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Poe’s name excavated: The mediating function and the transformation of discourse theme into discourse rheme

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Kansai Gaidai University, Japan

Abstract
This article examines the mediating function that transforms the topic presented, usually but not always in the initial position of a text, into the comment, in Edgar Allan Poe’s ‘The Haunted Palace’. In this text, a poem in ‘The Fall of the House of Usher’, the mediation, which is indicated in parentheses, is realized through various transformational devices, for example, a gradual change of lexical items (e.g. a graphological and voice inversion like III-2 saw – (III-8 was seen) – IV-2 Was…. Was). This function mediates the discourse theme, PAST GLORY (EXISTENCE) into the discourse rheme, PRESENT FALL (DESTRUCTION). This short text displays Poe’s exquisite skill in using the poetic devices that were available at that time. Unlike Old English poetry, which was exclusively delivered orally, or medieval poetry, which was circulated in manuscript but transmitted largely through the medium of sound, this 19th century work added several different communicative aspects characteristic of poetry circulated in print following a functional pattern of thematization common to communicative events. Through the discussion of functional arrangements of the traditional and ‘new’ textual devices, Poe’s name is shown to be anagrammatically embedded to mediate the topic of the text, or discourse theme, PAST GLORY (EXISTENCE), and the comment on the topic, or discourse rheme, PRESENT FALL (DESTRUCTION).

Keywords
anagrams, chiasmus, discourse rheme, discourse theme, literary discourse, mediating function, Poe

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I Introduction

To understand Poe’s works of poetry, it is necessary to consider not only the rise of journalism, a new mass medium of wide circulation, which helped enhance the general public’s concern about the written medium for communication, and one which formed Poe’s working milieu, but also the fact that the 19th century saw the birth of a new literary genre, detective stories, which popularized the use of melodramatic stage devices of the time such as candles, letters written in invisible ink, islands with buried treasure and so forth. Considering this, it is quite reasonable to infer that Poe used visual devices on the printed pages when creating a work in this new genre. How then can literally significant findings be identified in the miscellaneous accumulation of verbal devices? To answer this, a functional viewpoint will be introduced as a ‘treasure map’ that charts the way to the significant stylistic devices the author used to express his explicit and implicit communicative intent. Following the functional framework, first, the arrangements of rhymes and phonological, lexical and grammatical items, the stylistic features which exemplify Poe’s skill in using the developed stylistic aspects of English will be examined; second, what the author seems to have intended to convey to us through this text will be discussed.

The Haunted Palace

I
1 In the greenest of our valleys,
2 By good angels tenanted,
3 Once a fair and stately palace—
4 Radiant palace—reared its head.
5 In the monarch Thought’s dominion—
6 It stood there.
7 Never seraph spread a pinion
8 Over fabric so fair.

II
1 Banners yellow, glorious, golden,
2 On its roof did float and flow;
3 (This—all this—was in the olden
4 Time long ago)
5 And every gentle air that dallied,
6 In that sweet day,
7 Along the ramparts plumed and pallid,
8 A winged odor went away.

III
1 Wanderers in that happy valley
2 Through two luminous windows saw
3 Spirits moving musically,
4 To a lute’s well-tunèd law,
5 Round about a throne where sitting
6 (Porphyrogene!)
7 In state his glory well befitting,
8 The ruler of the realm was seen.

IV
1 And all with pearl and ruby glowing
2 Was the fair palace door,
3 Through which came flowing, flowing, flowing
4 And sparkling evermore,
5 A troop of Echoes, whose sweet duty
6 Was but to sing,
7 In voices of surpassing beauty,
8 The wit and wisdom of their king.

V
1 But evil things, in robes of sorrow,
2 Assailed the monarch’s high estate.
3 (Ah, let us mourn. For never morrow
4 Shall dawn upon him, desolate!)
5 And, round about his home, the glory
6 That blushed and bloomed,
7 Is but a dim-remembered story
8 Of the old time entombed.

VI
1 And travellers now within that valley,
2 Through the red-litten windows, see
3 Vast forms, that move fantastically
4 To a discordant melody;
5 While, like a ghastly rapid river,
6 Through the pale door,
7 A hideous throng rush out forever
8 And laugh—but smile no more.


