

# Journey to the Dark Depths of Mind in the Tales of Edgar Allan Poe

Joanna Pawliczak

There is no doubt that Edgar Allan Poe is a character both mysterious and tragic. This well-known American poet and novelist by his extraordinary creativity inspired, inspire and be inspired countless artists, creators and consumers of art<sup>1</sup>. Such names as Charles Baudelaire, Fyodor Dostoyevsky and Howard Phillips Lovecraft should be mentioned here. Among the Polish artists Bolesław Leśmian has to be highlighted as an outstanding poet on whose work Poe has had a significant impact. This effect is even more special that he was one of the greatest translators of the author of 'The Raven' into Polish.

It is thanks to its unmatched talent of Bolesław Leśmian Polish reader can enjoy today the dark atmosphere coming from the Gothic tale, embedded in the atmosphere of fantasy and horror, and crime story of which Poe was the undisputed precursor.

Poe's prose is characterized by a strong psychologism (the precursor of psychoanalysis) and surreal, extremely brutal descriptions of macabre. In this paper I present a synthesis of the most important features of the author of 'Fall of the House of Usher' and I will try to show roads on which both the reader of Poe's stories, as well as their own hero travels into the depths of the mind and what elements of light or darkness he or she may encounter.

*Biographical facts of the author as a map and a signpost on the road to the darkness*

Edgar Allan Poe the father of modern horror literature was born on January 19, 1809. He was educated in the United States (in Virginia) as well as

1 Studniarz S., *Tragiczna wizja: rzecz o nowelistyce Poe*, Adam Marszałek Publishing, Toruń 2008, passim.

in England. During his years at West Point his talent for writing prose was revealed.

It is worth mentioning that at the age of fifteen Poe wrote a poem commemorating a young woman's 'Requiem for the most beautiful of the deceased who passed away too soon'<sup>2</sup>. Indeed, Poe's first love was poetry and although he failed to maintain his early career with the publication of his work in later life 's two volumes of his poems came to the light.

In 1835 he became an assistant editor of *Southern Literary Messenger* in Richmond and then his talent as a writer was fully displayed. This was at a time when Poe fell in love with his thirteen years old cousin Virginia. Difficult financial situation of young married couple forced 'The Raven's' author to look for work and adoption of the post of an assistant in the said publication<sup>3</sup>. While working in the editorial Poe was primarily a publisher but he could also publish his own articles. At the beginning of 1836, in the above journal published about ninety reviews, six poems and three stories of Poe, not to mention editorial notes and comments prepared by him.

Later, Poe has worked for several other magazines. His writing career began to influence increasingly the publishing activities. And so, in 1839 he joined the Philadelphia weekly newspaper editor in "*Gentleman's Magazine*" and deepened his writing workshop. During this period stories drowned in macabre were published: *The Fall of the House of Usher* and *William Wilson*. These stories which today would be classified to the psychological thriller genre soon became the hallmark of Poe.

In 1841 the poet began to work with George Graham and at the same time preparing for the publication of his famous short story *The Murders in the Rue Morgue*. Finally, the story was published in April. The theme was to describe adventures of Auguste Dupin, the first in the history of literature fictional detective. Tale of ratiocination as Poe himself referred to this work has become the most popular form of detective prose in English literature<sup>4</sup>. It was during the stay in Philadelphia Poe published his most famous horror stories: *The Tell-Tale Heart* and *The Pit and The Pendulum*.

But the real fame came in 1845 when he released his most famous poem 'The Raven'. The reaction of the readers on this poem was simply impossi-

2 Silverman K., *Edgar A. Poe: Mournful and Never-ending Remembrance*, HarperCollins Publishers, New York 1992, p. 435.

3 Studniarz S., *Tragiczna wizja: rzecz o novelistyce Poe*, Adam Marszałek Publishing, Toruń 2008, passim.

4 Silverman K., *Edgar A. Poe: Mournful and Never-ending Remembrance*, HarperCollins Publishers, New York 1992, p. 171.

ble. We can call it a kind of revolution<sup>5</sup> that can be compared with today's crazy to see an outstanding movie or musical blockbuster.

