



Faculty of Arts and Philosophy

The Gothic in Narratives by E.A. Poe, H.P. Lovecraft and
Roald Dahl

Elisabeth Van Haegenborgh

00906990

Supervisor: Prof. Gero Guttzeit

Department of English Literature

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation researches the recurrence of Gothic aspects in the short stories “The Fall of the House of Usher,” “Ligeia” and “MS. Found in a Bottle” by Edgar Allan Poe; “Herbert West-Reanimator,” “Cool Air” and “The Colour Out of Space” by Howard Phillips Lovecraft; and “The Landlady,” “William and Mary” and “Royal Jelly” by Roald Dahl. The first theme under discussion, is the uncanny as “return of the repressed” and found in transgressions of boundaries (Royle 2003, 2). The second Gothic concept is that of the grotesque displayed in monstrous bodies at a “point of transition in a life eternally renewed” (Bakhtin 1968, 318). The last characteristic is the supernatural which is subdivided in the hyperbolic, exotic, instrumental and scientific marvelous and connected to motifs of vision by Tzvetan Todorov (1975, 54-56).

The intention is to find out how these Gothic features are presented in the short stories of Poe, Lovecraft and Dahl and what the main similarities and differences are in their employment. By analysing nine short stories, the main themes in their work will become clearer and we will be able to situate them in the realm of the fantastic going from the uncanny (supernatural is explained) to the marvelous (supernatural is accepted) as defined by Todorov (1975). The overall expectations are that Poe's narratives belong to the psychologically uncanny while Lovecraft's tales contain more supernatural aspects and are therefore marvelous. Dahl's stories are somewhere in between, shifting the emphasis from the uncanny or supernatural events to the reaction of the characters and the reader. However, they show great similarities and thus are indicative of a coherence in Gothic short stories throughout two centuries.

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Introduction

This dissertation looks at short stories by Edgar Allan Poe (1809-1849), Howard Phillips Lovecraft (1890-1937) and Roald Dahl (1916-1990). The research question is how they all construct a Gothic atmosphere with uncanny, grotesque and supernatural aspects and whether there are similarities and differences between how they achieve this. By analysing three short stories of each writer, every time focusing on another theme, we get a more nuanced idea of how they employ the Gothic and what sets their short stories apart.

The first chapter explores the concepts of the Gothic, the uncanny, the grotesque, the supernatural and the fantastic, linking the uncanny (Freud 1955; Masschelein 2011; Royle 2003) and the marvelous, to the fantastic (Todorov 1975). In reality, the meanings of all these concepts overlap and are not as clearly separated as presented here. For the sake of this research, however, it is necessary to create different, distinct fields to discuss these three writers and examine where their narratives are situated. The last part of this chapter links the authors to the concepts and to each other and defends the choice for the genre of short stories.

In the second chapter we analyse short stories by Poe commonly referred to as *Tales of the Grotesque and Arabesque* and found in *The Collected Works of Edgar Allan Poe* edited by Thomas Ollive Mabbott (1978), followed by tales by Lovecraft from *The Call of Cthulhu and Other Weird Stories*, edited by S.T. Joshi (2011), and narratives by Dahl from *Tales of the Unexpected* (1990). First, the use of the uncanny is examined in “The Fall of the House of Usher” (Poe), “Herbert West-Reanimator” (Lovecraft) and “The Landlady” (Dahl). Second, the following stories are analysed considering their grotesque themes: “Ligeia” (Poe), “Cool Air” (Lovecraft) and “William and Mary” (Dahl). Third, features of the supernatural are explored in “MS. Found in a Bottle” (Poe), “The Colour Out of Space” (Lovecraft) and “Royal Jelly” (Dahl). In every discussion, similarities and differences between the writers are mentioned, in particular concerning the type of narrator and narrative structure, and the location of the story within the realm of the uncanny or marvelous. The conclusion will provide a general overview of the similarities and differences discovered in the selected short stories by Poe, Lovecraft and Dahl.

I. Defining the Concepts

Before we can start to discuss how different manifestations of the Gothic present itself in the short stories of Poe, Lovecraft and Dahl, it is important to take a closer look at them one by one and thus discern them from each other. Firstly, the Gothic will be linked to the uncanny, grotesque and supernatural. Then, the uncanny will be examined using definitions by Sigmund Freud, Nicholas Royle and Anneleen Masschelein. Hereafter, the grotesque will be considered using sources by Mikhail Bakhtin and Alice Mills. The fourth part concentrates on the supernatural as defined by among others Clive Bloom, H.P. Lovecraft and Tzvetan Todorov. The fifth part mentions the fantastic and connects the uncanny to the supernatural mostly using Todorov's work. The last part links the works of Poe, Lovecraft and Dahl to the established concepts and to each other, arguing that all these Gothic characteristics are present in their stories which show many similarities and some particular differences.

1. The Gothic

The genre of the Gothic has a long history and therefore its definition has changed over time: “What we have in Gothic fiction is a form of literature with a very specific period of origin – the mid-eighteenth century – and a fluctuating but continuing history to the present day” (Punter 1980, 412). In his introduction to *The Literature of Terror*, David Punter sums up characteristics such as “the terrifying, [...] archaic settings, a prominent use of the supernatural, [...] highly stereotyped characters, [...] techniques of literary suspense, [...] the apparent presence of a ghost, often finally explained away by non-supernatural means; the very real presence of one or more members of the aristocracy, with castles and other props to match; and a dominant love-plot, generally set in the past” (1-2). Especially the (apparent) presence of the supernatural and use of suspense will be apparent in Poe's, Lovecraft's and Dahl's stories. He also calls the Gothic “a literature of psychic grotesquerie” (3), which will be spelled out more elaborately in Chapter I.3. Finally, he calls it a “version of self-conscious un-realism; a mode of revealing the unconscious; connexions with the primitive, the barbaric, the tabooed” (5) addressing themes such as “incest, rape, various kinds of transgression of the boundaries between the natural and the human, the human and the divine” (19). In this last collection of descriptions we recognise characteristics of the uncanny such as the return of the repressed and transgressions (see Chapter I.2). Thus, in his description of the Gothic, Punter mentions traits of the uncanny, the grotesque and the supernatural.

A second, more recent book which seems to confirm this connection, is *Gothic Horror: A Guide for Students and Readers* by Clive Bloom (2007). He literally mentions the importance of the

uncanny in the Gothic (16). He also states that the Gothic is “tied to theories of the excessive body, [...] the analysis of bodily functions and to boundary and identity transgression” and then goes on to quote a description of the grotesque (14). Furthermore, the supernatural is described as one of the main characteristics of the Gothic (17-18).

A third book linking the uncanny, the grotesque and the supernatural to the Gothic, is *The Handbook of the Gothic* (Mulvey-Roberts 2009). In this encyclopaedia of the Gothic, all writers and topics that have anything to do with it, are mentioned and discussed. Chapters concerning death, the fantastic, the grotesque, horror, monsters, necromancy, the supernatural and the uncanny are included in this work. In the following chapters we will look more closely at these Gothic characteristics.

2. The Uncanny

The first and foremost aspect of Gothic literature is an uncanny atmosphere. Whether the horror the stories entail is real or not, does not really matter as long as the hint of the unknown – of something we do not want to be confronted with – is present. Punter notes that there is a “very wide-ranging concern among Gothic writers with the nature of taboo: that is to say, [...] areas of socio-psychological life which offend, which are suppressed, which are generally swept under the carpet in the interests of social and psychological equilibrium” (Punter 1980, 405). In the stories of Poe, Lovecraft and Dahl, we will encounter taboo themes concerning incest, the return of the dead, the unnatural defying reason, the cosmic supernatural, taxidermy of humans and transformations of humans. When these suppressed areas return to the surface, uncanny moments are created.

The concept of the uncanny – like the Gothic – has undergone some transformations through the years. Friedrich W.J. Schelling first mentions it in his *Philosophie der Mythologie* (1835) and in 1906, Ernst Jentsch published an essay called “On the Psychology of the Uncanny”. The most notable work on this subject, however, has been done by Sigmund Freud in his essay “The Uncanny” written in 1919 and found in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud* (1955). More recent work includes the book *The Uncanny* (2003) by Nicholas Royle and *The Unconcept: The Freudian Uncanny in Late Twentieth-Century Theory* (2011) by Anneleen Masschelein. She also wrote the article “A Homeless Concept: Shapes of the Uncanny in Twentieth-Century Theory and Culture” (2003) which precedes her book.

The first thing Freud discusses in his essay, is the origin of the word uncanny or *unheimlich*. He writes that *heimlich* means known, familiar, but also mystical, obscure, secretive, hidden and dangerous, which “coincides with its opposite, *unheimlich*” (Freud 1955, 226). Masschelein explains this as follows: “one might say that a certain change of perspective has taken place: in the

positive sense, heimlich takes the inside-perspective of the intimacy of the home. In the negative sense, by contrast, the walls of the house shield the interior and in the eyes of the outsider, the secludedness of the inner circle is associated with secrecy and conspiracy. Unheimlich in the sense of strange, unfamiliar, uncanny, eerie, sinister [...] is then clearly the negation of only the first meaning of heimlich and as such, it almost coincides with the second, negative meaning of heimlich” (Masschelein 2003).

In his introduction to *The Uncanny*, N. Royle gives an elaborate description of the uncanny which is useful to get an idea of the scope of this concept. Similar to the afore mentioned doubt about a supernatural presence, he states that “the uncanny [...] is concerned with the strange, weird and mysterious, with a flickering sense (but no conviction) of something supernatural” (Royle 2003, 1). Analogue to Freud's definition and present in the narratives of Poe, Lovecraft and Dahl, it entails a “peculiar commingling of the familiar and unfamiliar” (1). As we will see, it is linked to “manifestations of insanity” and occurs in response to grotesque forms of “mechanical or automatic life, [...] dolls and other lifelike or mechanical objects” (1-2). Royle stresses the uncanny themes of “death and corpses, [...] live burial, [and] the return of the dead” which are prominent in the short stories we will discuss (2). He goes on to mention its origin in the “return of the repressed”: “something that should have remained secret and hidden but has come to light” (2). It has to do with “a strangeness of framing and borders, an experience of liminality” which concerns life and death, mind and body, and sexuality in Poe's, Lovecraft's and Dahl's tales. Here, we will also encounter a “sense of repetition” in their choice of words, which create a “constant or eternal recurrence of the same thing, a compulsion to repeat” (2). So, in Royle's description of the uncanny, we find aspects of the (un)natural, the (un)familiar, madness, grotesque forms, (return of the) the dead and the repressed, transgressions of boundaries and strange repetitions.

Freud and Masschelein both go into detail on the psychological origin of the uncanny. For this dissertation it suffices to say that the uncanny has to do with repressed experiences which resurface causing anxiety: “the specificity of the sensation of the uncanny lies in the fact that something is frightening, not because it is unfamiliar or new, but because what used to be familiar has somehow become strange” (Masschelein 2003). It “relates to the structure of psycho-analytic theory, and especially the castration complex and the memory of the child's relationship to the pre-Oedipal mother's body or even to inter-uterine existence” (Bloom 2007, 16). This motif can be found in “The Landlady” by Roald Dahl. The inter-uterine existence is a “phantasy” which, according to Freud, lies at the basis of the uncanniness of “being buried alive by mistake” (Freud 1955, 244). Derivations of this theme are present in “The Fall of the House of Usher” by Poe and “Herbert West-Reanimator” by Lovecraft. Freud goes on to say that the uncanny is “nothing new or alien, but something which is familiar and old-established in the mind and which has become

alienated from it only through the process of repression” (Freud 1955, 241).