Not hear it?—yes, I hear it, and have heard it. Long—long—long—many minutes, many hours, many days, have I heard it—yet I dared not—oh, pity me, miserable wretch that I am!—I dared not—I dared not speak! We have put her living in the tomb! (‘The Fall of the House of Usher’ Vol. III: 295–296, original italics)

2 Theoretical background

My argument develops on the basis of the speech act theory of Austin (1962), who argued that a declarative sentence consists of the performative part and the proposition. I assume that a literary discourse also has these two parts: the performative level, which consists of the author-reader level, and the textual proposition. Applying this assumption yields Figure 1, which appears to represent actual literary discourse.
Figure 1 does not, however, sufficiently represent the literary discourse framework. In actuality, literary communication is more like Figure 2. An author creates a fictional world, which consists of ‘text’ and the ‘message-internal world’ or the world created by the ‘text’ within the framework of communication, the ‘social’ aspect of literary discourse. A literary text presents a fictional story as if it were real. Knowing that the story is not real, readers enjoy the mock reality represented on the pages. And this is where the delight of reading literature lies. Readers take the box of broken lines in Figure 2 for the framework of natural discourse in Figure 1 because they are similar in structure, though actually the boxed part in Figure 2 is only a fictional world that the author created. By superimposing the three participants’ worlds of ‘The Haunted Palace’ (author (Poe)–narrator (Usher)–character (Wanderers)), we can obtain the structure represented in Figure 2.

In literature, events in the text purport to be occurring in a ‘real’ context, though in fact the context is a mock one. Figure 1 and the dotted part in Figure 2 are alike, but different. Readers enjoy this illusion, but some critics and linguists become confused and those theorists who attempt to apply the Labovian narrative analysis to a fictional text are misled into identifying the work as Figure 1. Labov’s (2001) speaker, a 73-year-old man from South Lyons, is different from Usher who narrates ‘The Haunted Palace’. These two people, Labov’s elderly American and Usher, each tell their own story, but not in the same communicative framework. It is necessary for us to posit Poe’s voice behind Usher’s narrative of a haunted kingdom, whereas there is no one behind Labov’s elderly narrator, because the latter is a real existence and at the top layer of the tree diagram of communication. In this sense, it is impossible to psychoanalyse Usher as if he were a real person.

A close examination of the story world in Figure 2, that is, the propositional part that consists of that [TEXT], reveals that it has the same informational structure as the clause in language, which Halliday (2004: 93–105) has discussed as being built up by a relation between theme and rheme. It is made of what could be termed discourse theme, which is mediated into the discourse rheme by a mediating function in a communicative and dynamic way.

The information structure of clause was originally discussed as a single event by Firbas (1992: 70) under the headings of ‘theme’ and ‘rheme’ with a ‘transition’ between them, see Figure 3.

![Figure 1](image-url)

**Figure 1.** Communication framework of natural discourse
Figure 2. Communication framework of literary discourse

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Textual</th>
<th>THEME (addresser’s and addressee’s points of view combined)</th>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Transition</th>
<th>Rheme</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Wanderers</td>
<td>Saw</td>
<td>Spirits Round about a throne</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 3. Firbas’s Semantic Component in the Clause

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Experiential</th>
<th>TRANSITIVITY</th>
<th>Experiencer</th>
<th>Mental Process</th>
<th>Phenomenon</th>
<th>Location: locative</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Wanderers</td>
<td>Saw</td>
<td>Spirits</td>
<td>Round about a throne</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interpersonal</td>
<td>MOOD</td>
<td>Modal</td>
<td>Propositional</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Textual</td>
<td>THEME (addresser’s point of view)</td>
<td>Theme</td>
<td>Rheme</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INFORMATION (addressee’s point of view)</td>
<td>Given information</td>
<td>New information</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 4. Based on MAK Halliday’s Three Layers of Semantic Component in the Clause (Halliday, 2002: 25)

