How to Study Emotion Effects in Literature

Written Emotions in Edgar Allan Poe's "The Fall of the House of Usher"

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> I felt that I breathed an atmosphere of sorrow. An air of stern, deep, and irredeemable gloom hung over and pervaded all.[1]

Reading how Edgar Allan Poe's narrator-protagonist feels in the midst of the horrifying storyworld, the reader is affected. The emotion words and affective language in general have an impact on us and we react emotionally to his emotion, although the appropriate reaction is regulated by the context and the work as a whole. We all know from personal experience that the emotions of fictional characters or narrators as well as all the emotional contents of literary works affect us as readers. We presume that authors, when writing, not only present us with the factual or emotional realities of the fictional world but also endeavour to move us: they make us feel for, with or against the characters and, all in all, react emotionally to the world created by the text. This includes appreciating and enjoying the style and language through which the storyworld is presented to us. Interaction with the text also involves ways of reacting to the figure of the author that we feel in reading; all the choices made by the author create, in a sense, an emotional profile of the writer. All in all, the author writes to create an emotional response (which does not preclude other communicative intentions) and the reader reacts emotionally as well as intellectually.

Affective communication proceeds from the choices of the author in writing to the emotional effects produced in readers, and presupposes a common lan-

1 Poe 1952: 128.

guage and common cognitive/affective frames.[2] Emotion effects are triggered in multiple ways by narrative, linguistic and stylistic features and the whole construction of fictional worlds. We may conjecture that any element of the story-world, narration or the language itself may participate in creating emotion effects. Furthermore, when we consider a literary text as a whole, we often have the feeling, like that of Poe's narrator in the epigraph above, of breathing an emotional atmosphere: while reading, we are immersed in a world coloured by a certain mood, be it sadness or joy, horror or just some kind of peaceful delectation.

In the following, I first outline my approach to the study of emotion effects. Second, I consider the question of emotional triggers, that is, types of textual elements that affect us and the way they produce emotion effects. To illustrate some of the categories involved, I turn to examples chosen from Poe's short story "The Fall of the House of Usher". Discussing this concrete, emotionally loaded text brings up questions that have pertinence to literary texts in general. At the end, I focus on the concept of tone or mood and the particular mood of Poe's text.

HOW TO STUDY EMOTION EFFECTS?

In any study of emotions, the first challenge is the terminology.[3] This varies from one study to another even within one field of study, not to speak of the deeper dividing lines between affective science and affect studies.[4] Without going deeper into this bewildering discussion, I will instead indicate here, how I use of the terms 'emotion', 'feeling' and 'affect' or 'affectivity' in this text. Here, these terms are understood in a very broad sense: affectivity is the most general term, referring to our tendency and capacity to be 'touched' or affected

2 These frames include intra-literary frames or "literary tradition" and "prefiguration", to use Paul Ricœur's term from *Temps et récit* (volume II). Cf. Lyytikäinen 2012: 48 for a short presentation.

3 In English, the words 'emotion', 'affect', 'feeling', 'sentiment', 'mood', and 'passion' have been variably used to refer to the same or slightly different phenomena. In psychology, 'affect' is often the most general term, which contains subcategories such as emotions (or emotion episodes), moods, attitudes, interpersonal stances and affect dispositions (e.g. Frijda/Scherer 2009).

4 Vide e.g. Hogan 2016.

by phenomena in the world or inside our body or mind.[5] 'Emotions' or 'feelings' designate how we react – mentally and physically – to anything that affects us. I use these terms alternately although in many theories 'feelings' are seen as the bodily element of emotions. For the present purposes, however, it is enough to bear in mind that the variety of emotions encompasses what seem to be mere bodily feelings at one end of the scale and highly complex emotions that arise from and are accompanied by or imbued in our thinking (our judgments, beliefs, imaginings etc.) at the other.[6] These emotions may be short-term episodes or enduring processes with narrative structure.[7] I also refrain from drawing any clear line between subjective emotions and shared and collective emotions. Emotions connected to language use and literary communication always have a certain shared nature: when we speak we necessarily rely on general meanings rather than individually experienced emotions, we use shared frames and framing or patterns to make our feelings understood.