A manner in which the repressed returns, is by transgression of boundaries manifested in “the semantic field of haunting, ghosts, spectres and the return of the dead” (Masschelein 2003). Masschelein writes that “The ghost is the most immediate representation of the uncanny as return of the repressed because it represents the return of death — 'signifier without signified,' the ultimate secret — in life. Because death is itself radically unrepresentable (it is only known by the dead), the uncanniness of the ghost is situated in the transition of life and death, on the limit between the two conditions which fades and dissolves” (Masschelein 2011, 120). Freud also acknowledges the strong uncanny feeling aroused by “death and dead bodies, [...] the return of the dead, and [...] spirits and ghosts” (Freud 1955, 241). He ascribes this to “the strength of our original emotional reaction to death and the insufficiency of our scientific knowledge about it. Biology has not yet been able to decide whether death is the inevitable fate of every living being or whether it is only a regular but yet perhaps avoidable event in life” (242).

Another recurring aspect of the uncanny is (strange) repetitions. Freud writes that “the factor of the repetition of the same thing [...] does undoubtedly, subject to certain conditions and combined with certain circumstances, arouse an uncanny feeling” (Freud 1955, 236-237). He also makes mention of an “inner compulsion to repeat” which is “perceived as uncanny” (Freud 1955, 238). Both Masschelein (2011) and Royle (2003) confirm the uncanniness of the repetition compulsion.

Besides transgressions and repetitions there are many other themes that can evoke an uncanny feeling. Freud, Royle and Masschelein list the omnipotence of thought (“the idea that your wishes or thoughts come true”), magic, xenophobia, déjà vu, dreams, superstition, animism and the evil eye (“the owner of a valuable object projects his own jealousy onto others and consequently fears their jealousy”) as other possibilities (Masschelein 2003; Masschelein 2011, 28-29).

It is important to keep in mind that “in the first place a great deal that is not uncanny in fiction would be so if it happened in real life; and in the second place that there are many more means of creating uncanny effects in fiction than there are in real life” (Freud 1955, 249). Furthermore it does not all have to be frightening: “the uncanny can be pleasurable in art because it forestalls the danger as well as the satisfaction of forbidden impulses from deeper, unconscious sources... this results in an overall pleasurable mixture of fear and delight [...] It allows for the return of the repressed in a safe way.” (Masschelein 2011, 47; 31).

In the analysis of the stories by Poe, Lovecraft and Dahl, we will first discuss the discrepancy between internal and external (un)familiarity. Then, their tales are interpreted as return of a repressed wish. Third, consequent loss of reason or madness will be accompanied by the fourth uncanny presence of dreams, drugs, superstition and fear. The fifth characteristic of (strange)

repetitions concerns particular words, colours and motifs of vision. Finally, transgressions of life and death, mind and body and concerning sexuality occur throughout their narratives.

3. The Grotesque

The concept of the grotesque is closely linked to that of the uncanny. Masschelein quotes Wolfgang Kayser who has written in *The Grotesque in Art and Literature* (1957): “the grotesque [...] entails that what was familiar and homely to us suddenly reveals itself as strange and uncanny. It is our world that has transformed. The suddenness, the surprise is an essential part of the grotesque.” Moreover, Masschelein writes that “the literary corpus of the grotesque—Hoffmann, Edgar Allan Poe, Charles Dickens, the surrealists—overlaps to a large extent with the literature associated with the uncanny and the fantastic.” Considering this, she states that “it is not surprising [...] that the themes and motifs of the grotesque, especially the ones related to the confusion between human, animal, and vegetable or between mechanical and human (for instance, monsters, puppets, wax-figures, automatons) coincide with those of the uncanny: madness, estrangement, alienation, the city, separate body parts that take on a life of their own, the double” (Masschelein 2011, 67). Alice Mills also mentions the connection between the grotesque and the uncanny in her introduction to *Seriously Weird: Papers on the Grotesque* (1999). She writes that a “psychoanalytic explanation of the grotesque is found in Freud's essay on the uncanny. [...] Freud specifies a particular emotional response that characterizes the psychoanalytic grotesque: his candidate is dread” (Mills 1999, 6). The origin of this dread, or “what makes it [the grotesque] uncanny, and hence terrifying, is not its difference from but its resemblance to the norm” (109). So, we find the grotesque in an uncanny transformation of our known world.

It is also present in the exaggeration of physical qualities creating monstrous results. As Mikhail Bakhtin writes it in *Rabelais and His World* (1968): “Cosmic catastrophe represented in the material bodily lower stratum is degraded, humanized, and transformed into grotesque monsters” (Bakhtin 1968, 336). Mills summarizes Bakhtin's thoughts on the grotesque as follows: He “postulates a comic grotesque of excess and license, a joyful and life-giving eruption of the strange and remarkable during the outrageous revels of carnival. [...] The Bakhtinian grotesque is characterized by low life, degradation, trickery and travesty” (Mills 1999, 3). This “excess” and “eruption” (3) manifests itself in the “material bodily lower stratum” (Bakhtin 1968, 336). Bakhtin states that “exaggeration, hyperbolism, excessiveness are generally considered fundamental attributes of the grotesque style” (Bakhtin 1968, 303). He stresses the importance of the nose (which “symbolizes the phallus”) and the mouth “in the grotesque image of the body; the head, ears, and nose also acquire a grotesque character when they adopt the animal form or that of inanimate

objects” (316). He lists “leading themes as copulation, pregnancy, birth, eating, drinking, and death” (355). Thus, the grotesque is expressed through bodily exaggerations and the monstrous.

This metamorphosis can include animal or material features and its goal is to conquer death. Bakhtin writes that “the grotesque character of the transformation of the human element into an animal one; the combination of human and animal traits is [...] one of the most ancient grotesque forms” (316). The word 'transformation' here is very important. It is frequently used by Bakhtin when describing what the grotesque body entails: “The object transgresses its own confines, ceases to be itself. The limits between the body and the world are erased, leading to the fusion of the one with the other and with surrounding objects” (310). The grotesque body transgresses and thus transforms, it “is looking for that which protrudes from the body, all that seeks to go out beyond the body's confines. Special attention is given to the shoots and branches, to all that prolongs the body and links it to other bodies or to the world outside” (316-317). This is clearly illustrated in “William and Mary” by Dahl where the eye of William protrudes from his brain. Bakhtin goes on to say that “the outward and inward features are often merged into one” (318). In a longer extract from his book, he describes it as follows:

The grotesque body, [...] is a body in the act of becoming. It is never finished, never completed; it is continually built, created, and builds and creates another body. [...]. This is why the essential role belongs to those parts of the grotesque body in which it outgrows its own self, transgressing its own body, in which it conceives a new, second body [...]. Confines between bodies and between the body and the world are overcome: there is an interchange and an interorientation. [...] Eating, drinking, defecation and other elimination (sweating, blowing of the nose, sneezing), as well as copulation, pregnancy, dismemberment, swallowing up by another body – all these acts are performed on the confines of the body and the outer world, or on the confines of the old and new body. In all these events the beginning and end of life are closely linked and interwoven (317).

The aspect of a double body which survives death also returns later on: “if we consider the grotesque image in its extreme aspect, it never presents an individual body; the image consists of orifices and convexities that present another, newly conceived body. It is a point of transition in a life eternally renewed, the inexhaustible vessel of death and conception” (318). And: “In the grotesque body [...] death brings nothing to an end, for it does not concern the ancestral body, which is renewed in the next generation. [...] One body offers its death, the other its birth, but they are merged in a two-bodied image” (322). A clear example of this can be found in “Ligeia,” where the dying Rowena lives again transformed into Ligeia. According to Bakhtin “grotesque imagery

constructs what we might call a double body” (318). To summarize, the grotesque body consists of “the dismembered parts, the separate organs [...], the gaping mouths devouring, swallowing, drinking, the defecation, urine, death, childhood, and old age. The bodies are merged with each other or with objects [...] and with the world” (Bakhtin 1968, 323).

Here, we can draw an analogy with the use of technology and the grotesque. In his article “More Than Organic: Science Fiction and the Grotesque”, Paul Starr argues that grotesque bodies have a “transformative potential” and “serve to represent the openness and fluidity of the body; they show how technology [...] can impact upon the body as product, site and zone. [...] The grotesque body [...], with its openness to what is supposedly 'outside', connects directly with current theories of the body as product rather than essence, as process rather than identity.” This body, “which may include the mutant, the alien and the cyborg, directly demonstrates [...] that bodies are the products of technologies, that they are continually reformed by processes which are mixtures of the organic and the inorganic” (Mills 1999 136; 143-144). Bakhtin already mentioned the “renewal and improvement” of the grotesque body and in combination with technology this is expressed in modern arts in the creation of the 'posthuman' (Bakhtin 1968, 341). The “post-modern culture” uses “the blurring of binary oppositions between machine, human and animal” and focuses on “the (human) figure [...] in the form of dolls, waxworks, giants, robots, body parts, or the plastified corpses of *Körperwelte[n]*” (Masschelein 2011, 148; Mills 1999, 115). Masschelein connects this focus on the human body and new technology in the 'posthuman': “In contemporary literature, the traditional motifs of [...] the automaton or robot [...] are joined by newer figures like the cyborg or the technologically enhanced human being—aesthetic surgery, organ implants, transsexuals are all related to the uncanny—subsumed under the term 'posthuman’” (Masschelein 2011, 149). To conclude, the grotesque transformation can result in a technologically enhanced posthuman.

When discussing the narratives by Poe, Lovecraft and Dahl, the grotesque transgressions of the body into the world and physical transformations to survive death, will be looked at first. Secondly, the emphasis on bodily features and the monstrous is described. And third, the stories share the theme of the will, represented as a puppet, trying to break through their controlled existence by defeating death. This is done by using (pseudo-) science and technology, thus creating repelling posthumans.

4. The Supernatural

The supernatural is not only about extraterrestrial existence, but also about the fear of this possibility. It is created in exaggerations and metamorphoses of what is known to us. Punter writes that “ghosts and phantoms [...] started to reappear with the Gothic revival” and that “almost all the

Gothic writers used the fear of the supernatural for one purpose or another” (Punter 1980, 11). Likewise, the first sentence of Lovecraft's essay “Supernatural Horror in Literature” reads: “The oldest and strongest emotion of mankind is fear, and the oldest and strongest kind of fear is fear of the unknown” (Lovecraft 1927). Like the uncanny, “the themes and motifs of the supernatural have their origin in the subconscious” (Masschelein 2011, 59). Bloom discusses these themes and motifs in his introduction to *Gothic Horror*: “all those areas above or beyond the material realm and [...] the hierarchic planes, fantastic creatures and daemonic forces which exist in cosmic and parallel dimensions and which rule and direct our physical existence” (Bloom 2007, 17). Although Lovecraft employs such creatures in his short fiction (more than Poe and Dahl), as a critic, he ascribes the supernatural rather to an atmosphere created in the story:

The true weird tale has something more than secret murder, bloody bones, or a sheeted form clanking chains according to rule. A certain atmosphere of breathless and unexplainable dread of outer, unknown forces must be present; and there must be a hint, expressed with a seriousness and portentousness becoming its subject, of that most terrible conception of the human brain – a malign and particular suspension or defeat of those fixed laws of Nature (Lovecraft 1927).