Adding two other semantic layers, Halliday (2002: 25) divided theme into two distinct parts: one part is for the speaker’s point of view, the other for the listener’s viewpoint. In addition, giving the textual component two distinctive strata, he extended the role of rheme to cover transition, see Figure 4.
In analysing literary discourse, it can be reasonably assumed that Halliday’s concept of theme, which realizes the addresser’s point of view, together with the Prague concept of ‘transition’, or ‘mediation’, work effectively to shed light on the author’s communicative intention. At discourse level in a literary text, a level where the author communicates something to the reader, the elements work together in a communicatively dynamic manner, along the line of theme–mediation–rheme development at a text level below the superordinate author-reader structure, in the same way that words and phrases do in a clause. The theme–mediation–rheme development is also a fundamental, text-creating function of literary discourse. In the story world, an event introduced in the story is, through mediation, given a solution in the end. Without considering this superordinate semantic stratum, Jakobson-style analysis of poetic parallelisms reveals no more than a simple accumulation of arbitrarily ‘discovered’ parallelisms.2

This article examines how Poe used the verbal items, phonological and visual, of ‘The Haunted Palace’, following the thematization pattern of theme–mediation–rheme, which should be termed discourse theme–mediation–discourse rheme because the semantic roles of verbal items are decided at the author-reader’s discourse level of literary communication.

In this poem Poe fully used a wide variety of linguistic features of the English language and the stage properties of the time in order to actualize this thematization. By analysing functionally these features of language and stage properties in the context of the 19th century, it is possible to develop a deeper appreciation of this work, allowing Poe, both figuratively and literally, to ‘rise’ from this 19th-century text.3

3 Theme-transformation stylistic devices

3.1 The whirlpool structure: A gradual mediation

Analysis of the text will proceed in three stages: first, the outermost layer of the text, Stanzas I and VI; second, the intermediate circle, Stanzas II and V; and third, the core of the text, Stanzas III and IV. The central two stanzas are the centre for ‘mediation’, which realizes the thematic transition from the first part of the text into the second part by using several verbal devices. Around this core, the outer two layers form two concentric circles. This structure resembles ‘a maelstrom’, a favourite theme of Poe’s. In the final part I will explain how he reappears before our eyes like the narrator who is sucked into a maelstrom then rises to the surface again losing everything he had. In this six-stanza poem, the discourse theme, PAST GLORY (EXISTENCE), is gradually mediated or transformed into the discourse rheme, PRESENT FALL (DESTRUCTION), through various manipulations of stylistic devices in mediation. This transition accords with ‘Poe’s first proposition in Eureka that “inevitable annihilation” is the basic fact of all existence’ (Thompson, 1970: 297).

3.1.1 The outermost circle: Stanzas I and VI. The supernatural animate nouns that appear throughout the text are arranged concentrically. These nouns are: in the first stanza, 1,2angels and 1,2seraph; in the third stanza, 3,3Spirits; in the fourth stanza, 4,3A troop of Echoes; and in the last stanza, 6,3forms and 6,3A hideous throng. There are no such
nouns in Stanzas II and V. In this mirror symmetry, there is an atmospheric change from celestial to ominous. Nominal phrases with celestial undertones in the first three stanzas are placed in contrast to the ominous nominal phrases in the latter half. There appears a transition of thematic feature from celestial to ominous, as shown in Figure 5.

Dividing each stanza of eight lines into a pair of quatrains, there appears a further mirror arrangement of these items. In the first stanza, I-2 angels is placed in the first quatrain and I-7 seraph the second quatrain, while in the last stanza there is the same arrangement, that is, VI-3 forms in the first quatrain, VI-7 A hideous throng the second quatrain. Likewise, the supernatural noun III-3 Spirits, in the first, or outer, quatrain of the third stanza, is mirrored by the supernatural noun phrase IV-5 A troop of Echoes in the second, or again outer, quatrain. Edgar Allan Poe called some of his stories ‘tales of ratiocination’ (Quinn, 1998: 314). The well-balanced ratio in the arrangement of the supernatural nominals in this poem suggests that this is also a text of ratiocination. All these symmetrical arrangements iconically support the thematic transition from celestial past to ominous present. The items in Figure 6 are arranged in the same way so as to contribute to the atmospheric change in the text:

![Figure 5. Prevailing ominous undertones](image)

![Figure 6. Balanced distribution of supernatural nominals](image)
Another parallelism supporting this concentric structure is the allocation of six colour terms: \(I_{1}\) greenest, \(II_{1}\) yellow, \(III_{6}\) Porphyrogene, \(IV_{1}\) ruby, \(V_{6}\) blushed and bloomed, and \(VI_{2}\) red. One colour term or phrase is allocated to each stanza, see Figure 7.

