oval Portrait

The main character of the short story *The Oval Portrait* tells about his journey to a chateau where he finds a painting which makes an impression of real liveliness. Later he finds a book about the history of all paintings in the chateau where he finds out the story about the painter who is so concentrated about his painting that he doesn't notice that the girl posing in front of him is dead. The narrator is really attracted by the painting, because it catches his attention just for its liveliness of the pictured face.

If the description of the narrator in the beginning of the story is concerned, there is a revelation that the narrator is taking drugs – he especially smokes opium. This fact suggests that the whole journey and the story of the painting can be made-up by the narrator's fantasy and imagination. After using his drug, he is not able to use his common sense and his mind is clouded. It's because it's generally well-known that the effects of opium are movements away from reality. It causes that the person is feeling some kind of euphoria and is dreaming. I assume that the soul of the narrator of *The Oval Portrait* is certainly diseased, because no soul can be healthy while using drugs. There have to be some problems which caused that the narrator was unhappy and his soul suffered. That is the reason why he was forced to suppress these states of mind by using opium.⁷⁵

⁷³ See Poe, Edgar Allan, and Davin Van Leer. *Selected Tales*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998, 193.

⁷⁴ See Poe, Edgar Allan, and Davin Van Leer. *Selected Tales*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998.

⁷⁵ See Poe, Edgar Allan. *Complete Edgar Allan Poe*. Herts: Wordsworth Editions Ltd, 2009.

CONCLUSION

The analysis of particular characters in Edgar Allan Poe's short stories has confirmed the key hypothesis of this thesis. It was described and proved that Poe's characters have often their dark secrets. They are burdened with these ones and they have to uncover them to relieve their souls. This deciding of uncovering secrets or keeping them hidden is connected with inner fight of their souls, which is eventually lost. It is also necessary to realize that their souls are frequently diseased which does not support their rationality at all.

It was discovered that the most frequent attributes of characters in Poe's short stories are these following ones: destroying desire, inner fight of a soul and diseased soul. The analyzed short stories demonstrated the behavior of the characters illustratively and it was also dealt with the initiators of their behavior which differed significantly. On the one hand, the initiator was an external element such as alcohol or an irritating element in some cases and on the other hand, it was for instance just the feeling of loneliness and the lack of love in other cases.

An interesting fact occurred while considering the biography of Edgar Allan Poe. A well known quote of him was stated in a letter which he wrote to Mrs. Maria Clemm: "I was never *really* insane, except upon occasions when my heart was touched."⁷⁶ This statement demonstrates that there really is a connection between him and his characters. Poe as well as his characters in short stories had his souls diseased due to some occurrences which happened during his life. There were always some initiators which caused certain actions. Poe experienced many tragic moments. His life was a bit dark as the life of the characters of his short stories. That also might be the reason why he expressed the darkness of his diseased soul in creating these characters. As a matter of fact, he didn't feel the real maternal love and it was reflected in the rest of his life. As a result, his characters are unusual and their mind is complex.

The complicatedness and timelessness of Poe's characters is fascinating and that's why it is current even up to the present day. It's because everyone has his dark side which is either suppressed by the fact that the person is well raised or it is developing. Although his

⁷⁶ See "Edgar Allan Poe Society of Baltimore – Works – Letters – E. A. Poe to Mrs. M. Clemm (July 7, 1849)." *Edgar Allan Poe Society of Baltimore – The Life and Writings of Edgar Allan Poe*. N.p.,n.d. Web 23 Apr. 2012. <http://www.eapoe.org/works/letters/p4907070.htm>.

masterpieces were created in the nineteenth century, his short stories and poems are attracted by readers up to the present day.

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