This has implications concerning the concept of the reader. We can speak of literary texts triggering emotions in individual readers, who may respond in all kinds of subjective ways, but it is equally legitimate to emphasize the writing and the composition of the text by investigating literary texts themselves, as we are confronted with linguistic signs and cognitive/affective frames used by writers. These signs and frames are the necessary condition for language understanding and it is pertinent to explore a literary text and its emotional impact at the level of language and, in the interpretation, focus on the authorial audience rather than real readers. This concept originates from Peter Rabinowitz and has been used by James Phelan, who conceptualizes this as a work's ability to pull

5 Flatley (2008: 12) sees, in this vein, affect and emotion as two points of view concerning the same phenomena: "Where emotion suggests something that happens inside and tends toward outward expression, affect indicates something relational and transformative. One has emotions; one is affected by people or things". A more fundamental grounding of affect and emotions as higher-order manifestations of a primordial affectivity is suggested in Colombetti (2014).

6 The complexity of emotions/affects emphasized by, e.g. Ben-Ze'ev (2000: 3-5) makes things even messier, not to speak of the relation between aesthetic emotions and real-life emotions discussed in connection with horror genres by Carroll (1990: 59-87). However, the general term 'emotion' will do as long as complex nuances are not required.

7 Although in psychology the idea of reserving the term emotion to designate only short-term episodes is common, this does not correspond to common usage nor is it useful when dealing with literature: with narratives, the great literary emotions are usually long-term processes (Goldie 2000: 4-5, 11-16).

readers into the authorial audience.[8] And, as Tero Vanhanen emphasizes, we can posit that the authorial audience also reacts to the emotional impact of the work in a way designed by the author. I agree with his conclusion:

> If we accept that a proper understanding of the work is achieved not through a particular emotional response but through the *recognition* of what is the proper emotional response for the authorial audience, we can mitigate the problem of subjectivity when dealing with emotional response to literary works.[9]

This approach can be integrated into cognitive poetics if we accept that we have and acquire more or less automatized emotional scripts or frames just as we do with (other kinds of) cognitive frames.[10] This seems uncontroversial in light of the results of recent research on human cognition that show how emotion and cognition are entangled even in the human brain.[11] The cognitive study of literature investigates the general resources preconditioning interpreters' mental states and the meanings created by their use rather than those mental states in individuals. In experiencing literature, immersion and empathy (in the sense of *Einfühlung*, which used to be the term in older aesthetics) guided by the frames lead to emotion effects, but what we can investigate by studying texts (and their contexts) are the intended effects – writerly intentions as manifested in the text – and *not* the experience of real readers.

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8 Phelan 1996: 102. The hypothetical audience that the (real or implied) author is writing for, in the sense Rabinowitz (1977: 126) understands it, is supposed to be familiar with relevant everyday, historical, cultural and literary knowledge, like genre conventions, or, as I would formulate it, with the cognitive and cultural frames presupposed by the understanding of authorial intention.

9 Vanhanen 2016: 21-22.

10 Cognitive poetics as represented by, e.g. Stockwell (2002) and Tsur (2008) have themselves different profiles: the issue here is only to claim that insights from different areas of cognitive poetics are most certainly fruitful in the study of emotion effects.

11 The idea that "emotions and cognition are inextricably intertwined" (O'Rorke/Ortony 1994: 283) has gained ground in affective science. Cf. Colombetti (2014: xvii) for the corresponding idea in enactivist studies. Developments in neuroscience since Damasio (e.g. 1995, 2010), who emphasized the role of emotion in the rational functioning of humans but still initially held the view that cognition and emotion are implemented in separate brain areas, have gone further: recent neuroscientific accounts question this separateness.

Thus, the emotion effects investigated here belong to the affective sphere, which presupposes and is presupposed by our embodied cognition and our language, the latter providing the vehicle of shared emotions and cognition in general and in literary texts in particular. These are the effects that different elements of literary texts have on the authorial audience: the emotion-related experiences that the texts offer to a reader who accepts the reader position that the text's rhetoric implies. The elements of the text relevant to producing these effects are the triggers. Whether real readers react to the triggers, feel the appropriate emotions or want to take the stance required, is another matter. Real readers can react in many kinds of personal ways (although a reaction *to the* text presupposes that the text itself causes or enables these reactions) and they can very well understand the stance that the text offers them (as an authorial audience) but still refuse to take that stance.