They all show a gradual change in tone from ‘green’ to ‘red’. \(III_{6}\) Porphyrogene, purple, and \(IV_{1}\) ruby, crimson red, are placed in the middle position of the transition in colour. The first term \(I_{1}\) greenest is on the chromatic scale opposed to the last \(VI_{2}\) red, forming a contrastive relationship and thus supporting the thematic change which occurs in the second half of the text.

3.1.2 The intermediate circle: Stanzas II and V. The intermediate circle of the text, Stanza II and Stanza V, represent transitional states in the gradual transition of theme from supreme happiness in the past to the present fall, which was supported by the chiastic arrangement of linguistic items. In Stanza II, the ‘happiness’ begins to be overshadowed; and in Stanza V, this ‘happiness’ shows a last flicker. Before treading deeper into Poe’s innermost world, it is necessary to examine the fact that the two areas of transition to and from this world of Poe iconically parallel these two Stanzas, II and V.

Stanza II is a transitional stanza in which an ominous shadow begins to come over supreme ‘happiness’, the first orchestral theme represented by the colour term \(I_{1}\) greenest in Stanza I. With the colour term \(II_{1}\) yellow in Stanza II, there is a slight tinge of foreboding, the first appearance of the discourse rheme, ‘fall’. Stanza V, on the other hand, is where the discourse theme of PAST GLORY (EXISTENCE) flickers for the last time.

These two transitions are iconically represented by a change in verb tense. The parallelism between the transition in theme and the change in tense is as follows: The pastness of the theme past bliss is realized in the last main verb, \(V_{2}\) Assailed, which is located in the second line, Stanza V, a verb with the feature PAST. Furthermore this pastness realized in the main clause is syntactically, and in parallel with the change in theme, downgraded into the position of the subordinate clause, and it is realized in the subordinate verb \(V_{6}\) blushed and bloomed. In the same stanza, in the next line, the main verb \(V_{7}\) is with the feature PRESENT replaces the first theme of pastness and past bliss. This Stanza V is a transitional stanza in which the original theme of past bliss vanishes.
To reinforce this transition, the future is also denied, as in the expressions \( V_{-3,4} \) *never
morrow / Shall dawn*, and this confirms the discourse rHEME of PRESENT FALL
(DESTRUCTION).

Paralleling these verbal arrangements, these two intermediate stanzas include two
phrases which stand for ‘time buried away’: in Stanza II, \( II_{-3,4} \) *the olden / Time long ago*;
and in Stanza V, \( V_{-5} \) *the old time entombed*.

The intermediate outer stanzas are thus given the role of transition, or mediation, in
the discourse theme–discourse rHEME structure: the former contains the beginning of the
transition, and the latter, the ending of the transition.

This coupling of beginning and ending further parallels the phonological contrast of
/p/ and /b/, both bilabial plosives, and different only in voicing; \( II_{-7} \) *plumed and pallid* and
\( V_{-6} \) *blushed and bloomed*. The beginning is linked with the voiceless bilabial plosive /p/,
whereas the ending is linked with the voiced bilabial plosive /b/. These two different
phonemes are so placed that one contrasts with the other in voice. This phonological
contrast is realized both at the head of each word in the two phrases, emphasizing the
parallelism of the first half of the poem and the second half. In both of these phrases, the
two words are linked together with the same coordinate conjunction *and*. The first coor-
dinated phrase, \( II_{-7} \) *plumed and pallid*, appears in Stanza 2, the first transitional stanza,
while the second coordinated phrase \( V_{-6} \) *blushed and bloomed* is placed in Stanza V, the
second transitional stanza.