Surprisingly, the famous poet met a huge tragedy. In February 1847 died his beloved wife. This fact is brought the creator to the brink of madness of despair. It is because of the death of his beloved Virginia he spoke memorable words: 'Deep in Earth my love is lying, and I must weep alone'<sup>6</sup>. Life after the death of his partner has become barren, filled with despair and emerging madness. Attempts to resurrect his fallen career mingled with the problems of alcohol and opium addiction, depression, unhappy romances and engagements and a failed suicide attempt.

Edgar Allan Poe died in October 1849, in Baltimore. He was forty years. Although the true cause of his death remains embedded in mystery to this day it is believed that the poet decided to commit suicide. As it was stated by a former expert: 'This death was almost a suicide, a suicide prepared for a very long time'<sup>7</sup>.

Despite his short and tragic life of Poe remained in the memory of the modern reader as the most revered master of dark stories in history. There is no doubt that the knowledge of his biography is an excellent signpost on the road of the world of his creation because this world came into being in his mind.

### *Themes of metaphorical journeys in the works of Edgar Allan Poe*

#### Love and hate

In many of Poe's stories, we have to deal with the issue of love and hate. In general, we observe how the mind of the main character in a metaphorical sense travels from the deep admiration to the strong state of hate having devastating impact on his actions and the world around him. This is particularly evident in such stories as *The Tell-Tale Heart* and *William Wilson*. Poe portraying psychological complexity of these two seemingly distant from each other highlights their proximity enigmatic. In a manner appropriate to its species he shows that the path from one to another can be very short. The poet, as well-known psychoanalyst Sigmund Freud interprets love and hate as universal emotions close to each other having its extension in time and space.

5 Ibidem, p. 237.

6 Poe Edgar Allan 1837 *Deep In Earth* [In:] Edgar Allan Poe *Complete Poems* Ed. By T.O. Mabbot, Illinois, p. 396.

7 Silverman K., *Edgar A. Poe: Mournful and Never-ending Remembrance*, HarperCollins Publishers, New York 1992, pp. 435–436.

With his gothic gloominess the author describes characteristics of this journey. Hero of *The Tell-Tale Heart* at the beginning talks about his praise and sympathy for an elderly man. As the story continues we can see how the unbridled aggression and hatred is born within the hero resulting in brutal murder and dismemberment of the honest old man. The hero of the story confesses that the reason for the sudden change of feelings was the 'evil eye' of the old man which did not allow to 'rest' his worried mind:

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! He had the eye 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<sup>8</sup>.

Lubiłem poczciwego starucha. Nigdy mi nic złego nie uczynił. Nigdy mnie nie uraził. Nie pożałowałem zgola jego złota. Przypuszczenia moje dotyczą raczej jego oka... Tak, to było to! Miał jedno oko podobne do sępiego — oko płowo-niebieskie, bielmem przysłonięte. Ilekroć to oko zwracało się ku mnie, tylekroć krew we mnie stygła, i oto — zwolna — stopniowo — uknuła mi się w głowie zachcianka odebrania starcowi życia, aby w ten sposób raz na zawsze uwolnić się od jego oka<sup>9</sup>.

### Self vs. alter ego

In one of the stories of Poe we find traces of conflict over two seemingly identical or different personalities. An example of this is the story *William Wilson*. In this work we see William Wilson as a person with his imaginary alter ego of a completely different nature. During the development of the story we observe the narrator who is chased by his alter ego through the whole Europe. That alter ego of the main character threatens the cohesion of his personality, because it shows him that he is not able to escape from their unwanted traits<sup>10</sup>. Unfortunately, due to the fact that the alter ego is confusingly similar to the main character he becomes his rival. The only escape from the narrator's anguish appears to be a suicide.

and I broke my way from the ball-room into a small ante-chamber adjoining -- dragging him unresistingly with me as I went. Upon entering, I thrust him furiously from me. He staggered against the wall, while I closed the door with an oath, and commanded him to draw. He hesitated but for an instant;

8 Poe E. A., *Selected Tales*, London 1994, p.267.

9 Poe E.A., *Opowieści niesamowite*, Cracow 1976, p.117.

10 Studniarz S., *Tragiczna wizja: rzecz o nowelistyce Poe'a*, Adam Marszałek Publishing, Toruń 2008, passim.

then, with a slight sigh, drew in silence, and put himself upon his defence. The contest was brief indeed. I was frantic with every species of wild excitement, and felt within my single arm the energy and power of a multitude. In a few seconds I forced him by sheer strength against the wainscoting, and thus, getting him at mercy, plunged my sword, with brute ferocity, repeatedly through and through his bosom<sup>11</sup>.