What seems self-evident but still needs to be emphasized is that the ways in which a literary text engages with its audience are specific to textual interaction, and to quite a special field even within that sphere. Emotion studies often presuppose face-to-face settings and interaction and it is crucial not to forget what changes when we study literature. We do not enter into a direct interaction with other people by reading. We are dealing with verbal descriptions of emotions or other verbal evocation of emotions. This precludes direct reactions to other people's facial expressions, tone of voice, gestures and all the other bodily markers of emotion. Everything we encounter in literature is mediated by language.

The verbalizing process itself may also have its impact on actual experiences of emotion: studies on this relationship point out that the verbal expression of emotions as such influences and changes the emotions experienced. As William Reddy emphasizes, emotion and (linguistic) emotional expression interact in a dynamic way and verbalizing emotions permits the formation of emotional habits and even emotional regimes.[12] Furthermore, unlike typical non-fiction texts, literary texts do not primarily express the emotions of the writer but dramatize fictional emotions. Thus, we do not react primarily to the emotions of the writer

12 On emotional regimes, Reddy 2001: xii and 124-128. Reddy maintains that "[a]ny enduring political regime must establish as an essential element a normative order for emotions, an 'emotional regime'" (ibid. 124). Rosenwein (2007) has introduced the concept of "emotional community" which refers to groupings with shared emotions within a society. Cf. also Wetherell 2012: 19-20. This also makes it possible for fictional texts to shape the emotion systems or regimes of their audiences. The result, then, not only intensifies the experiencing of emotions but, on the contrary, can replace experiencing with expressing. Emotional regimes as well as social rituals require that emotions are expressed or performed), but not necessarily felt.

but to the emotions of fictive beings. What is more, literary texts construct whole storyworlds in which various things and objects affect us. All kinds of emotion-related items come into play. The narrator or literary characters may discuss various emotions or emotions as a category and we gain knowledge of emotions rather than being asked to feel them. The psychological analysis of emotions in literary texts has many functions, and philosophical conceptions of emotions are illustrated in literary texts. Tropes, embedded stories and discourses and many other elements are brought in. All in all, the possibilities are as varied as in real life. As texts, literary texts are unique precisely because they dramatize whole worlds and bring in a full gallery of fictional agents with their mindscapes that often affect us profoundly. Even in shorter forms and in lyric poetry, the literary form imposes an indirect relationship between the text and the writer of the text, and mediates the emotions.

By doing this, literary storyworlds complicate the question of whose emotions we react to if and when we react to *the emotions of others* while reading. It is crucial to reflect upon the subjects of emotions or emotion ascriptions in literary texts. We may, of course, react emotionally to anything described or to the descriptions themselves, but when we react to others' emotions in the literary context, it is usually to the emotions of fictional characters or character-narrators. It makes a difference that we do not encounter them directly; how we react to them is orchestrated by the styles of worldmaking, including all the narrative and stylistic choices made by (real) authors. How all this overtly or covertly evokes the 'back-stage' emotions of the (implied) author and relates to the mood of the text is a complex issue. I discuss mood at the end of my text but emphasize already here that our emotional reactions to fictional subjects are mediated by moods that relate to genres.

WHAT TRIGGERS EMOTIONS IN LITERARY TEXTS

As already stated, virtually anything in literary texts can trigger emotion effects. In poetry it is easy to point out the affective role of even individual words, assonances and rhymes. In the case of prose narratives, the primary focus is often on the fictional characters or narrators and their emotions. But, as in the real world, we can react affectively to anything we pay attention to in literary storyworlds. What is more, when dealing with texts, we can also react to the text and its texture and narrative forms themselves. As an authorial audience, we should take all this into account.

Even before entering the text proper, the audience is guided by the paratexts that are attached to the text itself, most importantly the title(s). Poe's title exemplifies this: "The Fall of the House of Usher" contains a key word that helps to set the tone and a horizon of expectations affecting the emotional response – "the fall" creates suspense and possibly excitement. A story of decay or destruction can be assumed: the fall of a house may be understood literally or it may allude to the extinction of a whole family line because the family name is mentioned. Referring to the popular 1997 film, we could speak of the "Titanic"-effect of many stories: the outcome is told beforehand, either by the title, the introduction or just by the fact that a myth, event or story familiar to the reader is mentioned. The effect of this knowledge on the affective orientation may vary, but it is clear that such an effect is intended when the story is structured in such a way as to give this orientation from the very start. Texts where the reader has to wait for a second reading to know the direction of the plot are structured with a different story logic.