These two coordinated phrases are placed in parallel to enclose the central stanza
group. The first word in the first phrase \( II_{-7} \) *plumed* and the second word in the second
phrase \( V_{-6} \) *bloomed* are linked with the masculine rhyme /-lúːmd/ forming the rhyming
pair *plumed–bloomed*, and they contrast with each other in their contrastive head phonemes /p/ and /b/. Moreover, these rhyming words end with the same inflectional
bound-form *-ed*. The remaining two words, \( II_{-7} \) *pallid* and \( V_{-6} \) *blushed*, are linked with the
same voiceless vs. voiced opposition at their head sound. These two coordinated groups
are the only phrases with the coordinate conjunction *and* in the poem, further emphasizing
the phonological and then semantic contrast realized in the pair /p/--/b/, which I will dis-
cuss later.

By drawing crossing lines between these alliterative pairs, it is possible to draw the
diagram shown in Figure 8. Here, in Figure 8, looming up is a space at the central stanza
pair. Before discussing this space I should discuss how far Poe was conscious of this
sound contrast of /p/--/b/.

Several examples of this phonological contrast, both in poetry and prose, should serve
to convincingly support the conclusion that Poe deliberately used this opposition in order
to signal a particular semantic contrast. One passage of Poe’s *The Oval Portrait* goes: ‘I
thus saw in vivid light a *picture* all unnoticed before. It was the *portrait* of a young girl
just ripening into womanhood. I glanced at the *painting* hurriedly, and then closed my
eyes’ (Vol. IV: 246, italics mine). Here there is a succession of /p/ sounds: *picture–portrait–
painting*. They are all key content words referring to the same object. Another example is
‘pleasurable pain’ (Vol. V: 255, italics in all the quotations are mine) in *The Premature
Burial* in which two key words are alliteratively linked with the plosive /p/. This title
*The Premature Burial* also has a contrast of voiced and voiceless. Another example is
the title: The *Pit* and the *Pendulum*. In this title, the two dangers waiting for the hero are
phonologically linked with the head sound /p/. Others are ‘black plume’ in ‘The Raven XVII’ (‘The Raven’, Vol. VII: 94–100); ‘the pallid bust of Pallas’ in ‘The Raven XVIII’; ‘Bird or beast upon the … bust’ in ‘The Raven IX’; ‘bird and bust’ in ‘The Raven XII’; and ‘burial before death’ (Vol. V: 263) in Premature and Burial. In the last case, the two head sounds in the title, Premature and Burial, are again contrasted in voice. In The Murders in the Rue Morgue, an ‘Ourang-Outang’ is brought from Borneo to Paris, and causes incidents. In this case, the voiced /b/ in ‘Borneo’ (Vol. IV: 188) stands for savageness and uncivilized brutality; the voiceless /p/ in ‘Paris’ stands for reason and civilization. ‘The Parisian police’ (Vol. IV: 165) and ‘the Prefect of Police’ (Vol. IV: 167) of Paris, who is the friend of ‘Dupain’, does a desperate search before they arrest this ‘brute beast’ (Vol. IV: 184–185) in the ‘Bois de Boulogne’ (Vol. IV: 183), again a symbol of nature placed against civilization. In this prose, it is clear that voiceless /p/ is linked with reason, while voiced /b/ is linked with non-reason and wilderness.

This contrast of /p~/b/ iconically represents two reversed worlds. Phonologically, these two bilabial plosives differ in voice; that is, voiceless or voiced, or, unmarked or marked. Graphologically, or in terms of grapheme (Quirk et al., 1985: Chapter 1.12), these two letters significantly differ in whether there is a descender (p) or an ascender (b) on the left side of a circle: 1° (p) versus 1° + o (b).

3.1.3 The central stanza pair for mediation where the king resides. Now let us go on to the central pair of stanzas, III and IV, examining the following four facts:

(i) that -ing forms converge in this pair;
(ii) that what Poe calls the most ‘sonorous’ sound, that is, the long open back vowel /ɔː:/ is used twice in the first masculine rhyme; ⁴
(iii) that anagrams are buried;
(iv) and that a thematic change realizes itself visually by a change of grammatical voice, by a letter inversion, and by a transition from daylight to night.

First, let us look at the convergence of the -ing forms, both verbals and adjectives, in this central pair of stanzas. These -ing forms are, in Stanza III, moving, sitting, and well befitting; and in Stanza IV, glowing, flowing, sparkling, and surpassing. To this it is possible to add the noun king in Stanza IV. This is the only noun with the sound shape of /-ɪŋ/ and, this word, being placed at the end of the succession
of *-ing* forms, becomes foregrounded. I will soon return to this especially foregrounded word *king*.