I, nieodparcie wlekąc go za sobą, przetłoczyłem się od sali balowej, aż do przyległej, niewielkiej sieni. Stanąwszy w sieni, odrzuciłem go ze wściekłością precz — od siebie. Potoczył się ku ścianie. Klnąc, zawarłem drzwi i kazałem mu broń obnażyć. Wahał się przez chwilę, poczem z nieznacznym westchnieniem dobył, milcząc, swej szpady i stanął w pozycji. Walka wszakże trwała niedługo. Burzyły się we mnie najognistsze — wszelkiego chowu podniety, i w każdej z osobna dłoni czułem dzielność i potęgę całej zgrai. W okamgnieniu uderzeniem pięści przyparłem go do muru i tam, mając go w swej mocy, kilkakrotnie, cios za ciosem, zanurzałem mu w piersiach szpadę z bydlęcą drapieżnością<sup>12</sup>.

Suicide seems to be the only solution because the insanity that the alter ego causes, can be eliminated only through a journey to the land of the dead.

In the story *The Black Cat* we meet the narrator who turns from an animal lover into a cat killer.

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. I was especially fond of animals, and was indulged by my parents with a great variety of pets. With these I spent most of my time, and never was so happy as when feeding and caressing them. This peculiarity of character grew with my growth, and in my manhood, I derived from it one of my principal sources of pleasure<sup>13</sup>.

Od dziecka zdradzałem miękkość i ludzkość uczuć. Szczególniej przepadałem za zwierzętami i za zgodą rodziców posiadałem wielce różnorodny zespół ulubieńców. Cały niemal czas spędzałem w ich towarzystwie i nigdy nie czułem się tak szczęśliwy, jak wówczas, gdy je darzyłem pokarmem i pieśczętą. Ta osobliwość mego przyrodzenia wzrastała wraz z wiekiem i, gdy m zmężniał, stąd głównie czerpałem moje uciechy<sup>14</sup>.

Source of the macabre in *The Black Cat* has its origin in the sudden transformation of the hero and the murder of his beloved cat Pluto. After this action we are witnessing his complete moral breakdown.

11 Poe E.A., *Selected Tales*, London 1994, p.116.

12 Poe E.A., *Opowieści niesamowite*, Cracow 1976, p.29.

13 Poe E.A., *Selected Tales*, London 1994, p. 311.

14 Poe E.A., *Opowieści niesamowite*, Cracow 1976, p. 135.

I fancied that the cat avoided my presence. I seized him; when, in his fright at my violence, he inflicted a slight wound upon my hand with his teeth. The fury of a demon instantly possessed me. I knew myself no longer. My original soul seemed, at once, to take its flight from my body and a more than fiendish malevolence, gin-nurtured, thrilled every fibre of my frame. 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<sup>15</sup>!

Roilem sobie, iż kot unika mojej obecności. Schwyciłem go za kark — on zaś, spłoszony moją przemocą, z lekka poranił mi zębami rękę. Owładnęła mną nagle wściekłość demona. Straciłem przytomność. Zdawało się, iż duch mój przyrodzony zniecka wymknął mi się z ciała, i przepojona ginem, nadszataną złość przenikła każde włókno mej istoty. Z kieszeni kamizelki wyszarpnąłem szczyryk i otworzyłem. Porwałem biedne zwierzę za gardło i śmiało wyważyłem mu z orbity jedno ślepie<sup>16</sup>!

We observe as he travels the dark recesses of his mind to let out the madness from him in the form of murder of his wife at the end. Horrific images complements the fact of reincarnation of killed Pluto in the person of another cat that constantly haunts the main character, accompanying him on his way through the madness and fueling his hatred.