He says there is only “one test of the really weird”, namely “whether or not there be excited in the reader a profound sense of dread, and of contact with unknown spheres and powers; a subtle attitude of awed listening, as if for the beating of black wings or the scratching of outside shapes and entities on the known universe's utmost rim” (Lovecraft 1927). In this 'definition', Lovecraft, who is not only a critic, but primarily an author, calls on the sensation of the reader to decide on the genre of a story. Todorov, who is first and foremost a critic, does recognize two groups of events which can define a story as supernatural: “the first is that of *metamorphosis*. [...] The other group of fantastic elements is based on the very existence of supernatural beings [...] and on their power over human destiny” (Todorov 1975, 109). He also writes that “the supernatural often appears because we take a figurative sense literally” and says “exaggeration” is another important characteristic (77). A final remark he makes, is that “every appearance of a supernatural element is accompanied by the parallel introduction of an element belonging to the realm of sight. It is, in particular, eyeglasses and mirrors that permit penetration into the marvelous universe” (Todorov 1975, 121). In conclusion, the supernatural in a story can be evoked by the existence of cosmic creatures, but also an atmosphere of fear or suspense. Todorov adds exaggerations, metamorphoses and the motif of vision to the supernatural characteristics.

Reconsidering the importance of atmosphere, Lovecraft writes that there are “genuine tale[s]

of cosmic fear” and those “in which the horrors are finally explained away by natural means [...]”; but [...] often posses, in isolated sections, atmospheric touches which fulfill every condition of true supernatural horror-literature” (Lovecraft 1927). The distinction he makes here, Punter describes as the difference between stories with “genuinely supernatural occurrences” or else “events which prove after all to have reasonable and natural explanation” (Punter 1980, 11). A possibility to name them is “novels of horror” and “novels of terror”. The “first sort describes the supernatural and the gruesome as such to make the reader shiver” while the second type is “suspense literature [...] in which the so-called supernatural events are rationalized in the end (mock supernatural)” (Van Bork 2014). In *The Fantastic: A Structural Approach to a Literary Genre*, Todorov distinguishes “within the literary Gothic, two tendencies: that of the supernatural explained (the 'uncanny'), [...] and that of the supernatural accepted (the 'marvelous')” (Todorov 1975, 41-42). He explains this as follows: “If he [the reader] decides that the laws of reality remain intact and permit an explanation of the phenomena described, we say that the work belongs to [...] the uncanny. If, on the contrary, he decides that new laws of nature must be entertained to account for the phenomena, we enter the genre of the marvelous” (41). Todorov then differentiates four kinds of marvelous:

1. “*Hyperbolic marvelous*. In it, phenomena are supernatural only by virtue of their dimensions, which are superior to those that are familiar to us” (54).
2. “*Exotic marvelous*. In this type, supernatural events are reported without being presented as such. The implicit reader is supposed to be ignorant of the regions where the events take place, and consequently he has no reason for calling them into question” (55).
3. “*Instrumental marvelous*. Here we find the gadgets, technological developments unrealized in the period described but, after all, quite possible” (56).
4. “*Scientific marvelous*, which today we call *science fiction*. Here the supernatural is explained in a rational manner, but according to laws which contemporary science does not acknowledge (56).

Using this division, the stories discussed in Chapter II can be categorised. We have to keep in mind, however, that a marvelous story can contain uncanny themes and an uncanny narrative can have supernatural themes. Firstly, “The Fall of the House of Usher” (Poe) is not marvelous, but mostly uncanny. “Herbert West-Reanimator” (Lovecraft) is scientific marvelous and “The Landlady” (Dahl) is instrumental. Then, “Ligeia” (Poe) and “Cool Air” (Lovecraft) contain elements of the scientific marvelous, whereas “William and Mary” (Dahl) is more instrumental. Lastly, “MS. Found in a Bottle” (Poe), “The Colour Out of Space” (Lovecraft) and “Royal Jelly” (Dahl) all show signs of the hyperbolic and scientific marvelous, but only the first two also exhibit the exotic.

When analysing the last three stories in detail, we will first look at the existence of the unnatural or what defies reason and science. Secondly, the fear aroused in the characters and the reader through suspense, will be discussed. Next, we mention exaggerations and unnatural dimensions often connected to the fourth theme of metamorphosis. The fifth aspect is the motif of sight which accompanies the supernatural, exaggerations and metamorphoses.

5. The Fantastic

It is in the fantastic that the Gothic, the uncanny, the grotesque and the supernatural meet. We will first look at the aspect of 'hesitation' which fantasy implies according to Todorov, followed by his definition of the concept and then place it on the continuum of the uncanny, fantastic and marvelous. Subsequently, we will discuss the 'discourse of the fantastic' and the 'themes of the self and 'themes of the other'. But first, it is important to realize that “both the uncanny and the fantastic are experiences of the reader” (Borghart and Madelein 2003). Masschelein notices that “psychoanalysis in fact excludes the most essential part of the experience: the presence of an experiencing subject”: It “disenchants the literature it analyzes; when the mystery of the fantastic is solved, it is robbed of its charm” (Masschelein 2011, 60-61). This is the case because “the fantastic has only one life: it exists only as fantastic in the act of reading for the first time, when reading is still a spontaneous, automatic (unconscious) activity” (86). Masschelein proceeds: “A second reading is less automatic and therefore more detached and (self-)reflexive. Because the reader already knows how the story ends, she no longer hesitates. Inevitably the attention is drawn to the construction of the story. The charms of the fantastic are lost or killed in the process of being revealed as procedures” (86). Unfortunately, drawing 'attention to the construction of the story' is exactly what this dissertation does. But hopefully, it will only stimulate the reader to seek more fantastic tales to relive this first experience Masschelein talks about.

The hesitation she mentions, is what Punter calls “the paranoiac structure which marks the better Gothic works off from mere tame supernaturalism: they continually throw the supernatural into doubt, and in doing so they also serve the important function of removing the illusory halo of certainty from the so-called 'natural' world”. He too focuses on the perception of the reader who “is placed in a situation of ambiguity with regards to fears within the text, and [...] is invited to share in the doubts and uncertainties which pervade the apparent story” (Punter 1980, 404). It is precisely this hesitation which is the core of fantastic literature. Borghart and Madelein (2003) use it as a foundation to link the uncanny to the fantastic. Masschelein mentions this in her article “A Homeless Concept: Shapes of the Uncanny in Twentieth-Century Theory and Culture” and more information can be found in the article “The Return of the Key: The Uncanny in the Fantastic” by

Borghart and Madelein. Thus, we find that the hesitation in the reader with respect to unnatural happenings, is what makes a story fantastic. This hesitation is very much present in Poe's narratives and to a lesser degree in Lovecraft's. In Dahl's tales, the reader is more surprised by the reaction of the characters than by the events themselves.

There have been written many works on the fantastic, but the most elaborate is *The Fantastic: A Structural Approach to a Literary Genre* (1975) by Tzvetan Todorov. In this book, he defines the fantastic as follows:

The fantastic requires the fulfillment of three condition. First, the text must oblige the reader to consider the world of the characters as a world of living persons and to hesitate between a natural and a supernatural explanation of the events described. Second, this hesitation may also be experienced by a character; thus the reader's role is so to speak entrusted to a character, and at the same time the hesitation is represented, it becomes one of the themes of the work—in the case of a naïve reading, the actual reader identifies himself with the character. Third, the reader must adopt a certain attitude with regard to the text: he will reject allegorical as well as 'poetical' interpretations (Todorov 1975, 33).

The first and third condition are compulsory, but the second is optional. The hesitation between natural and supernatural explanations leads Todorov to distinguish between the supernatural explained (or uncanny) and the supernatural accepted (or marvelous). He positions the fantastic in between these two fields: "We find that in each case, a transitory sub-genre appears: between the fantastic and the uncanny on the one hand, between the fantastic and the marvelous on the other. These sub-genres include works that sustain the hesitation [...] for a long period, but that ultimately end in the marvelous or in the uncanny" (44). He represents these sub-divisions in a diagram:



So apparently, there is no genre of the pure fantastic, but only the hesitation between the uncanny and the marvelous. Todorov remarks that "the fantastic is defined as a special perception of uncanny events" (91). Also Masschelein writes that the uncanny, abject, grotesque, monstrous, "and the genres associated with them, can be subsumed under the fantastic in the broadest sense of the word" (Masschelein 2003, 134). They cannot, however, be placed on the same level. Both the uncanny and the supernatural play their part in the creation of fantastic literature:

The uncanny realizes [...] only one of the conditions of the fantastic: the description of certain reactions, especially of fear. It is uniquely linked to the sentiments of the characters and not to a material event defying reason. (The marvelous, by way of contrast, may be

characterized by the mere presence of supernatural events, without implicating the reaction they provoke in the character) (Todorov 1975, 47).

Purely supernatural events, then, will not do the trick either: “the supernatural is not quite the same as the fantastic, nor is its presence typical or exclusive for the fantastic as genre. Specific for the fantastic is the reaction to the supernatural event and the way it is inscribed in a text” (Masschelein 2011, 88). In conclusion, we find that the fantastic-uncanny and the fantastic-marvelous both depend mainly on the reaction of the reader to the events described.

Todorov describes a specific 'discourse of the fantastic' which consists of three features to achieve “structural unity”. The first is the use of “figurative discourse” (Todorov 1975, 76). Secondly, he observes that “in stories of the fantastic, the narrator habitually says 'I’” (82). He gives two reasons for this: we can doubt the narrator which creates the necessary hesitation (“to believe or not to believe?”) and “the first-person narrator most readily permits the reader to identify with the character, since [...] the pronoun 'I' belongs to everyone” (84). The third characteristic of the discourse of the fantastic – besides the figurative discourse and I-narrator – is a syntactical one. Todorov quotes Penzoldt on this matter, who wrote the book *The Supernatural in Fiction* published in 1965: “The structure of the ideal ghost story may be represented as a rising line which leads to the culminating point... which is obviously the appearance of the ghost. Most authors try to achieve a certain gradation in their ascent to this culmination, first speaking vaguely, then more and more directly” (86-87). It was Poe, for whom all tales are “characterized by the existence of a single effect, located at the end, and by the obligation all the elements within the tale are under to contribute to this effect” (86): “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” (Poe 1842). Thus, there are three characteristics of the fantastic discourse: figurative speech, an I-narrator and the use of a single effect.

Besides the discourse, Todorov also discusses the themes of the fantastic. He starts with the “themes of the self” (Todorov 1975, 110) which bring us, “in Freudian terms, within the *perception-consciousness* system. [...] The term *perception* is important here: works that are linked to this thematic network constantly emphasize the problematic nature of this perception, and especially that of the fundamental sense, sight [...]: to the point where we might designate all of these themes as 'themes of vision’” (120). The presence of “eyeglasses and mirrors” in fantastic tales is a manifestation of these themes and has already been mentioned in the previous chapter (121). So, the theme of vision is important in fantastic narratives and will appear in all nine stories discussed.

A second cluster of fantastic themes, are the “themes of the other” which pertain to the “relation of man with his desire – and thereby with his unconscious” (125; 139). They include “all

variations on the theme of sexuality, including contrast figures to sexuality (mother, priest...), [and] transgressions or perversions of 'normal' sexuality (incest, homosexuality, group sex...). The scale ranges from violence and cruelty to the theme of death and typical motifs related to death (life after death, vampires, corpses . . .)” (Masschelein 2011, 85). Todorov also mentions necrophilia as a theme of the other (Todorov 1975, 136). These themes of transgressions concerning life and death, and sexuality, will be examined together with the transgression of mind and body when analysing the uncanny in short stories by Poe, Lovecraft and Dahl.