In this way these *-ing* forms converge in this central pair of stanzas. In Stanzas II and V, there are two words that include the sound shape of /-ɪƞ/. In Stanza II, this form is changed into the adjective *II-8 winged* by addition of *-ed*, and in Stanza V, it is followed by the plural ending *-s*.*thing*. Poe carefully avoided /-ɪƞ/ at the end of words, thus making it possible for this *-ing* form to appear only in the central pair of stanzas. This special distribution of *-ing* forms highlights the central stanza pair, the innermost part of the text.

Second, through the examination of the first masculine rhyme pairs (**III-2 saw** : **IV-2 door**; **IV-2 more** : **III-2 evermore**) it is possible to find that these two pairs are identical in their rhyming sound /ɔ:/ and this fact also contributes to strengthening the cohesion within the two central stanzas.

Stanzas III and IV, the core of ‘maelstrom’ or the core of concentric circles for mediation, are the place where Poe’s self-consciousness is verbally and eminently realized. Earlier I pointed out that *IV-8 king*, which has an *-ing* form, is foregrounded in the stanza. So is the co-referential *III-8 ruler*. The ruler, through paronomasia, is linked to his domain to which he stands in a metonymical relationship (the ruler of the realm), and furthermore, by alliterating *IV-1 ruby* (ruler–ruby) embedded in the ‘palace door’, it also has the function of consolidating these two central stanzas. It is possible to say that in this part Poe presented the one who dwells, or ‘king’ or ‘ruler’, in the innermost realm, the ‘palace’. Here special attention should be paid to this *king* or *ruler*. In Section 3.1.2, where I discussed Stanzas II and V, I pointed out that the contrastive pair of /p/-/b/ was foregrounded. In this central stanza pair, the word with the voiceless bilabial plosive /p/, which, it should be remembered, represented ‘reason’, collapses. The word *III-6 Porphyrogen* (Po-p-o-e-e) meaning ‘Born in the purple’, in his *Haunted Palace* is the first example of its usage cited in the *Oxford English Dictionary*, a word labelled ‘rare’. Poe coined this word for use here. Now it is not impossible to find here his name P-o-e anagrammatically embedded twice.

*Porphyrogen* (Po-p-o-e-e)

Both phonologically, by the alliterative /p/ sound, and, visually, by the anagrammatical embedding, ‘p’, ‘o’ and ‘e’, the sound and the image of this word can be linked with the author Poe. In the other stanza of the central pair Poe again subtly embedded a phrase.

**Figure 9.** A convergence of *-ing* forms in the central pair of stanzas
with his dismembered name. It is the phrase in line 5, \textit{IV-5} \textit{A troop of Echoes}. In this Stanza \textit{IV}, the voiceless bilabial plosive /\textit{p}/ repeats itself in \textit{pearl–palace–sparkling}, which is followed by the repetition of /\textit{oʊ}/ in \textit{glowing–flowing}, \textit{flowing}, \textit{flowing}. The sound complex of /\textit{p}/ and /\textit{oʊ}/ further converges upon the following phrase \textit{A troop of Echoes}, in which the embedded sound shape /\textit{p}… \textit{oʊ}/ forms an echo rhyme. Thus, the aforementioned red \textit{ruler} or the foregrounded \textit{king} whose name is Poe echoes among those who praise him (see Figure 10).

This technique of embedding his divided name into a text is also used in \textit{The Purloined Letter}, a prose work that the French psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan analysed at the beginning of his \textit{Écrits}, though his highly theoretical analysis does not provide us with a clue to who wrote this letter, the very thing in question. In this prose, the letter in question is placed in Minister D–’s room in what the author describes as ‘a trumpery filigree card-rack of pasteboard, that hung dangling by a dirty blue ribbon, from a little brass knob just beneath the middle of the mantelpiece’. Here is again a whirlpool structure, that is, the Minister’s room lies in the outermost circle, then the mantelpiece, and in the very centre stands the letter. The adjectival modifier of this prose ‘Purloined’, which this French psychoanalyst calls ‘rare’, \textsuperscript{6} appears to have the same anagram in itself. The author’s name is divided into three separate letters, \textit{p–o–e}, and buried in this rare modifier as in:

\textit{Purloined (P–o–e)}

Metatextually speaking, the very person who signed this letter is thus Poe himself.