Obvious and ubiquitous categories to be taken into account when dealing with the emotion effects of the storyworld are: 1) characters, 2) narrators, 3) plot and events and 4) fictional objects and settings. All these broad categories can involve us emotionally in any of the ways we encounter them in the real world and even in ways that we do not come across in the real world. Characters in particular prompt emotion effects in the authorial audience even if we are not encouraged to feel the same emotions as they do. We also have emotions towards these figures when they are not feeling, or not described as feeling, anything in particular: their appearance, acts and behaviour are all usually evoked to move us in one way or another. Although dealing with the emotions related to characters or narrators is often seen as straightforward and unproblematic, complexities arise. Modernist or postmodernist – to say nothing of what has been termed "posthumanist" – texts, have provided us with intriguing kinds of characters. The imaginary access to other people's or even animal minds, all kinds of counter-factual imagining, display of dream-like worlds with personified objects and hybrid or downright impossible beings may involve us in experiences that go beyond possible real-world experiences.

Emotional responses to literature are not restricted to how fictional people affect us. One reacts to all kinds of things and events as well as to people. But without underestimating the role of plot and events – for Aristotle the most important element of tragedy and its emotional effect[13] – I move on to objects, which are of vital concern in Poe's short story.

13 *Poetics*, chapter 6; e.g. Halliwell 1987: 37.

In real life, any object that somehow attracts our attention is prone to affect us – make us feel something.[14] As Poe's narrator affirms about the depressive setting in the short story: "there *are* combinations of very simple natural objects which have the power of affecting us."[15] The fact that natural objects and their combinations as such affect us emotionally is not only folk-psychology but also acknowledged by recent psychological research.[16] Moreover, the descriptions of objects and natural phenomena in literary texts have similar effects to encounters with these natural objects or surroundings in real life. However, a significant aspect to bear in mind is the variety of narrative devices by which elements of the storyworld are imbued with affective power or denied that power even if they are somehow "naturally" prone to have this kind of power. Literary texts build on the "natural" frames but also manipulate the audience's feelings by attaching valences or affective values to objects and settings. In literary works, any object or phenomenon described tends to function as an emotion-trigger. In stories like Poe's the weather, for example, plays a significant affective role: it is understood to be part of the whole and part of the affective atmosphere.

At another level, we may focus on the discourses of emotion and concepts and metaphors connected to emotions that come up in literary works. Literary subjects present judgements and 'information' relating to emotions and use comparisons and metaphors or other tropes (involving conceptual blending and including affective trope-worlds). All this serves not only to give the audience food for thought or information about the thoughts of fictional subjects, but also to provide elements in constructing the affective make-up of the text.

Furthermore, the authorial audience is, in various ways, induced into affective states by the lexical choices, linguistic registers and the like. The politics of using or not using emotion words produces quite different emotional textscapes. Emotions can be named, but the most powerful devices to evoke them do not necessarily even include naming emotions. For example, descriptions and narration attributing emotions to characters encompass psychonarration, narrated monologue, interior monologue, and speech expressions by characters that possibly only imply their emotions (or show them without telling). Style, rhythm, points of view, distance as well as many other elements and their combinations have affective value without requiring the explicit mention of emotions or the use of emotion words. In modernist literature, this absence of explicit emotion and emotion words has been the rule rather than the exception, whereas in Poe's short stories emotion words abound.

14 To cite Varela/Thompson/Rosch 1991: 113: "All experience has a feeling tone".

15 Poe 1952: 126, emphasis in original.

16 Cf. e.g. Ben-Ze'ev 2000: 88.

Everything related to the so-called material aspects of language and style as well as the formal features of narration counts in creating the overall network of emotion effects. Although it may be difficult to separate the worlds from the words, the shifting focus on one or the other aspect is possible. The double focus on words and worlds is also necessary to access the most general affective agency in the literary work: the mood or tone of the text (also referred to as atmosphere, *Stimmung* and attunement).