Throughout this dissertation – in addition to features of the uncanny, the grotesque and the supernatural – we will watch out for the aspect of hesitation in the reader (the doubt between uncanny or marvelous) and the discourse of the fantastic (I-narrator and use of single effect). Also, the themes of the self or themes of vision will turn out to be important in every story. The themes of the other (transgressions of life and death and concerning sexuality) and transgressions of mind and body will be discussed in Chapter II.1 on the uncanny in narratives by Poe, Lovecraft and Dahl.

6. Connecting Poe, Lovecraft and Dahl to the Concepts, to Each Other and to the Short Story

Chronologically the first writer, Edgar Allan Poe, is often called the inventor of the Gothic short story. In *The Literature of Terror*, Punter lists Poe as one of the three main writers of “Early American Gothic” (Punter 1980, 189-213). He wrote a unique mixture of “two kinds of Gothic romance: the shocking, supernatural, Teutonic tale; and the insinuated, explained, English tale” (Cornwell 1990, 84). It is particularly in his short fiction that “his bonds with Gothicism are unmistakable” (Mulvey-Roberts 2009, 69). Poe is often used to explain and explore the concept of the uncanny. Royle writes that for Todorov “and indeed for many other critics as well Poe's work epitomizes 'the uncanny in literature'” (Royle 2003, 34). Also Punter mentions that Poe uses the uncanny “influence of repressed desire” in his stories and “the theme of premature burial” (Punter 1980, 212; 202). Poe's volume *Tales of the Grotesque and Arabesque* has a literal link to the grotesque in its title. He parodied the Gothic by exaggerating its excessiveness, thus creating grotesque stories “that would be followed by later American writers from H.P. Lovecraft to Stephen King” (James and Mendlesohn 2012, 39). The difference between the grotesque and the arabesque is described by Carlson as the difference between “the comic, burlesque, and satiric” and “the serious, poetic, terrifying, and visionary” (Carlson 1996, 283). Concerning the supernatural and fantastic in Poe's short fiction, there are different opinions. They are often called supernatural (James and Mendlesohn 2012, 40; Mulvey-Roberts 2009, 71), but where Cornwell argues they are “open to multiple readings, including of course a supernatural one, and may therefore [...] be

considered perfectly viable as examples of the fantastic” (Cornwell 1990, 85), Todorov states that “as a rule, we do not find the fantastic in Poe's works, in the strict sense [...]. Yet Poe remains very close to the authors of the fantastic both in his themes and in the techniques that he applies” (Todorov 1975, 48). The use of the I-narrator is one of these techniques (82; Ferguson 1982, 22) and so is the theory of the single effect developed by Poe and discussed in the previous chapter. Punter confirms this structural contribution of Poe by saying he invented “a kind of story which does not move by simple narrative but by spiralling intensification” (Punter 1980, 203). To conclude, several sources confirm that Poe's Gothic stories contain elements of the uncanny and the grotesque. He often uses a fantastic narrative structure, but whether his tales contain true supernatural aspects, is under dispute.

In another chapter of *The Literature of Terror*, listed as one of the three main writers of “Later American Gothic” is H.P. Lovecraft (Punter 1980, 268-290). He wrote extensively on Poe in his essay “Supernatural Horror in Literature” and devoted an entire chapter to him (Lovecraft 1927). Whereas Fritz Leiber (a contemporary writer of Lovecraft) argues that Lovecraft “gambled his creativity from the start on the Edgar Allan Poe sort of story” (Bloom 2007, 165), Punter says that his Gothic style and use of terror differs from Poe's because they are “utterly devoid of psychological interest” (Punter 1980, 281). Similarly, in the documentary *H.P. Lovecraft: Fear of the Unknown* (2008), there are different visions on this matter. Lovecraft is described as being Poe's “most significant descendant”, but also as going “in a whole different direction with his imagination” and using “a bigger canvas” than Poe (*H.P. Lovecraft: Fear of the Unknown* 2008, my transcription). Lovecraft certainly developed a personal style and his stories are often described as weird fiction. He published many of them in the magazine *Weird Tales* (1923-1954). On one hand he employs typical Gothic elements such as “emphasis on the past's attractiveness” and a “deliberate archaism of much of his language” (Punter 1980, 284-285), but on the other hand “he took it away from the ghost story, away from the Gothic and into this vision of a malign world: this place surrounded by evil, mad, horrible, monstrous things, always trying to get in” (*H.P. Lovecraft: Fear of the Unknown* 2008, my transcription). His weird fiction was characterized by “the strange and uncanny intruding upon contemporary reality” (James and Mendlesohn 2012, 44). Also Robert Bloch (a contemporary of Lovecraft on whom Robert Blake, the protagonist in one of Lovecraft's stories, “The Haunter of the Dark”, is based) describes the uncanny as being part of Lovecraft's work: “He realized that there is nothing more horrible than to find the unfamiliar when you expect the familiar” (Bloom 2007, 155). The humour in Lovecraft, arising from grotesque aspects, is not as openly present as with Poe: “It's submerged, a little bit below the surface” (Bloom 2007, 165). Many of his stories containing grotesque creatures are part of the Cthulhu Mythos which includes “a book of ancient and forbidden knowledge known as the *Necronomicon*, and strange ancient

gods” (James and Mendlesohn 2012, 45). They are described as “supernatural horrors” (45). Bloom writes that Lovecraft creates “tales at once supernatural (reincarnations abound) and cosmological (the space creatures from whose abode the horror comes)” (Bloom 2007, 7). Joshi acknowledges that Lovecraft writes “*supernatural horror*”, but specifies that he meanders towards “*quasi science fiction*” in his later stories. This means that “the real world is [...] presupposed as the norm, but the impossible intrusions are rationalized in some way. [...] The implication in his stories is that we may some day be able to account for 'supernormal' phenomena, but cannot do so now” (Joshi 1990, introduction). His descriptions of the supernatural phenomena are always very detailed and lifelike because a writer of fantasy must try to conjure up the non-existent, make the unbelievable believable by being as realistic as possible (Bloom 2007, 160). As Joshi formulates it: “Realism is not an end but a function in Lovecraft: it heightens the weird by contrast” (Joshi 1990, 193). Lovecraft himself calls it the necessity to maintain “a careful realism in every phase of the story *except* that touching on the one given marvel” in his “Notes on Writing Weird Fiction” (Lovecraft 1933). The often “vivid first person” (Bloom 2007, 158) narrating these events “will convey to the reader the sense of cosmic insignificance that is at the heart of Lovecraft's fictive aim” through “their perception of and reaction to phenomena” creating a fantastic narrating situation (Joshi 1990, 208). A final important factor in Lovecraft's work is his racialism. Joshi, Punter and Bloom and the documentary *H.P. Lovecraft: Fear of the Unknown* all mention his hierarchic vision on humankind and his fear of racial degeneracy: “There was a constant repetition of this theme song – the terror of heredity, the mental and physical degeneration” (Bloom 2007, 160). But Leiber counters this by stating that “the theme – the theme of decay – is the theme of death, and it is universal” (161). In conclusion, Lovecraft's weird fiction appears to be less psychological and grotesque, but more supernatural than Poe's narratives. He does, however, provide a realistic setting in which the occurrence of the supernatural creates an uncanny effect.

Although Roald Dahl is never listed between Gothic writers, his works contain many of their characteristics. His children's literature is often called Gothic or grotesque, but his short stories for adults are not that easily definable (West 1990 and De Saegher 2014). They are described as “macabre”, “gothic” and “uncanny” (Henfridsson 2008; Piatti-Farnell 2010, 1; Sohler 2011). “Dahl's short stories [...] are about snakes, rats, cannibalism, adultery, embarrassment, revenge, deceit, murder, dead bodies, mutilation and aphrodisiacs. They are, in other words, about 'the extremes of experience – unusual, bizarre, inexplicable, unexpected or threatening incidents’” (Burger 2002, 148-149). In his stories “there is to be found a home for the Gothic; a dwelling site of the psychologically disturbed” including “an array of phobias, madness, criminality and perversions” and “a fascination with the dark side of humanity” (Piatti-Farnell 2010, 1). The collection of short stories discussed here, is called *Tales of the Unexpected* and often in these tales

events “are related which may be readily accounted for by the laws of reason, but which are, in one way or another, incredible, extraordinary, shocking, singular, disturbing or unexpected”. According to Todorov these are the characteristics of works that belong to the genre of “the uncanny in the pure state” (Todorov 1975, 46). Although there is not much secondary literature on the influence of Poe and Lovecraft on Dahl, he himself mentions Poe in a letter to Jay Williams – a 17-year old student asking for advice – as one of the writers you should read before writing short stories yourself: “Study particularly the American short story writers like O’Henry and Runyon and Hawthorne and Poe” (Dahl 1980). In one of Dahl’s biographies by Donald Sturrock, the author writes: “Together with Douglas Highton, Roald also developed a fascination with Victorian ghost stories and Gothic fantasy, which he was to maintain for the rest of his life. The two boys read M.R. James and Edgar Allan Poe together” (Sturrock 2010, 56). Dahl won two Edgar Allan Poe Awards for Best Short Story which indicates a likeness in genre (“List of Edgar Allan Poe Award for Best Short Story Winners” 2008). Another link to Poe is the movie director Tim Burton. He made a short stop-motion film *Vincent* (1982) which “pays homage to [...] Edgar Allan Poe” and said that “‘The Fall of the House of Usher’ and ‘The Raven’ and Edgar Allan Poe and Vincent Price helped [...] [him] to live” (“The Gothic Imagination of Tim Burton” 2010, 11-12). Burton also was a fan of Dahl and adapted *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* (2005) for the big screen “drawing on Roald Dahl’s dark imagination and absurdist view of human nature” (“The Gothic Imagination of Tim Burton” 2010, 26). Not only Dahl’s stories are called macabre, also Lovecraft has a posthumous collection of short stories entitled *Dagon and Other Macabre Tales* (1965). And where Dahl calls his stories ‘unexpected’, Joshi quotes Lovecraft in his introduction to *The Call of Cthulhu and Other Weird Stories*, saying: “Pleasure to me is wonder – the unexplored, the unexpected, the thing that is hidden and the changeless thing that lurks behind superficial mutability” (Lovecraft 2011, xxii). To conclude, analogies are found in the terms used to describe the works of Poe and Lovecraft, and Dahl. Not much research has been done yet on the uncanny, grotesque and supernatural aspects in his short stories for adults, but in analysing three of them, we will find that they are definitely present.