In this work, in front of the fire below the mantelpiece, the author’s name appears before our eyes, as if written in invisible ink. The same stage property is also used in \textit{The Gold-Bug}. In this work, a skull and a cryptogram emerge on the parchment, just as with the anagram.

From the foregoing discussion of the outermost pair of Stanzas I and VI and the intermediate inner pair II and V, it is possible to see that this central stanza pair is the very place where the thematic current of this text inverts itself, just as in Poe’s \textit{A Descent into the Maelström}, in which the hero narrowly escapes the whirlpool, taking a chance when the gyrations become less violent and finally stop, to ascend up to the surface, while his blood brother becomes engulfed in the abyss.
The author presents this change in theme iconically in two visual ways. First, the word \textit{saw}, which carries a strong beat at the end of line 2, Stanza III, is inverted by the medial stage of the grammatical passive form \textit{was seen} in line 8, and reappears twice in Stanza IV in the visually inverted form \textit{Was...Was} in lines 2 and 6. Second, in this central stanza group there are several words and phrases which stand for a change in light, from bright to dark. Earlier in our discussion, I pointed out that the two colour words of \textit{greenest} in Stanza I and \textit{red} in Stanza VI are chromatic opposites, iconically representing the two contrastive meanings in Stanzas I and VI. In addition to this chromatic difference, light should be considered here. The \textit{greenest} in Stanza I shows that this is the reflection of bright sunshine; on the other hand, in Stanza VI there is a reflection of \textit{pale} moon on the door. One of the outermost stanzas, Stanza I, has a feature which could be termed DIURNAL, representing daytime, which is linked to it; while linked to the other outermost stanza, Stanza VI, is NOCTURNAL, a textual distinctive feature representing night-time. Between these two contrastive stages in the outermost stanzas, the central stanza pair features a stage for crossing, in which daytime and night-time meet and encroach upon each other. Here the daylight gradually disappears and the darkness of night creeps in. This is effectively verbalized in the two phrases: \textit{two luminous windows} and \textit{sparkling}. A similar alternation of light is described in Poe’s prose work entitled \textit{Berenice}, for the death scene to the death of hero’s beloved Berenice, that is, the crossroads of life/death:

\begin{quote}
\ldots the \textit{phantasma} of the teeth maintained its terrible ascendancy, as, with the most vivid and hideous distinctness, it floated about amid the hanging lights and shadows of the chamber. (Vol. II: 24, original emphasis)
\end{quote}

As well exemplified in \textit{Berenice}, the flickering of light serves as a kind of sign which shows a border state dividing two contrastive states: a positive state, and a negative state.

This change of light and the visual reversal of letter-succession in the two words \textit{saw–was}, are represented in Figure 11.

This stylistic type of phonological chiasmus also appears in Poe’s ‘The Raven’. In his ‘Linguistics and Poetics’, Roman Jakobson pointed out that the ‘refrain word’ \textit{never} in

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{figure11.png}
\caption{Other elements that support the coffin}
\end{figure}
this poem is repeated in the key word *raven* in a phonologically reversed form. Jakobson’s analysis of this part of ‘The Raven’ is as follows:

The never-ending stay of the grim guest is expressed by a chain of ingenious paronomasias, partly inversive, as we would expect from such a deliberate experimenter in anticipatory, regressive *modus operandi*, such a master in “writing backwards” as Edgar Allan Poe. In the introductory line of this concluding stanza, “raven,” contiguous to the bleak refrain word “never,” appears once more as an embodied mirror image of this “never.” /n.v.r/–/r.v.n../ (Jakobson 1960: 372, original emphasis)

Poe’s prose text *The Black Cat* also has this kind of reversed structure. In *The Black Cat* the narrator found his wife buried in the basement wall with their black cat on her head. Prior to this scene, this Black Pluto (In the cat’s name is another example of the usage of /b/ and /p/) was seen at the narrator’s foot, on the lap, and then on the chest. The passage runs:

Whenever I sat, it would crouch beneath my chair, or spring upon my knees, covering me with its loathsome caresses. If I arose to walk it would get between my feet and thus nearly throw me down, or, fastening its long and sharp claws in my dress, clamber, in this manner, to my breast. (Vol. V: 150)

In Poe’s textual world, the black cat on the head symbolizes a world in which the inverted negative state wins over the positive world. In *The Black Cat* this negative world is the one in which the *b* symbolically rules over the positive world. The *b* is here the first letter of ‘black’ in ‘black cat’.

This motif of reversal appears in another prose text by Poe, *The Gold-Bug*. Here, a black African slave climbs up from the foot of ‘an enormously tall tulip-tree, which … far surpassed … all other trees … in the beauty of its foliage and form’ (Vol. V: 109), just as the black cat moves up from the foot to the breast. And at the very top of it, this black slave finds ‘a skull’. Blackness, or the /b/ sound of the word, stands, as it were, in a metonymical relation with death. In space, the two stages, ‘foot’ and ‘top’ are crossed; and in time this crossing occurs when ‘the sun was just setting’, when daytime mingles with night-time, which is what Leach (1976: 82, 1982: 158) calls ‘a liminal zone’ or ‘interface’, where this thematic transformation takes place.

*Narrative of A. Gordon Pym* also has this motif. In this work, thousands of black-skinned savages climb up the white vessel named Jane and split open and rip up her decks and demolish the ‘cordage, sails, and everything movable on deck’.

4 Conclusion

As these examples show, in Poe’s texts, chiasmus, or the chiastic arrangement of items or events is related to the mediating textual function that results in destruction. This text thus implies that glorious existence is, through burial, transformed into destruction. In *The Fall of the House of Usher* or *A Descent into the Maelström*, the narrator approaches the centre of the ‘House’ or the ‘Maelström’ and then escapes. With their reversed moves, in the former prose the brother and the sister sink into the deep tarn with the house, and
in the latter the narrator’s brother becomes engulfed by the whirlpool. In The Gold-Bug Jupiter, a loyal servant of Legrand, drops the beetle through the right eye of the skull and then through the left eye. After that they discover buried treasure and skeletons. Also in this article Poe’s embedded name was found lying there in the centre of the poem like buried treasure. Poe has loomed up from the 19th-century text.

In his ‘Linguistics and Poetics’, Roman Jakobson cites a passage from Poe’s Marginalia which runs ‘as evil cannot exist without good’ (Jakobson, 1960: 363) and calls this author ‘a master in “writing backwards”’ (Jakobson, 1960: 372), apparently paying attention only to Poe’s reversals in writing. Poe paid special attention to the instant when this reversal occurs, to the area that carries the mediating function that transforms the discourse theme PAST GLORY (EXISTENCE) into the discourse theme PRESENT FALL (DESTRUCTION).

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### Notes

1. Quotations of Poe’s works all refer to the 1965 edition, The Complete Tales and Poems of Edgar Allan Poe, and subsequent references will cite only the volume and page numbers of that edition.
2. For the application of this concept to Geoffrey Chaucer’s Troilus and Criseyde, see Kikuchi, 2001, for William Shakespeare’s Othello and Hamlet, see Kikuchi, 2010.
3. I used ‘rise’ because my analysis of this poem is like an actual archaeological excavation of Poe’s grave made of letters. ‘Literally’ is an emphatic use, and by ‘rising’ I meant ‘looming up’.

### References


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Shigeo Kikuchi, Professor of English Linguistics at Kansai Gaidai University, Osaka, Japan, is the author of *Essays on English Literary Discourse: Medieval and Modern* (2007). As a Fulbright Visiting Scholar 1998–1999, he studied discourse grammar at the Department of Linguistics, Harvard University, USA. He is a permanent member of the Board of Trustees, Modern English Association (Headquarters: Hiroshima Jogakuin University, Hiroshima). He is a co-author of *Taishukan’s Unabridged Genius English–Japanese Dictionary of Present-day English* and has written various essays and articles on stylistics and semiotics.