The moodiness of my usual temper increased to hatred of all things and of all mankind; while, from the sudden, frequent, and ungovernable outbursts of a fury to which I now blindly abandoned myself, my uncomplaining wife, alas! was the most usual and the most patient of sufferers<sup>17</sup>.

Właściwa memu usposobieniu posępność urosła aż do rozmiarów nienawiści dla wszelkiej rzeczy i wszelkiej istoty ludzkiej. Tymczasem żona moja, która się nigdy nie skarżyła, stała się — niestety — moim codziennym kozłem ofiarnym, najcierpliwszym łupem nagłych, częstych i nieposkromionych wybuchów wściekłości, której się odtąd oddawałem na oślepie<sup>18</sup>.

### *Journey of the dead into the world of the living*

Edgar Allan Poe often places the theme of the dead return to life in his works. This well-known motif in the literature is introduced in Poe's stories by the use of memory as a medium that literally brings creatures back to life — mostly women. One example of this phenomenon can be called a story entitled

15 Poe E.A., *Selected Tales*, London 1994, p. 312.

16 Poe E.A., *Opowieści niesamowite*, Cracow 1976, p. 136.

17 Poe E.A., *Selected Tales*, London 1994, p. 317.

18 Poe E.A., *Opowieści niesamowite*, Cracow 1976, p. 142.

*Ligeia*. Here we meet the narrator, who unable to bear with the death of his wife, Lady Ligeia, still remembers her.

Than all else adapted to deaden impressions of the outward world, it is by that sweet word alone — by Ligeia — that I bring before mine eyes in fancy the image of her who is no more. And now, while I write, a recollection flashes upon me that I have never known the paternal name of her who was my friend and my betrothed, and who became the partner of my studies, and finally the wife of my bosom<sup>19</sup>.

inne znieczulają na wrażenia świata zewnętrznego, a jednak dość mi jest tego jednego, słodkiego słowa: Ligeja! — by przed oczyma mej wyobraźni przesunął się obraz tej, co już odeszła... Kiedy to piszę, przychodzi mi na myśl, iż nie znałem nigdy rodowego miana istoty, co była mą przyjaciółką i mą narzeczoną, co brała udział w mych dociekaniach i została w końcu mą ślubną oblubienicą<sup>20</sup>.

He cannot erase her from his memory even when married again to Lady Rowena. Memories of the deceased spouse become so strong that over time they affect the current wife. She falls into a mysterious illness that no doctor can cure.

Poe allows tormenting memories of the protagonist to break the barrier that exists between the world of the dead and the living. They stimulate the spirit of Lady Ligeia to travel from the underworld, and welcome her spouse once again.

My memory flew back, (oh, with what intensity of regret!) to Ligeia, the beloved, the august, the beautiful, the entombed. I revelled in recollections of her purity, of her wisdom, of her lofty, her ethereal nature, of her passionate, her idolatrous love<sup>21</sup>.

Pamięć moja pierzchała (och, z jakimż nieukojonym żalem!) w przeszłość, ku Ligei, ku tej pięknej, ku tej dostojnej, ku tej jedynej, ku tej umarłej. Lubowałem się rozpamiętywaniem jej czystości, jej wiedzy, jej szczytnej, przeduchowanej natury, jej przenamiętnej, rozmodlonej miłości<sup>22</sup>.

In the above story, memory is the factor that determines the way back to the familiar place. Loving husband remembering his wife in a very realistic way brings her to him. In *Ligeia* Poe not only told the story of return of

19 Poe E.A., *Selected Tales*, London 1994, p. 48

20 Poe E.A., *Opowieści niesamowite*, Cracow 1976, pp. 289–290.

21 Poe E.A., *Selected Tales*, London 1994, p. 58.

22 Poe E.A., *Opowieści niesamowite*, Cracow 1976, p. 300.

beautiful woman from the dead, but also emphasized the power of love, which is even able to withstand death.