In the second chapter of this dissertation we will consider the uncanny, grotesque and supernatural in some of the more illustrative short stories by Poe, Lovecraft and Dahl. The choice for collections of short stories seems to come naturally when discussing the genre of the Gothic and all its appearances. Poe is considered a master in this field and it was also one of Lovecraft’s most used mediums. Robert F. Marler writes that Poe’s “‘The Poetic Principle’ [...] includes the doctrine of brevity and the concept of ‘the totality of effect or impression’” and that his “concept of the ‘single effect’, as modified by critics, has a bearing on the short story’s history” (Marler 1974, 160). In his *A Companion to Poe Studies*, Carlson writes that “Poe recommends a plot in which all

elements are adapted to each other, thus producing unity of effect. Time both intensifies and limits effects, so Poe recommends the tale over the long narrative” (Carlson 1996, 284). Yet another critic writes that Poe's theory means “a short story, which can be finished at a sitting, is best fitted to rivet the reader's attention; and that novels are of imperfect interest, inasmuch as they are perused at different times, and, therefore, with different states of mind, by the same individual” (Bissell 1851, 273). In Lovecraft's essay “Supernatural Horror in Literature” (1927) it stands out how many (collections of) short stories he mentions as examples of great weird fiction: “In the eighteen-thirties occurred a literary dawn directly affecting not only the history of the weird tale, but that of short fiction as a whole; and indirectly moulding the trends and fortunes of a great European aesthetic school” (Lovecraft 1927, 15). Here, he is mostly talking about Edgar Allan Poe about whom he writes: “Truly may it be said that Poe invented the short story in its present form” (16). He ascribes “the vital shift in weird writing” to Poe, who made “the short story rather than the novel the vehicle for the weird” (Joshi 1990, preface). Roald Dahl is concise on the subject of the short story in his letter to Jay Williams: “It should be fairly obvious to you what the role of the short story is in modern literature. It's a big one” (Dahl 1980). So, throughout two centuries and spread over different continents we seem to find a consistent interest in the Gothic short story.

II. Exploring the Stories

In this chapter the established concepts of the uncanny, the grotesque and the supernatural will be applied to motifs in short stories by Poe, Lovecraft and Dahl. Only one short story per concept is not much to define the use in the rest of their oeuvre, but enough to get an idea of the various nuances they employ and how their style is alike and different. The stories chosen are as illustrative as possible for the corresponding feature of the Gothic in the rest of their short fiction. For Poe's stories *The Collected Works of Edgar Allan Poe* (1978) is used, edited by Thomas O. Mabbott. References to Lovecraft can be found in *The Call of Cthulhu and Other Weird Stories* (2011), edited by Sunand T. Joshi. Finally, citations from Dahl's stories refer to *Tales of the Unexpected* (1990).

1. The Uncanny

In this chapter, the first story of which uncanny motifs will be discussed, is “The Fall of the House of Usher” by E.A. Poe. The narrator receives a letter from Roderick Usher, an old school friend, asking him to visit because he feels bodily and mentally ill. He goes to the gloomy Usher mansion where Roderick and his twin sister Madeline Usher live. Roderick spends his time by painting, reading and playing eerie music. When Madeline, who was also diseased, dies, they bury her in the vaults underneath the house. Some days later, the narrator is telling a story to Roderick and they hear strange noises which turn out to come from Madeline, who has escaped her coffin, broke out of the vault and opened the door to the chamber they sit in. She had been buried premature and, with her last breath, flings herself upon her brother who dies in the fall. The narrator flees the house which collapses and disappears into the lake surrounding it (Poe [1839] 1978).

The second story under analysis is “Herbert West-Reanimator” by H.P. Lovecraft. This story exists of six parts. The first part “From the Dark” introduces the reader to the narrator and his school friend Herbert West who study medicine together and experiment on bringing the dead back to life. Their first successful experiment ends in a scream from one of the test objects, making the protagonists flee in fear, accidentally burning down the house. The second chapter “The Plague-Daemon” describes how they get more fresh dead bodies because of a typhus epidemic. After a few feeble results, one victim (an old school professor of theirs) is completely reanimated, but very violent. He knocks them unconscious, kills seventeen people and is ultimately captured and imprisoned in an asylum. In the third part “Six Shots by Midnight” they resurrect a coloured boxing champion who kills a small child before coming to their door and being killed by West who shoots him six times. The fourth chapter “The Scream of the Dead” sees the narrator coming back from vacation with West waiting for him with a perfectly preserved body to reanimate. Upon regaining

consciousness, however, he screams about his last experience before dying, revealing that West in fact killed him. At this point, the narrator becomes more afraid of Herbert West than of the reanimated monsters they created together. In the fifth part “The Horror from the Shadows”, they are doctors in the Great War and thus have a constant supply of fresh corpses. At this point, West is experimenting on reanimating separate body parts. When a befriended doctor, who knows about the reanimating procedure, is killed in an airplane crash, West tries to reanimate his body which has been separated from his head. To their horror, the head, placed in a shadowy corner, starts to talk. Then the building is bombed and the protagonists flee again, not knowing whether the body and/or head are still revitalized and leaving West quite paranoia. In the final chapter “The Tomb-Legions” the decapitated doctor (now with a head of wax), joined by other victims of the reanimation process, shows up at the asylum where they free the resurrected, violent version of the old professor. When the narrator and Herbert West learn this news and receive a curious package at home, they burn it. At this point, an army of reanimated bodies directed by the beheaded doctor, breaks through the wall of their basement, behind which lies an old network of catacombs. They tear apart Herbert West and decapitate him. The narrator is questioned by the police because of the disappearance of Herbert West, but the wall in the basement is unbroken and his story will never be believed. He is cast aside as a madman or murderer in the end not even believing his own memories (Lovecraft 2011, 50-80).

The last story under discussion is “The Landlady” by Roald Dahl. This narrative is told by a heterodiegetic narrator. It starts with the seventeen-year-old Billy Weaver who is on business in Bath, England. He is looking for a bed and breakfast to spend the night. Planning to stay at “The Bell and Dragon”, he is curiously entranced by a sign in a window saying BED AND BREAKFAST. The room he sees inside is cosy, a fire is burning in the hearth and the presence of a dog and parrot create a homely atmosphere. He rings at the door and immediately a friendly landlady opens it. He is invited to put his luggage in an upstairs room and afterwards sign the guest book downstairs. The landlady enters and invites him to drink tea with her. However, he is startled by the fact that the two other names in the guest book seem familiar and tries to remember where he heard them before. As Billy starts to remember that they belong to two young men who disappeared in the area, the landlady reveals the dog and the parrot are dead and stuffed and that the two other men are still in the house with them. This does not seem to sink in with Billy Weaver, but the reader realizes that the smell he had noticed came from the poisonous cyanide in his tea and he will be killed and stuffed by the landlady just like her two previous “guests” (Dahl 1990, 173-184).

The three stories will firstly be situated in the genre of the fantastic as pertaining to the uncanny or marvelous. This will be repeated with the stories in Chapter II.2 and II.3, so that the interpretation is discussed before the analysis starts. We will see that Poe's and Dahl's stories lean

more towards the uncanny and Lovecraft's towards the marvelous. The first uncanny characteristic which returns in all three stories, is the discrepancy between a familiar and unfamiliar interior and exterior pertaining to buildings and characters. Then, the inner unhomeliness which resurfaces is discussed as the return of the repressed. Although the subject of repression is different, the three stories can all be seen as the reflection of an inner repressed wish. This return is accompanied by a loss of reason or madness which is most strongly present in the narrators of Poe's and Lovecraft's stories, but can also be found in the landlady in Dahl's story. The loss of reason is often preceded by superstition, drugs and fear. These features return in the three stories, but the dream motif related to this unbalanced reality, does not occur in Dahl's story. The themes are constructed through (strange) repetitions of words which is another characteristic of the uncanny in literature. Poe and Lovecraft similarly stress noises and moonlight and the landlady shows a particular interest in (the writing down of) names. What the stories have in common is colour symbolism. Especially the colour white recurs, gaining a xenophobic meaning in Lovecraft's story. Also eyes and, in general, the themes of the self or vision as discussed by Todorov, are common good. A final uncanny trait can be found in the themes of the other which consist of transgressions between life and death, mind and body and concerning sexuality. The first kind of transgression manifests itself in the artificial prolonging of life as in Lovecraft's and Dahl's stories, premature burials typical of Poe, and overall return of the dead. The transgression between mind and body in "The Fall of the House of Usher" is linked to similarities between the house and the bloodline of Usher, the narrator's mind or Roderick's mind. In Lovecraft's and Dahl's stories, it is concentrated more on the attempt to divide the mind from the body thus objectifying human beings. Sexual transgressions such as incest and necrophilia are more relevant in Dahl's and Poe's stories than in Lovecraft's. To conclude, the type of narrator and use of single effect will be discussed. This will also be the case in Chapter II.2 and Chapter II.3 to establish a better view on the similarities and differences in narrative structure as generated by Poe, Lovecraft and Dahl.

Poe – "The Fall of the House of Usher"

The uncanny in Poe's work is insurmountable. Punter writes that "popular consciousness of psychology probably owes as much to him as to Freud and Jung together" (Punter 1980, 203). The concept of the uncanny as defined by Freud can be illustrated by almost all of Poe's short stories. In the form of "an experience of limits, [...] it characterizes the whole of Poe's oeuvre" (Todorov 1975, 48). There is even "a well-known Freudian psychoanalytic tradition of reading Poe as a means of elucidating what is meant by 'Freud'" (Royle 2003, 147). In particular "The Fall of the House of Usher" (FHU) has been analysed and interpreted countless times using the Freudian

uncanny. It “is probably the most interpreted short story ever written, its ambiguities endlessly fascinating” (Bloom 2007, 3). There are various ways of interpreting the story, one of which is that the events the narrator witnesses (the premature burial, reappearance and actual death of Madeline Usher, and the following collapse of the house they lived in) are supernatural. Another option would be that they are “his private but powerful fantasies” or a third possibility is that he “visits the products of his dubious imagination on Roderick” (Punter 1980, 203). Whether the correct interpretation is an uncanny, fantastic or supernatural one, is unclear. According to Todorov it is “an instance of the uncanny bordering on the fantastic”. The prolonged death of Madeline and the collapse of the house are both rationally explainable in the context of the story. She suffers from “frequent although transient affections of a partially cataleptical character” (Poe [1839] 1978, 404) and the breaking down of the house is already anticipated in the beginning of the story when the narrator discerns a “fissure, which [...] made its way down the wall” (400). Therefore “the supernatural explanation is merely suggested, and one need not accept it”. Todorov states once more that “the fantastic is ultimately excluded from” FHU and the rest of Poe's work (Todorov 1975, 47-48). In conclusion, we can state that the events in FHU are not supernatural, but uncanny, because the reaction of the characters is more important than the veracity of the events themselves (see Chapter I.5; Todorov 1975, 47). With Dahl we are usually in the same realm of the 'supernatural explained' or uncanny literature. This is also the case in “The Landlady” (LL). Lovecraft mentions more supernatural creatures or events in many of his stories, but sometimes they can be rationally explained and are comprehensible, like in “Herbert West-Reanimator” (HWR).

The first aspect Freud discusses in his essay is the origin of the word *unheimlich*. This reference to both homeliness and secrecy is very apparent in FHU. The House of Usher implies both the tangible house this family lives in, but also the incestuous family they descend from: “an appellation which seemed to include [...] both the family and the family mansion” (Poe [1839] 1978, 399). There is a tension between the respectable façade of their bloodline and their deteriorating physical and mental health. This discrepancy can also be seen in the exterior of the house itself: “there appeared to be a wild inconsistency between its still perfect adaptation of parts, and the crumbling condition of the individual stones” (400). We find this duality between outer and inner appearances also in the character of Herbert West (Lovecraft) and the landlady (Dahl). Furthermore, in this last story the impression of a homely bed and breakfast are in great contrast with what happens inside.