Turning to Poe's short story, it could be analysed by using any of the categories or levels mentioned: it is, from the beginning to the end, imbued with emotional expressions and depictions of characters and objects, it personifies the house, it contains shocking events, it comments on and intertextually relates the dominant emotion felt by the narrator-protagonist, it creates a strong and fascinating emotional atmosphere. In the following I illustrate how items falling into some of these categories function in Poe's text as emotion triggers and reflect how these categories are related. I conclude by discussing the role played by the last category (tone/mood), which refers to the most general and fundamental affective level in all literary texts.

THE INSUFFERABLE GLOOM – THE SUFFERING AND REFLECTING VISITOR

We may navigate with the emotions of characters and narrators relatively automatically, but spelling out everything involved in fictional situations (or even in everyday real-life situations) is not simple. Some complexities come up even in seemingly straightforward attributions. Poe's narrator directly tells us about the emotion that is connected to the first perception of the house of the Usher family – the gloom that proves to become all-pervading during his stay in the house: "I know not how it was – but, with the first glimpse of the building, a sense of insufferable gloom pervaded my spirit."[17] Poe's character-narrator is telling (afterwards, "now") about the emotion (the insufferable gloom) that he experienced at the story time (as a character). Here we already have a complex narrative structure linked with the double role of the character-narrator. In the whole story, the often detailed and affect-laden characterizations of emotion purport to make the audience feel a similar sense of awe and gloom to that which the character felt, while the narrative distance and the analytical stance of the narrator, at the same time, create a kind of intellectual shield that permits a contemplation of

17 Poe 1952: 125.

the emotional turmoil from outside rather than from within the storyworld. The audience can, in a way, oscillate between the experience of the character immersed in the scenes remembered and the narrator, safely away from the strange world of the House of Usher, reflecting afterwards upon the events that occurred there.

Poe's narrator, who constantly reflects on his own emotions, also makes comparisons with supposedly known and habitual emotions; e.g. he compares his insufferable gloom to the "usual" poetic sentiment: "I say insufferable; for the feeling was unrelieved by any of that half-pleasurable, because poetic, sentiment, with which the mind usually receives even the sternest natural images of the desolate or terrible."[18] These judgements and information relating to the felt emotions are the result of after-thoughts. They also possibly serve several different functions. The quote above emphasizes, by the comparison with a traditional poetic feeling, the power and extraordinariness of the gloom suffered by the narrator and spreading throughout the atmosphere of the story. Furthermore, it functions, if taken as a meta-commentary, as a way of defining or introducing a new emotion into the gallery of literary emotions. Instead of an old-style poetic sentiment, Poe intends to introduce a new sensation pertaining to the horror genre he is creating.[19] It is supposed to be fascinating in a new way, to be stronger and more mysterious and, supposedly, less "poetic", whatever Poe means by that.

The same function pertains to another comment where a comparison with the romantic feeling of the sublime is made: "There was an iciness, a sinking, a sickening of the heart – an unredeemed dreariness of thought which no goading of the imagination could torture into aught of the sublime."[20] The reader is supposed to know the sublime implied and to imagine something far more terrible. What this terrible feeling is, is determined only by negations: the message is that we must imagine something that goes beyond our present categories. The negative is a strong affective power.[21] The negativity is here fortified by adjectives like "insufferable", "unrelieved" and all the expressions which refer to unpleasant things and feelings. The word "unredeemed" also suggests the overcoming of the redemptive or cathartic sublime.

Poe's narrator, who both mediates his own feelings to the reader and functions as the stand-in for the affected reader, is free to dwell on the affects evoked

18 Ibid.

19 This is not *the* horror genre defined by Carroll (1990), and Poe's genre has not necessarily the same kind of "art-horror" as the overall effect of the genre on the audience.

20 Poe 1952: 125.

21 Cf. Karttunen 2015: 32-53 for a sociostylistic perspective on negatives.

by the storyworld and keen, at the time of telling, to analyse and generalize upon his memories or experiences and feelings felt at the story time. He offers us his "theories of emotion". This is a practice often found in (especially older) literary texts like Poe's: narrators and characters not only present their own emotions or those of other fictional figures but make generalizations. And possibly more than that: these generalizations, at least in the case of Poe, relate to the genre of the text and function as metafictional elements commenting upon the genre.