*Symbols associated with metaphorical journey in works of Edgar Allan Poe Masquerade*

By the use of masquerade characters of Poe's stories can break away from all conventions and enter the path of the crime. For example, in *The Cask of Amontillado* the main character — Count Montresor, uses precisely the fact that during the carnival ball, everyone plays different role<sup>23</sup>. He lures unfortunate Fortunato to his catacombs and there he bricks him up alive.

The thousand injuries of Fortunato I had borne as I best could ; but when he ventured upon insult, I vowed revenge. [...] At length I would be avenged; this was a point definitively settled — but the very definitiveness with which it was resolved, precluded the idea of risk<sup>24</sup>.

Tysiące krzywd, zadanych mi przez Fortunata, zniosłem cierpliwiej, niżli to było w mej mocy, lecz gdy doszło do zniewagi, poprzysiągłem sobie zemstę [...] Prędzej, później pomsta nadejść musiała — było to postanowienie, które zapadło ostatecznie. Sama jednak doskonałość powziętego pomysłu wykluczała wszelką myśl o narażeniu go na niebezpieczeństwo<sup>25</sup>.

On the other hand, in the story *William Wilson* the theme of masked ball pushes the narrator to the diligent implementation of the plan of killing his alter ego. Due to the fact that each guest wears a costume, the main character feels in his endeavor virtually unpunished.

At the end of the story, *The Masque of the Red Death* spirit of the plague appearing in the guise on Prince Prospero's masked ball, travels all the rooms in the castle, taking lives of all his guests.

The figure was tall and gaunt, and shrouded from head to foot in the habiliments of the grave. The mask which concealed the visage was made so nearly to resemble the countenance of a stiffened corpse that the closest scrutiny must have had difficulty in detecting the cheat. And yet all this might have been endured, if not approved, by the mad revellers around. But the mummer had gone so far as to assume the type of the Red Death. His vesture was dabbled in blood -- and his broad brow, with all the features of the face, was besprinkled with the scarlet horror. When the eyes of Prince Prospero fell upon this spectral image (which with a slow and solemn movement, as if more fully to sustain its role, stalked to and fro among the Walters<sup>26</sup>.

23 Studniarz S., *Tragiczna wizja: rzecz o nowelistyce Poe'go*, Adam Marszałek Publishing, Toruń 2008, passim.

24 Poe E.A., *Selected Tales*, London 1994, p. 374.

25 Poe E.A., *Opowieści niesamowite*, Cracow 1976, p. 125.

26 Poe E.A., *Selected Tales*, London 1994, p. 196.



Osobistość była smukła i chuda, od stóp do głów opatulona w calun. Maska, tająca oblicze, tak trafnie wyobrażała twarz zeszytniałego trupa, że najszczegółowsze badanie z trudem wykryłoby fortel. Mimo to — wszyscy rozbawieni hulajdusze mogliby, jeśli nie pochwalić, w każdym razie ścierpieć ów żart potworny. Wszakże maska posunęła się aż do przyswojenia godel Śmierci szkarłatnej. Jej ubiór był pokalany krwią, a jej wysokie czoło oraz wszystkie zarysy twarzy były zbryzgane straszliwym szkarłatem. Gdy oczy księcia Prospera padły na tę postać widmową, która ruchem powolnym, uroczystym i napuszystym, jakby dla utrzymania się w roli, kroczyła tu i tam wśród tancerzy<sup>27</sup>.

## Animals

In Poe's stories which depict acts of murder often happens that they are committed because of animals or by animals as is the case of *The Murders in the Rue Morgue*. The fact that the title murder was committed in a very strange and brutal way makes the police helpless and ineffectual in the search.

A search was made in the chimney, and (horrible to relate!) the; corpse of the daughter, head downward, was dragged therefrom; it having been thus forced up the narrow aperture for a considerable distance. The body was quite warm. Upon examining it, many excoriations were perceived, no doubt occasioned by the violence with which it had been thrust up and disengaged. Upon the face were many severe scratches, and, upon the throat, dark bruises, and deep indentations of finger nails, as if the deceased had been throttled to death<sup>28</sup>.

zaczęto szukać w kominie i w końcu (strach powiedzieć!) wydobyto stamtąd trupa jej córki, wtłoczonego przez ciasny otwór głową na dół i wsuniętego dość znacznie w górę. Zwłoki były jeszcze zupełnie ciepłe. Przy badaniu okazało się, że skóra była w wielu miejscach pocierana, co było bez wątpienia następstwem silnego wtłaczania i nie mniej z kolei silnego wyciągania trupa z komina. Twarz była mocno podrapana, a na szyi widniały ciemne ślęce i głębokie ślady paznokci, jak gdyby zmarła padła ofiarą uduszenia<sup>29</sup>.