The familiar feeling Billy Weaver has when he enters the bed and breakfast – the uncanny recollection of something that still feels known, but has long been forgotten or repressed – is also experienced by Roderick Usher when he first enters the house: “While I hesitated not to acknowledge how familiar was all this – I still wondered to find how unfamiliar were the fancies

which ordinary images were stirring up” (400-401). This return of the repressed past occurs quite literally in FHU when Madeline comes back to the living by escaping her entombment: “Her interment beneath the narrator's 'sleeping apartment' suggests 'a consciousness plagued by its repressed underpinnings’” (Carlson 1996, 394). According to Mulvey-Roberts, the story is “dramatising the evils of repression” of which “the fear originates in his [Roderick's and the narrator's] own warped psyche” (Mulvey-Roberts 2009, 72-74). In LL the danger is actually external (the murdering landlady), but one could argue that this is in fact “a profoundly repressed wish coming true”: having “all the amenities that come from a secure environment and also a nurturing necessary to sustain life” (Sohier 2011, 5). Billy Weaver finds the perfect and eternal mother. In HWR it is also not the actual deeds of West that frighten the narrator: “I came to find Herbert West himself more horrible than anything he did” (Lovecraft 2011, 72). It is the repressed wish of living forever that makes West and his actions so despicable to the narrator. In FHU the objects of repression – according to Mulvey-Roberts and Carlson – are sexuality and femininity. The story is “Poe's most dramatic account of the male's self-destructive repression of women'. Roderick buries her [Madeline] in order to free himself of the material world and to escape into art” (Carlson 1996, 391). So, in FHU we find the return of the repressed love Roderick feels for his sister, underlying madness, sexuality and femininity.

This repression is accompanied by a loss of reason: “the death and burial of consciousness and rationality themselves” (Carlson 1996, 202). The narrator tries to keep his wits about him throughout the story, but is pulled into the eerie atmosphere of the Ushers and their house. Roderick already knows he is losing it: “I feel that the period will sooner or later arrive when I must abandon life and reason together, in some struggle with the grim phantasm, Fear” (Poe [1839] 1978, 403). Poe often mentions Roderick's nervousness, hypochondria and “phantasmagoric conceptions” (405). The entire story can be seen as “an allegory of a deranged mind” presented in Roderick's poem “The Haunted Palace” (418-419). Carlson goes even further and states that “Roderick is not killed by his sister, but is literally terrified to death by his environment and his distorted imagination” (Carlson 1996, 199). Punter stresses the importance of the word “Madman” which Roderick exclaims at the end of FHU:

Here is the crux of the story in a single word: 'Madman'. Roderick, at least, has seen the madness in his companion; or, Roderick has finally seen his own insanity in its full colours; or, the narrator is giving vicarious vent to his psychological triumph over the dying Roderick; or, the writer is celebrating his victory over the now disorganised perceptions of his readers (Punter 1980, 206).

The narrator of HWR also experiences a loss of reason when he gets scared not only of the creatures they created, but of the human monster that is Herbert West – ultimately paranoia himself. Billy Weaver is inside the bed and breakfast only for a short time and has not got the chance to become unnerved by what he discovers about the landlady and the fate that awaits him (being killed, stuffed and preserved). Often, in Dahl's stories, the madness does not have time to settle in, because the tale ends with the beginning of the discovery of some gruesome truth and so the reader is not presented with the following awkward situation, drama or murder. With Lovecraft and Poe it is exactly this moment around which the story revolves. In FHU the madness is thus present in an early stage with Roderick and Madeline and also the narrator develops it throughout the story, unable to contain it in the end.

This loss of reason is caused by a growing superstition and fear. The narrator of FHU tells us that “the consciousness of the rapid increase of my superstition – for why should I not so term it? – served mainly to accelerate the increase itself” (Poe [1839] 1978, 399). Towards the end of the story Roderick's nervousness gets an even bigger grasp on the narrator: “I felt creeping upon me, by slow yet certain degrees, the wild influences of his own fantastic yet impressive superstitions” and “I struggled to reason off the nervousness which had dominion over me” (411). The entire story could also be seen as a dream: “The narrator's journey is understood as a dream toward his inner and spiritual self, Roderick Usher, whom the narrator reaches by way of reverie or dream” (Carlson 1996, 196). Carlson even argues that “the typical Poe story is, in its action, an allegory of dream-experience; it occurs within the mind of a poet; the characters are not distinct personalities but principles or faculties of the poet's divided nature; the steps of the action correspond to the successive states of a mind moving into sleep; and the end of the action is the end of a dream” (179). What the narrator of FHU feels when looking at the house of the Ushers, is “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” (Poe [1839] 1978, 397). Mabbott notes that “the reference to opium is, as always in Poe, a suggestion that unimaginative readers may consider the whole story hallucination” (418). Lovecraft makes roughly the same use of the dream motif as Poe, but Dahl makes no allusions to the possibility of his stories being a dream. At the end of FHU the “webs of reason and superstition” are ripped apart, “consciousness and the unconscious fuse” and everything breaks down (Punter 1980, 206). In conclusion, FHU creates an atmosphere of fear, and the fact that the narrator uses drugs and refers to his dreamlike state, makes the reader doubt the events.

What keeps the story together, however, are (strange) repetitions. This is noticeable in Poe's, Lovecraft's and Dahl's work mainly pertaining to their choice of vocabulary. Carlson notes that Poe's “evocative vocabulary arouses vague and undefinable responses in the reader by clustering certain words and their synonyms together. In the opening paragraph of 'Usher', for example,

windows, sedges, trees, and the key word, *tarn*, reappear there and elsewhere in the tale, giving Poe a group of evocative words that propel him through the story” (Carlson 1996, 451). Ketterer adds to this list of repeated words: “*melancholy, house, Usher, gloom, heart, shudder, gray, singular, character, superstition, leaden, inconsistency, phantasmagoric, hypochondriac, and silver*” (Ketterer 1999, 192). There are many more words and their variants which are repeated throughout the story and keep the reader's attention like the returning refrain in an uncanny song. Another example of such repetitions are those of colours and senses. The themes of the self or vision (see Todorov) are most commonly associated with the uncanny. Both Lovecraft and Dahl make multiple references to the eye(s) of Herbert West and the landlady. Similarly, the narrator of FHU mentions twice the “eye-like windows” of the house, twice his own eyes or that of another observer and no less than seven times the eye(s) of Roderick Usher: “an eye large, liquid, and luminous beyond comparison”, with “miraculous lustre”, “tortured by even a faint light”, and towards the end they contained “a species of mad hilarity” when “the luminousness of his eye had utterly gone out” (Poe [1839] 1978, 401-403; 411-412). Next to vision, “the uncanny can also involve other senses”. Here, Royle uses FHU as an example “with its strange, repeated stress on 'cracking' sounds” (Royle 2003, 45-46). They accompany important events like the wailing of Madeline Usher when she is buried alive, the destroying of her coffin from the inside and the breaking out off the vault in which she was imprisoned. Carlson adds to these the importance of the “rushing noise” as Poe's “ultimate metaphoric sound motif” (Carlson 1996, 206). Sounds will also turn out to be of great importance in “Herbert West-Reanimator”. “The Landlady” is not so much pervaded with sounds, but uses other recurring aspects to build an uncanny atmosphere. For example, the colour white has a revealing function in this story, just like in HWR. In Poe's tale only Madeline's robes are white. Roderick's skin is of a “ghastly pallor”, he has “silken hair” and the sedge, walls and stones of the house are all “gray” (Poe [1839] 1978). The façade has already become discoloured and it will not take long before total darkness will fall. Poe thus repeats many words to create an uncanny atmosphere, especially those pertaining to the themes of vision and connected to noises.

Another uncanny aspect present in FHU is the transgression of borders between life and death, mind and body and concerning sexuality. These themes are roughly parallel to the themes of the other (sexuality, violence and death) as discussed by Todorov (1975). Concerning the “boundaries which divide Life from Death”, Poe states they are “at best shadowy and vague” (Royle 2003, 145). In HWR and LL we find the will to prolong life artificially. In FHU the theme concerns the return of the (seemingly) dead and of being buried alive. “To be buried while alive is”, according to Poe, “the most terrific of these extremes” which lay on either side of the border between life and death (Royle 2003, 145). Whereas Roderick is “representative of death-in-life, the death wish”, Madeline “personifies the will-to-live, life-in-death” (Carlson 1996, 193).

This can be traced back to her resistance to sexual transgressions or “the curse of the incestuous, sterile love of [Roderick,] the last of the Ushers” (193). The incest between Madeline and Roderick can be linked to her premature burial, “an act that 'in intention if not in deed was incestuous' and indicative of the split personality”. By trying to dispose of Madeline, Roderick “tries to dispose of 'an integral part of himself” (195). Also the narrator notices the uncanny similarity between the twins: “A striking similitude between the brother and sister now first arrested my attention ” (Poe [1839] 1978, 410). Their “bad blood” and “problem of the blood-line” (Punter 1980, 206) led to a “repressed sexuality” and incest which even continues after death (Mulvey-Roberts 2009, 72-74). When Roderick looks down upon the corpse of his sister, he tells the narrator that “sympathies of a scarcely intelligible nature had always existed between them” (Poe [1839] 1978, 410). Moreover, when Madeline, who has escaped her coffin, enters the room where the narrator and Roderick are, she “fell heavily inward upon the person of her brother, and in her violent and now final death-agonies, bore him to the floor a corpse, and a victim to the terrors he had anticipated” (416-417). Apart from FHU, the themes of incest and necrophilia are recurrent in other stories from Poe's *Tales of the Grotesque and Arabesque*.

The third kind of transgression, is that between mind and body. In FHU, Poe combines “physical horror (entombment and reincarnation; a collapsing house surrounded by a moat) with horror more closely associated with the mind (Usher's hypochondria and hysteria and Madeline's catatonia)” (Bloom 2007, 3). The physical or exterior deterioration is a mirroring of the internal breakdown. The “Usher mansion” is “representative of his [the narrator's] own head or mind” (Mulvey-Roberts 2009, 72-74). The house can also be seen as the body and then Roderick Usher is “the mind or intellect now diseased, too long separated from the physical or sensual side (twin sister). [...] When Madeline returns from the coffin to embrace her brother, body and mind are reunited in death” (Carlson 1996, 195). Whichever interpretation is correct, “The Fall of the House of Usher” plays with the boundaries between life and death, mind and body and the extremes of sexuality.

A final important feature, which will be discussed in the analysis of every short story, is the narrative structure of the story. The two most prominent aspects of fantastic writing as brought forward by Todorov, are the type of narrator and the use of the single effect as defined by Poe and Penzoldt. As we will see, Dahl uses a different writing method from Poe and Lovecraft, but creates a similar effect. The narrator of FHU is homodiegetic, but cannot be trusted: “Poe leads us to doubt the narrator's veracity and competence” and we are “confronted with a fiction which may well be written by an insane pseudo-author” (Punter 1980, 203). This stands in contrast to Roderick, who “*knows* he is neurasthenic, whereas the narrator makes confessions of his own susceptibility while maintaining an apparently rational discourse” (205). The second narrative aspect, is what Punter

calls “spiralling intensification: and this technique is at its most perfect in 'The Fall of the House of Usher’” (202-203). He describes FHU as a “mounting spiral of terror” (203-204). “The Landlady” also contains this quality, but has a more subtle and allusive ending. “Herbert-West – Reanimator”, however, copies the Poesque technique. Thus, FHU has an unreliable narrator who tells his story working towards the collapse of the House of Usher, Roderick's mind or his own.

In conclusion, FHU is situated in the fantastic-uncanny realm and constructs a contrast between the interior and the exterior of the House of Usher. This discrepancy is the result of a repressed madness, sexuality and femininity creating a loss of reason in Roderick, Madeline and ultimately the narrator himself who is terrified, under the influence of opium and in a dreamlike state. The stress on noises and the themes of vision strengthens the uncanny atmosphere. The themes of the other are found in the return of the dead, incest and necrophilia, and the representation of the mind and body in the house and different characters. The narrator is unreliable and the story makes use of the technique of single effect ending in a physical and mental breakdown.