OBJECTS ASSAILING THE SENSES

Poe's narrator in his character-role also functions as a proxy for the audience by seeing the objects that affect the audience. The audience feels the (vicarious) awe and horror mainly via the objects witnessed by the experiencing protagonist. What the narrator-protagonist fears and loathes is supposed to have a similar effect on the audience.[22] This has been an important strategy in horror narratives as well as in other genres where a strange or unknown world is opened up to the reader via a visitor who is also unfamiliar with this world (this also applies to the figure of Dante in *Divina Commedia*). In Poe's story, the strategy is prominently used in the service of conveying emotions. The very first sentences of the story already delineate the strong depressive feeling provoked by the surroundings of the house and the weather conditions:

> During the whole of a dull, dark, and soundless day in the autumn of the year, when the clouds hung oppressively low in the heavens, I had been passing alone, on horseback, through a singularly dreary tract of country; and at length found myself, as the shades of the evening drew on, within view of the melancholy House of Usher.[23]

The adjectives and adverbs breathe an overall melancholy gloom that is then attributed to the house as well. We know from psychology that the mere mentioning of affect-laden words produces a measurable bodily effect and influences

22 Carroll (1990: 17-19) argues that in horror narratives certain characters regularly have this function to guide the reader's response. That this is not always the case is suggested by unreliable narration; e.g. representations of madness in literature can involve a narrator (or character) that feels awe and horror at everyday objects (a poem in Finnish literature has coined this "seeing horrors everywhere"). The audience is supposed to understand that the trouble is in the seeing rather than in the fictional world.

23 Poe 1952: 125.

the mental make-up of the person hearing or reading them.[24] How much stronger then is the effect of this whole array of dreary words and the possibility of imagining the whole setting with the depressing weather.[25] We may generalize that the functions of nature description, including the weather and the time of the day and year, in Poe's fantasy-stories – as well as in many other literary genres – are almost entirely affective: they are intended to provoke emotion effects in readers.

Although Poe's narrator hastens to name the emotion, the "gloom", and analyses the emotion in the way indicated above, he also resorts to comparisons and personification of the house:

> I looked upon the scene before me – upon the mere house, and the simple landscape features of the domain – upon the bleak walls – upon the vacant eye-like windows – upon a few rank sedges – and upon a few white trunks of decayed trees – with an utter depression of soul which I can compare to no earthly sensation more properly than to the after-dream of the reveller upon opium – the bitter lapse into every-day life – the hideous dropping off of the veil.[26]

Poe's story, in many ways, suggests that the house itself, with its "vacant eye-like windows", is a living being that in a mysterious way controls and participates in the feelings of the main characters and forms an uncanny double to the master of the house, Roderick Usher: the melancholy house is a mirror-image of its owner. Such personifications, in themselves, may have a strong effect on the audience, even in the form of local metaphors. We may well ask how our animistic imagination relates to our emotional life. If we see our emotional life as a product and function of our social interaction with other people, it is clear that personifying objects makes them affect us more deeply.

What are, then, the functions of these statements within the emotional make-up of the text? Poe's use of significant objects and his reference to the power of objects show that he is very much exploring the ways in which he can provoke emotion effects by combining and describing natural objects. We must, however, add that he does not seem to trust the combinations in themselves, since his descriptions are so laden with affective words. Even his objectifying description of Roderick Usher abounds with expressions emphasizing the horror. His friend

24 Oatley (cf. 2011: 113) refers to an experiment by Francesco Foroni and Gün Semin.

25 For imagination as/and simulation, cf. Hogan 2013: 1-26, and the short version Hogan 2016; Oatley 2011: 2-21.

26 Poe 1952: 125.

is so ghastly, wild and strange that he evokes something beyond humanity, a monster:

> The now ghastly pallor of the skin, and the now miraculous lustre of the eye, above all things startled and even awed me. The silken hair, too, had been suffered to grow all unheeded, and as, in its wild gossamer texture, it floated rather than fell about the face, I could not, even with effort, connect its Arabesque expression with any idea of simple humanity.[27]

This allusion to monstrosity would delight Noël Carroll, who considers monsters to be necessary in the horror genre.[28] Here, the reference is to the imminent collapse of reason in Usher's mind. The narrator suspects that Usher is succumbing to madness and Usher himself seems to confirm this assumption by presenting the allegorical song/poem about the haunted castle that also functions as a *mise en abyme* of the theme of the story. This, as well as other descriptions in Poe's story, evoke the general mood or tone of the text at the same time as creating the storyworld and a vivid sense of its unreal reality. Mood effects are conspicuous in Poe's text and direct us towards something that is not an emotion in the sense of having a specific object but rather an overall emotional perspective which hovers over the fictional world.