Only Detective Dupin using his outstanding deductive abilities points on a trained orangutan as the perpetrator asserting that no man could commit such an inhuman act<sup>30</sup>.

If now, in addition to all these things, you have properly reflected upon the odd disorder of the chamber, we have gone so far as to combine the ideas

27 Poe E.A., *Opowieści niesamowite*, Cracow 1976, p. 383.

28 Poe E.A., *Selected Tales*, London 1994, p. 127.

29 Poe E.A., *Opowieści niesamowite*, Cracow 1976, pp. 174–175.

30 Studniarz S., *Tragiczna wizja: rzęcz o nowelistyce Poego*, Adam Marszałek Publishing, Toruń 2008, passim.

of an agility astounding, a strength superhuman, a ferocity brutal, a butchery without motive, a grotesquerie in horror absolutely alien from humanity<sup>31</sup>.

Jeżeli na domiar wzięłeś należycie pod rozagę cudaczny nieład w pokoju, to będziemy mieli wszystkie dane, by skojarzyć pojęcia przedziwnej zręczności, nadludzkiej siły, zwierzęcej dzikości, bezcelowej zbrodni, cudactwa, którego groteskowa groza nie ma nic wspólnego z człowieczeństwem<sup>32</sup>.

In the story *The Black Cat* murdering of Pluto the cat becomes a symbol of the way from a law-abiding citizen and an animal lover to the absolute, inhuman killer of the main character<sup>33</sup>. The second cat leads him to an even more severe crime — the murder of his wife.

[...]. Uplifting an axe, and forgetting, in my wrath, the childish dread which had hitherto stayed my hand, I aimed a blow at the animal which, of course, would have proved instantly fatal had it descended as I wished. But this blow was arrested by the hand of my wife. Goaded, by the interference, into a rage more than demoniacal, I withdrew my arm from her grasp and buried the axe in her brain. She fell dead upon the spot, without a groan<sup>34</sup>.

[...]. Uniósłszy topora i zapomniawszy w mej wściekłości dziecinnego strachu, który dotąd dłoń moją hamował, wymierzyłem w zwierzę cios, który byłby śmiertelny, gdyby padł, jakom chciał. Wszakże cios ów powściągnęła dłoń mej żony. To pośrednictwo podjuzdło mię aż do szatańskich rozściernień. Wyszarpnąłem dłoń z jej uścisku i zanurzyłem topór w jej czaszce. Padła trupem na miejscu, nie wydawszy jęku<sup>35</sup>.

## Whirlpool

The story *MS. Found in a Bottle* reveals us the history of a sea journey of the main character to the ends of the earth. Poe in a characteristically phantasmagoric way introduces the whirlpool as a symbol of the journey from scientific rationality to the imaginary world of mysterious ideas.

I became aware of a dull, sullen glare of red light which streamed down the sides of the vast chasm where we lay, and threw a fitful brilliancy upon our deck. Casting my eyes upwards, I beheld a spectacle which froze the current of my blood<sup>36</sup>.

31 Poe E.A., *Selected Tales*, London 1994, p. 144.

32 Poe E.A., *Opowieści niesamowite*, Cracow 1976, p. 194.

33 Studniarz S., *Tragiczna wizja: rzecz o noweliście Poego*, Adam Marszałek Publishing, Toruń 2008, passim.

34 Poe E.A., *Selected Tales*, London 1994, p. 318.

35 Poe E.A., *Opowieści niesamowite*, Cracow 1976, pp. 142–143.

36 [online], [access 5.06.2013], <http://classclit.about.com/library/bl-etexts/eapoe/bl-eapoe-manu.html>.

postrzegłem światło szkarlatne o mroczącym się i pośepnym blasku, które chwiało się u wylotu bezdennej, wchłaniającej nas czeluści i miotalo na nasz pokład pelgające smugi rozwidnień. Uniósłszy do góry oczy, ujrzałem widok, który krew mi zmroził<sup>37</sup>.