Lovecraft – “Herbert West-Reanimator”

In many aspects, Lovecraft's work is reminiscent of that of Poe. However, Poe is more subtle in his uncanny motifs, they are underlying rather than outspoken, which they are in Lovecraft's stories. He more commonly makes use of words such as 'uncanny,' 'grotesque,' 'Gothic,' 'supernatural,' 'marvelous' and 'fantastic' to describe the unfolding events. At the foundation of his tales lies a “sense of cosmic insignificance” (“Weird Tales: The Strange Life of H.P. Lovecraft” 2006, my transcription). This creates an atmosphere in which there is no hope for the characters in his stories. There are always other forces at work in the universe which are stronger, faster and more evil than human kind. Although there are many supernatural creatures present in his stories, he always makes them fit within the created universe: “He goes one step further than a lot of other fantasy writing. He does not merely say that there are strange and terrible things out there, but this is in fact the structure of the universe” (“Weird Tales: The Strange Life of H.P. Lovecraft” 2006, my transcription). Although the supernatural aspects are often not explained – they just exist – Lovecraft was opposed to a supernatural reading of his stories (Kneale 2010, 96). As discussed in Chapter I.6, he offered the possibility that the phenomena could not be explained now, but one day, they might be. In “Herbert West-Reanimator” they certainly make sense and the story is more uncanny than it is marvelous. This is connected to the importance of the way the narrator experiences the events. It does not really matter whether they were truly supernatural or not, because we will see that the narrator is terrified and therefore unreliable. The effect on the reader is

thus one of uncanny origin.

A first witness of that uncanniness, is the discrepancy between the outer appearances and inner features. Herbert West is a person “whose slight form, yellow hair, spectacled blue eyes, and soft voice gave no hint of the supernatural—almost diabolical—power of the cold brain within” (Lovecraft 2011, 56). Also the houses in which they live and perform their experiments are secretive, isolated and contain a cellar to hide the bodies and perform their illegal activities (52, 78). The cellar recalls the vault where Roderick buries Madeline and the attic (or third floor) where the landlady keeps her victims. Particularly in the last house where Herbert West and the narrator live, there is a “secret chamber beneath the tomb of the Averills” with “grave-secrets” which reminds us again of FHU (78). At the end of the story the walls of this chamber come down, just like the collapse of the house of the Ushers: “It was West who first noticed the falling plaster on that part of the wall where the ancient tomb masonry had been covered up. [...] They [reanimated humans] were removing the stones quietly, one by one, from the centuried wall” (80). So, Herbert West's exterior differs from his interior and the houses reflect the secretive nature of the experiments situated inside.

The return of these repressed creatures represents the return of a repressed wish to live forever. This will be discussed further in the analysis of the crossing of boundaries between life and death. This theme of death is in sense the theme of decay and can be linked to Lovecraft's fear of degeneration displayed in his racism, or rather, xenophobia: “Difference, so prized in the culture of today, was not something he valued”. Although Lovecraft married a Jew, he “could only tolerate the ethnically other, when diluted by assimilation, and advised [his wife] Sonia of his preference for an Arian majority in situations involving mixed company” (“Weird Tales: The Strange Life of H.P. Lovecraft” 2006, my transcription). The presence of the colour white in HWR can therefore be interpreted in racial terms. Poe used it to represent Madeline's innocence, but also Roderick's incestuous sickness and Dahl relates it to taxidermy and the landlady's mental instability. Lovecraft associated it with superiority. At one point he describes a dead “negro” as “a loathsome, gorilla-like thing, with [...] a face that conjured up thoughts of unspeakable Congo secrets and tom-tom poundings under an eerie moon. The body must have looked even worse in life—but the world holds many ugly things” (Lovecraft 2011, 63). To conclude, HWR contains a repressed wish for eternal life and a fear for decay expressed in xenophobia.

Both the narrator and Herbert West develop a paranoia, because of the ugly things they themselves created. At first, they “could not get bodies fresh enough to shew any trace of reason when reanimated, so had perforce created nameless horrors” (67). This causes in West a “maddening sensation of being haunted and hunted” (56). In the end, they lose exactly that which they tried to reanimate in their dead victims: reason. The narrator testifies: “They imply that I am a

madman or a murderer—probably I am mad. But I might not be mad if those accursed tomb-legions had not been so silent” (80). Similar to FHU, Herbert West, like Roderick, develops a nervous disposition because of his wrongdoings and the narrator is contaminated by him.

The narrator of HWR doubts his own sanity so much that at one point he wonders “if it could have been other than a daemonic dream of delirium” (Lovecraft 2011, 73). Lovecraft drew the inspiration for his stories from his dreams:

I began to have nightmares of the most hideous description, peopled with things which I called night-gaunts, a compound word of my own coinage. In dreams they were wont to whirl me through space at a sickening rate of speed fretting and impelling me with their detestable tridents. It is fully fifteen years, nay more, since I had seen a night-gaunt, but even now, when half asleep and drifting vaguely along over a sea of childhood thoughts, I feel a thrill of fear and instinctively struggle to keep awake. That was my own prayer back in '96: to keep awake and ward off the night-gaunts (“Weird Tales: The Strange Life of H.P. Lovecraft” 2006, my transcription).

Neil Gaiman, an English fantasy writer, adds that these “night-gaunts [...] prefigured his habit in later life of drawing on the content of his most vivid dreams for transmutation into weird tales” (“Weird Tales: The Strange Life of H.P. Lovecraft” 2006, my transcription). HWR is also wrought with fear and drugs. The drug or “reanimating solution” is injected in dead bodies, or test objects (Lovecraft 2011, 68). Amongst these is even an old “friend and fellow-scholar” of West, “once a student of reanimation, this silent trunk was now gruesomely called upon to exemplify it” (74). The narrator himself is an old school friend of West and can therefore never be sure he will not become a victim. He will live in constant fear: “While he was with me, the wonder and diabolism of his experiments fascinated me utterly, and I was his closest companion. Now that he is gone and the spell is broken, the actual fear is greater” (50). In LL, Billy Weaver does fall victim to a drug the landlady administers to him in secret. These references to opium (FHU), injections (HWR) and poison (LL) stress the uncanny contrast between reality and dream, they create a hesitation in the reader who starts to doubt the narrated events. In conclusion, HWR represents a delirium found in dreams, fear and drugs.

Other returning uncanny aspects, are the themes of vision (eyes), the colour white, moonlight and noises. The eyes of Herbert West are a sign of the danger inside him. The narrator describes his countenance in every chapter of the story (of which there are six) and the reader feels he gradually becomes less human. From a “spectacled youth with delicate features, yellow hair, pale blue eyes and a soft voice” we go to a “calm, blond, blue-eyed scientific automaton” later

characterized by an “occasional flash of a cold blue eye to tell of the hardening and growing fanaticism of his character under the pressure of his terrible investigations” (51; 62; 66). Also the eyes of the 'undead' betray their level of consciousness. In the beginning of the story “the thing actually opened its eyes, but only stared at the ceiling with a look of soul-petrifying horror before collapsing into an inertness from which nothing could rouse it” (58). Another later victim had the same fate: “The lids opened, shewing eyes which were grey, calm, and alive, but still unintelligent and not even curious” (69). Only a “very fresh body” (West killed him so he could immediately reanimate him) started “writhing into full and terrifying consciousness with eyes dilated at the memory of its last scene on earth” (70). Their last victim was decapitated and – when brought back to life – fashioned himself a “wax face with eyes of painted glass” (79). Just as their test objects become more artificial, West shows his first sign of emotion as he is killed by one of them: “A sort of mad-eyed monstrosity behind the leader seized on Herbert West. [...] They all sprang at him and tore him to pieces before my eyes [...]. As it [West's head] disappeared I saw that the blue eyes behind the spectacles were hideously blazing with their first touch of frantic, visible emotion (80). Lovecraft uses the word 'eye' three times in this short fragment. Other words repeated throughout the story are 'white' (59), 'light' (53) and 'moon' (63). White signifies both superiority in racial terms, and the whiteness of dead bodies in contrast to the blush on the cheeks of the living. Moonlight accompanies the episodes in which they take the dead coloured man home and when he is knocking at their door with the arm of a dead child in his mouth. This last scene very much conjures up the ending of FHU in which they hear the noises Madeline makes as she breaks out, a door opens to reveal a terror of their own making, covered in blood, and a “blood-red moon” illuminates the drama (Poe [1839] 1978, 417):

After the clock had struck three the moon shone in my eyes, but I turned over without rising to pull down the shade. Then came the steady rattling at the back door. [...] So we both went down the stairs on tiptoe, with a fear partly justified and partly that which comes only from the soul of the weird small hours. The rattling continued, growing somewhat louder. When we reached the door I cautiously unbolted it and threw it open, and as the moon streamed revealingly down on the form silhouetted there, West did a peculiar thing. [...] My friend suddenly, excitedly, and unnecessarily emptied all six chambers of his revolver into the nocturnal visitor. [...] Looming hideously against the spectral moon was a gigantic misshapen thing not to be imagined save in nightmares—a glassy-eyed, ink-black apparition nearly on all fours, covered with bits of mould, leaves, and vines, foul with caked blood, and having between its glistening teeth a snow-white, terrible, cylindrical object terminating in a tiny hand (Lovecraft 2011, 65).

Not only are the noises of wood and iron similar to FHU, also human screams can be heard in both stories. Roderick exclaims “madman” when he realizes the scope of their wrongdoing and Madeline falls down upon him with a “low moaning cry” (Poe [1839] 1978, 416). The first reanimated body in HWR utters a “most appalling and daemonic succession of cries” which sound “hellish” and reminds one of “all the supernal terror and unnatural despair of animate nature” (Lovecraft 2011, 54). The fourth chapter of the story is called “The Scream of the Dead” which refers to the content of a scream rather than its sound. Like the revealing word 'madman', a reanimated victim makes clear that West had killed him with a needle. This reveals to the narrator what West is capable of. And finally, there is the scream of the decapitated victim. Both the sound (“I should not call that sound a voice, for it was too awful”) and above all “its source” (the head which is placed in a “large covered vat in that ghoulish corner of crawling black shadows”) are “awful” (75). In conclusion, and parallel to FHU, the repetition of themes of vision, the colour white, moonlight and noises are prominent in HWR.

Similar to both FHU and LL, HWR explores the limits of life and death. What is very much the same as in FHU, are the references to coffins, disturbed graves, the dead climbing out of their burial place and returning to hunt the one that put them there premature. Parallel to LL is the attempt to create artificially prolonged life. Herbert West examines “the nature of death and the possibility of overcoming it artificially” (50). He is a materialist and talks about the “mechanistic nature of life”, “the organic machinery of mankind” and man as a “machine of nervous matter” (50; 75). For the creation of an “artificial life”, “natural life must be extinct” (66). The bodies they use for their experiments are called 'things' and are thus deprived of all humanity. The narrator even sees West look at living persons in this objectifying way: “West had [...] a hardened eye which sometimes glanced with a kind of hideous and calculating appraisal at men of especially sensitive brain and especially vigorous physique” (76). As we will see, the landlady in Dahl's story looks at Billy Weaver in the same way. Thus, the return of the dead and the wish to extend life are also present in HWR.