CREATING AN ATMOSPHERE OF GLOOM AND FASCINATION

How can we understand the concept of tone or *mood* when it refers to the general genre-constitutive or genre-dependent emotional atmosphere of the whole text? In the case of "The Fall of the House of Usher", it is strikingly obvious that the very first sentences carry a great deal of affective weight and evoke the central atmosphere of horror, constitutive of the horror genre which Poe is here inaugurating. Generally speaking, the tone of the text, especially in the case of short fiction, is most often clearly set at the very beginning of the text. Of course, it also develops along the way and finally encompasses the whole text, creating the affective perspective from which the audience sees the storyworld. However, the

27 Ibid.: 129.

28 Cf. Carroll 1990: 41-42.

beginning is essential in awakening the interest in the text and in setting the tone.[29]

In psychology the term 'mood' has been used to refer to (fleeting or medium-term) states of mind in individuals, and we may ask how this concept relates to the mood of a literary text. It has been claimed – with good reason, I think – that the way in which the text moods function follows the logic of moods in individuals.[30] Poe is helpful himself: he describes this logic and, thus, seems to hint at his own poetics in "The Fall". Poe's narrator's description of the constant mood of Roderick Usher assumes that the mood determines the attitudes and emotions towards everything: "[A] mind from which darkness, as if an inherent positive quality, poured forth upon all objects of the moral and physical universe in one unceasing radiation of gloom."[31] The gloom that has invaded the mind of Usher colours his whole world. This observation, when interpreted on the meta-level, is pertinent to the way in which the whole text is constructed. Everything described in this story contributes to creating and strengthening the atmosphere of gloomy horror. Every phenomenon that the narrator pays attention to is seen through the filter of this dark melancholy. This contagious atmosphere seizes the narrator immediately on arrival, before he has met his friend. Not only the state of his friend but what he himself affirms to be a "superstition" about the house and its surroundings being haunted imposes itself on him:

> I had so worked upon my imagination as really to believe that about the whole mansion and domain there hung an atmosphere peculiar to themselves and their immediate vicinity – an atmosphere which had no affinity with the air of heaven, but which had reeked up from the decayed trees, and the gray wall, and the silent tarn – a pestilent and mystic vapor, dull, sluggish, faintly discernible, and leaden-hued.[32]

The role of the narrator as a mediator in between the mysterious storyworld and the normal world, which includes his rational posture as narrator with hindsight, contributes to the overall setting of the tone: however, it is the immersion in the gloomy atmosphere of horror that is the main interest of the story and the main line which creates mood effects.

29 In his essay "Nathaniel Hawthorne" Poe (1952) has written that "a skillful literary artist" constructs his tales around "a certain unique or single *effect*" and continues: "If his very initial sentence tend not to the outbringing of this effect, then he has failed in his first step" (I thank Mark Shackleton for bringing this essay to my attention).

30 E.g. Flatley 2008.

31 Poe 1952: 131.

32 Ibid.: 127.

Although the logic of literary moods can be compared to the functioning of individual moods, it is also clear that there is more to this issue. A mood in this sense is not the emotional state of an individual subject and especially not any fleeting state of mind. Here we are referring to something that, in a sense, grounds the fictional world, and gives it the colouring and light through which it is seen, felt and thought. Mood as this kind of structure can be understood in terms of what Martin Heidegger called *Stimmung*. Matthew Ratcliffe emphasizes that moods in the Heideggerian sense are variants of a changeable sense of belonging to the world that is pre-subjective and pre-objective.[33] All states of mind and object-related emotions as well as all perceptions and cognitions of 'external' things presuppose this background of belonging. Moods also determine the kinds of possibility we are open to. A change of the ground mood can involve a radical alteration in how one finds oneself in the world. This opposes the common idea of moods as generalized emotion. Instead, mood is here something presupposed by the possibility of intentionally directed emotional experiences. All such experiences involve finding something significant in one way or another and experiencing it as mattering. And moods determine the kind of significance things can have for us, the ways in which they are able to matter.