Reading the above masterpiece we feel that the whirlpool can also be a symbol of a kind of journey into uncharted areas of knowledge or just to the land of the dead.

## Eyes

*The Tell-Tale Heart* is a perfect example of the symbolism of eyes as a part of stimulating the hero to enter the path of evil. It was nothing more than the 'evil eye' of the old man that leads the narrator to madness. It instills in his mind an imaginary thought that 'the evil eye' had cast a terrible curse upon him. The hero decides to commit a criminal act and thus he takes a symbolic journey from a completely sane to totally demented human individual. A similar theme can be seen in the story *Ligeia*. Here mysterious Lady Ligeia's eyes magically influence her husband to such point that after her death he is not able to forget her.

Shrinking from my touch, she let fall from her head, unloosened, the ghastly cerements which had confined it, and there streamed forth, into the rushing atmosphere of the chamber, huge masses of long and dishevelled hair; it was blacker than the raven wings of the midnight! And now slowly opened the eyes of the figure which stood before me. "Here then, at least," I shrieked aloud, "can I never -- can I never be mistaken -- these are the full, and the black, and the wild eyes -- of my lost love -- of the lady -- of the LADY LIGEIA."<sup>38</sup>

Targnęła się, by uniknąć mojego dotknięcia, przy czym obsunęło się upiornie czechło, co osłaniało wolno jej głowę, i skroś rozmigotanego powietrza komnaty wionęła ogromna smuga długich, rozpuszczonych włosów: były one czarniejsze niżli krucze skrzydła północy! I rozwarły się zwolna oczy stojącej przede mną postaci. Teraz — zawolałem na cały głos — teraz na pewno już się nie mylę! To wyraziście, czarne, nieodgadnione oczy miłości, co mnie odeszła — to oczy Lady — LADY LIGEIA<sup>39</sup>.

So we can clearly see that thanks to the eyes of Lady Ligeia and memories of her husband her way back from the land of the dead to the living is possible.

37 Poe E.A., *Opowieści niesamowite*, Cracow 1976, p. 109.

38 Poe E.A., *Selected Tales*, London 1994, p. 64.

39 Poe E.A., *Opowieści niesamowite*, Cracow 1976, p. 306.

In this article, I tried to introduce the reader to the work of Edgar Allan Poe as the mysterious and tragic author. The subject of my discussion was mainly to show the symbolic journey into the dark mind and analyze its secret paths. Applications that may arise after reading the stories of Poe allow us to say that his works are full of allusions to real or symbolic journey on many levels of existence<sup>40</sup>. Here we can name at least return the dead to the living world and the transformation of the hero from a peaceful man to a beast burning with desire to murder.

Looking at the stories written by the author of *The Raven* we must also bear in mind that journeys shown in his work are mostly journeys in their metaphorical sense.

### *Bibliography*

[online], [access 5.06.2013], <http://classiclit.about.com/library/bl-etexts/eapoe/bl-eapoe-manu.html>

Poe E.A., *Deep In Earth*, [in:] Poe Edgar Allan, *Complete Poems*, Ed. By T.O. Mabbot, Illinois, 2000.

Poe E.A., *Selected Tales*, Penguin Classics Publishing House, London 1994.

Poe E.A., *Opowieści niesamowite*, Wydawnictwo Literackie, Cracow 1976.

Silverman K., *Edgar A. Poe: Mournful and Never-ending Remembrance*, HarperCollins Publishers, New York 1992.

Studniarz S., *Tragiczna wizja: rzecz o novelistyce Poego*, Adam Marszałek Publishing, Toruń 2008.

40 Studniarz S., *Tragiczna wizja: rzecz o novelistyce Poego*, Adam Marszałek Publishing, Toruń 2008, passim.