Ratcliffe has developed the concept of "existential feeling", relying on Heidegger's ideas but expanding the range of emotional states to encompass a greater variety of moods and using the Husserlian concept of the horizon as well as adding a bodily dimension. Existential feelings are bodily feelings and experiences of the body as well as the world.[34] Ratcliffe is primarily interested in the changes in the sense of being of patients suffering from depression, but he briefly analyses a few examples from literature and film, e.g. Lars von Trier's *Melancholia*, which can be compared to "The Fall". As in von Trier's film, the melancholia in Poe's story pours out from the person suffering from depression and invades the storyworld as a whole. What is important in Ratcliffe's methodology when used in analysing literary texts or other artworks is the holistic approach: moods here function as sets of rules of worldmaking that relate to genre-repertoires. What still remains to be explored is whether his approach also brings new insights to the analysis of emotion effects in literature.

33 Ratcliffe 2015: 55-57: Moods as Heidegger understands them are neither subjective states of mind nor something in the world (objective); the translation 'attunement' actually better captures the sense. As modes of attunement, they are presupposed by the intelligibility of intentionally directed experiences, thoughts and activities (ibid.: 55-56). Ratcliffe 2008 uses the term "feelings of being".

34 Ibid.: 55.

To return to Poe's story, it is necessary also to question the identification of the overall mood with the mood (state of mind) of the narrator. What has so far been left out of the discussion is the dual role of the narrator as both the immersed experiencer and the analytical narrator in relation to the mood of the text. As the experiencing character, he gradually succumbs to the mystery, superstition and non-reason in the storyworld: in a word, he is fascinated by the storyworld.[35] But, as the narrator, he is also the voice of reason and analysis, and is struggling (and failing) to understand the mystery. He represents the common sense, which fails in the face of mystery, and the rational world that the reader is supposed to leave behind to enjoy the story.[36] Curiosity, a (safe) sense of dwelling in the mystery and the forceful language put a spell on the reader, leading the way to a kind of dream state of freedom from the constraints of reason while the thrill of horror stimulates both the body and the mind. This effect is indicated to the authorial audience by exploiting deeply-rooted fears and nightmares about madness, illness and death as well as many references to relevant literary traditions such as Gothic and Dark Romanticism. But all this happens in the context of fiction, in which a knowledge of the rules of the game and a feeling of safety can be presupposed. In the mid-18th century, Edmund Burke had already spelled out the ambivalence of negative and positive emotions in art-horror,[37] but Poe's downplaying of the sublime changes the balance and introduces a more troubling combination that has come to mark contemporary horror genres in even more extreme ways.[38] In Poe's story, one's sense of reason is left perplexed and impotent, and the art-horror or its overall effect on the audience is troubling and does not elevate in the way the sublime is supposed to do.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

The analysis of emotion effects is complex. Trying to analyse all emotion triggers and their effects even in a relatively short text like "The Fall" is virtually impossible. However, studying emotion triggers and their effects by showing a

35 For the complexities involved in literary fascination cf. Baumbach 2015.

36 Carroll (cf. 1990: 57) notes how the horror genre depends on the Enlightenment distinction between nature (as reason) and the violation of nature or unnatural phenomena (as non-reason).

37 For Burke, the sublime produces "the strongest emotion which the mind is capable of feeling" and it transforms the horror into "a delightful horror, a sort of tranquillity tinged with terror" (Burke 1990: 36, 123).

38 Vanhanen 2016 presents a comprehensive analysis of issues relating to this point.

variety of them 'in action' in Poe's short story proved to be interesting and intriguing and illustrates how the overall attunement of the text works and how the individual elements and the overall mood link together.

Poe's story is highly explicit and insistent in tone: more than is habitually found in most genres. Nevertheless, attuning itself is something that is essential to literature: more than the classical unities or any other structural coherence, it is the overall unity of tone that matters. As Poe puts it in his essay on Hawthorne, referring to his "effect" mentioned in note 29: "In the whole composition there should be no word written, of which the tendency, direct or indirect, is not to the one pre-established design." Whereas Aristotle maintained that the plot in the tragedy should dominate and even the characters remain in a secondary place to attain the proper tragic effect of pity and fear, one could claim that it is not really the plot but the affective tone or general mood that matters. The emotion effects created by the author and experienced by readers who join the authorial audience would, thus, provide the text with the coherence which is the basis for the overall aesthetic experience, an experience which is a genre-dependent cognitive/affective complex.

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