However, sexual transgressions are not as prominent as in FHU or LL. We could draw an analogy between West's obsession with reanimated corpses and the theme of sexuality or necrophilia, because he is so attracted to them that he cannot stop creating them: “His interest became a hellish and perverse addiction to the repellently and fiendishly abnormal; he gloated calmly over artificial monstrosities which would make most healthy men drop dead from fright and disgust” (71-72). Necrophilia can thus be associated to HWR, but there is no sign of incest in the story.

The transgression of the third boundary – between mind and body – can be found in West's

idea that the body (or even separate body parts) does not need a mind to function and that there is no such thing as a soul. The narrator “still held some curious notions about the traditional 'soul' of man, and felt an awe at the secrets that might be told by one returning from the dead. [...] But [his] wonder was not overwhelming, since for the most part [he] shared the materialism of [his] friend” (53-54). In the end, they succeed in creating reasoned beings, but it is apparent that without their souls, they are but blood lusted creatures without consciousness. Whereas in FHU the mind and body were represented by aspects in the story which collide towards the end, Herbert West tries to separate them with disastrous consequences.

The interaction between the narrator and Herbert West is similar to that between Roderick Usher and the narrator: the narrator is pulled into the strange world of its antagonist. They are old school friends and therefore trust each other. The homodiegetic narrator, however, doubts the nature of what he experiences. It could be a delirium, dream or terror fantasy: “The final soul-shattering catastrophe held elements of daemonic phantasy which make even me doubt the reality of what I saw” (76). In “The Landlady” the entire story is presented as factual and it stops right before Billy Weaver is killed and stuffed. This is seemingly in contradiction to Poe's theory of the single effect which Lovecraft adopts in HWR: The entire story builds up to the moments of horror in which Herbert West is killed and carried off by the monstrosities he created in every chapter.

In conclusion, HWR creates an uncanny atmosphere contrasting Herbert West's stately appearances with his wicked psyche originating in a repressed longing to extend life and a fear of degeneration. This manifests itself in a loss of reason in both protagonists, originating in anxiety, drugs and dreams. Uncanny repetitions concerning vision, whiteness, moonlight and noises heighten the weird mood in which the limits of life are pushed in the resurrection of the dead. There is a possible hint of necrophilia present, but no proof of incest. In the reanimation process, mind and body are separated with macabre results. In the end, the doubting narrator does not know whether to trust his own memory, particularly concerning the climax of the story in which all previous victims (or chapters) come together to take revenge upon their creator.

Dahl – “The Landlady”

As mentioned before, Dahl's themes and technique differ slightly from Poe's and Lovecraft's. However, his stories are uncanny or 'supernatural explained', like Poe's. Sohier (2011) writes in his article “Metamorphoses of the Uncanny in the Short-Story 'The Landlady' by Roald Dahl” that “in the study of Roald Dahl's short-story, we will not be concerned with the less palatable aspects of the uncanny, namely cannibalism, live burial, the return of the dead, but on the other hand, we will be involved in gruesome deaths and corpses and also with [...] taxidermy” (Sohier 2011, 2). Not only

are his stories uncanny, but also the Gothic “terror and horror” are present (7). Usually, he does not involve himself with supernatural phenomenon and therefore is not placed in the realm of marvelous literature. In this section we will look at the uncanny characteristics considering the (un)homely; the return of the repressed; loss of reason; drugs, fear and dreams; (strange) repetitions; transgressions concerning life/death, mind/body and sexuality; and finally, the type of narrator and use of the single effect.

In “The Landlady” we find the same discrepancy between interior and exterior as in FHU and HWR. Again, there are houses with a dual aspect to them of respectfulness and decay. Billy Weaver walks along a “wide street” with “a line of tall houses on each side, all of them identical. [...] It was obvious that once upon a time they had been very swanky residences. But now, [...] the paint was peeling from the woodwork on their doors and windows, and [...] the handsome white façades were cracked and blotchy from neglect” (Dahl 1990, 174). The weather and landscape too, combine “the misleadingly familiar elements with potentially murderous suggestions” (Sohier 2011, 4): “It was about nine o’clock in the evening and the moon was coming up out of a clear starry sky over the houses opposite the station entrance. But the air was deadly cold and the wind was like a flat blade of ice on his cheeks” (Dahl 1990, 173). As with Roderick Usher and Herbert West, Billy Weaver “adopts an exterior attitude, a mere empty outward form [of briskness]” (Sohier 2011, 3). The first impression Weaver has of the landlady is very positive: “She seemed terribly nice. She looked exactly like the mother of one’s best school-friend welcoming one into the house to stay for the Christmas holidays” (Dahl 1990, 177). He describes her as emanating a familiar warmth and security. However, she “impersonates death because she killed and stuffed two young men and is about to proceed with a third one, [...] but she exhibits at first, along with her house, all the signs of the familiar, *das Heimliche*”. She is “a mix between maternal instincts and truly demonic intentions” (Sohier 2011, 3). She describes her house as her “little nest” (Dahl 1990, 177) and Billy experiences it as follows: “The room was wonderfully warm and cosy. I’m a lucky fellow, he thought, rubbing his hands. This is a bit of all right” (179). When he sees a “bright fire burning in the hearth”, a “pretty little dachshund”, “pleasant furniture” and a “large parrot” through the window, he thinks they are “a good sign in a place like this” (174). However, the animals later turn out to be dead and “since they are stuffed they take on the uncanny aspect of sleeping creatures” (Sohier 2011, 5). As Sohier puts it: “The hero does get himself settled, he finds lodgings prior to his being “unsettled”, disturbed as his encounter with the familiar becomes strange” (4). Although Billy Weaver does not “see the unseen” or makes “sense out of the undecidable smells” (7), he does notice that there are “no other hats or coats in the hall. There were no umbrellas, no walking-sticks—nothing” (Dahl 1990, 177). Sohier states that “this could be a formula for the uncanny: what should be present is absent. And what should be absent is present, since there is a surfeit of homely

signs” (Sohier 2011, 7). So, in LL, we find ambiguity in houses, the weather and the character of the landlady.

The reason Billy is attracted to the landlady and her house, is a “profoundly repressed wish coming true”, or “the unconscious work of desire” (Sohier 2011, 5). Billy experiences this himself when he feels that “the compulsion or, more accurately, the desire to follow after her into that house was extraordinarily strong” (Dahl 1990, 176). He has a “forbidden desire for the mother” and meets his “perfect match in so unholy and unhomely a mother that she is prepared to embalm the unwary son. [...] He runs briskly and eagerly to a mother that is a phantom-like mother. The character is portrayed as running to 'a mum' and gets in effect the full treatment, 'a mummification” (Sohier 2011, 7). In his drive he does not (want to) acknowledge that he smells cyanide in his tea and remembers where he heard the names of the landlady's previous guests before (in the newspaper headlines as men who disappeared in that neighbourhood). Even when she says: “Left? [...] 'But my dear boy, he never left. He's still here. Mr. Temple is also here. They're on the third floor, both of them together”, he does not become suspicious (Dahl 1990, 182). He still thinks she is “harmless” and has a “kind and generous soul” (179). To conclude, in LL the return of the repressed has to do with the wish for a homely environment and the perfect mother.

This is accompanied by a madness manifested in the landlady who is “slightly off her rocker” which Billy ascribes to a guess that “she had probably lost a son in the war, or something like that, and had never got over it” (178-179). He thinks he detects an unprocessed trauma which has made her a bit loopy: “She should be characterized by a madness that does not say its name” (Sohier 2011, 7). This can be linked to the neurotic behaviour of Roderick Usher, Herbert West and the two narrators involved. Billy Weaver though, never has the time to be sucked into the quirky world of his antagonist and does not develop the fear or paranoia that characterize FHU and HWS. In conclusion, the loss of reason is concentrated in the landlady, but not in the character of Billy Weaver.

This is connected to the fact that he has not got the chance to become frightened. The narrators of FHU and HWR are so scared in the end and sometimes find what they see so unlikely, that they start doubting whether it really happened and ascribe it to a dream. This never happens in LL. It does however take the reader “beyond the rationalisation of fear” because the reader knows what will happen to Billy Weaver, even if he does not (Sohier 2011, 7). There is also a drug involved which the landlady administers in a cup of tea to kill Billy. Herbert West similarly used injections to balance his victims on the border between life and death and in FHU opium is used as possible explanation for everything the narrator experiences. Thus, the three stories all use drugs to stress the irrational side of the events and create hesitation in the reader.

Uncanny repetitions that unite the story are prominent in LL. It starts when Billy Weaver

notices a sign in the window: “BED AND BREAKFAST, it said. BED AND BREAKFAST, BED AND BREAKFAST, BED AND BREAKFAST, BED AND BREAKFAST”. This sign is “holding him, compelling him, forcing him to stay where he was and not to walk away from that house” and ultimately what makes him go inside (Dahl 1990, 175). This last “repetition of near synonyms” points to “the decision [which] is uncannily made for him” (Sohier 2011, 4-5). The way the landlady tries to persuade him to come in, is by repeating “please come in”, “why don't you come in out of the cold?” and “do come in” (Dahl 1990, 176). When she is poisoning him at the end of the story, she puts him at ease by saying: “But come over here now, dear, and sit down beside me on the sofa and I'll give you a nice cup of tea and a ginger biscuit before you go to bed” (181), repeating it when he insists on remembering where he heard the names of her previous victims before:

'Come over here now and sit next to me and warm yourself in front of this lovely fire. Come on. Your tea's all ready for you.' She patted the empty place beside her on the sofa, and she sat there smiling at Billy and waiting for him to come over. He crossed the room slowly, and sat down on the edge of the sofa. She placed his teacup on the table in front of him. *'There we are,'* she said. *'How nice and cosy this is, isn't it'* (182)?

The fact that he knows he heard the names in the guest book somewhere before, but cannot recall the details, bothers him: “There is nothing more tantalizing than a thing like this which lingers just outside the borders of one's memory” (181). This is similar to having a *déjà vu*, another characteristic of uncanny tales. Moreover, Dahl uses the theme of vision in LL. For example, each word on the notice in her window acts “like a large black eye staring at him through the glass” (175). Billy tells the landlady “the notice in your window just happened to catch my eye” (176). Sohier describes the sign as conveying “the idea of an evil eye that freezes all movement” (Sohier 2011, 5). The “blue eyes” of the landlady are mentioned four times, in the beginning as evidence of benevolence, later assessing him as object for her 'hobby' and in the end watching him apparently waiting for evidence that her poison is working (Dahl 1990, 176-177; 182; 184). Another striking repetition is the word 'all' in italics which recurs four times. When the landlady welcomes Billy by saying: “It's *all* ready for you, my dear”, she means his room, the poison and the material to stuff him after she has killed him (176). And when she asks him to sign the guest book, she remarks: “Everyone has to do that because it's the law of the land, and we don't want to go breaking any laws at *this* stage of the proceedings, do we” (178)? In retrospect this is a clear reference to the illegal proceedings which she knows will follow later on. And when she states “I stuff *all* my little pets myself when they pass away”, we know she does not just mean the dog and the parrot (184). Other repetitions are related to colour symbolism. The colour white appears four times and is an

outer immaculate feature which seems to hide underlying darkness. Billy Weaver notices the landlady's "small, white, quickly moving hands, and red finger-nails" which could be related to the blood she has on her murderous, corpse-like hands (181). Furthermore, she remarks on his "white [...] teeth" which will match his deceased look (183). Sohier asserts that "a desire for the perfection of the skin, the fascination of the body, [...] could be associated with a desire for whiteness, the whiteness of teeth and, in the same breath, with an insistent apprehension of age and ageing, the whole compounded of a desire for a baby" (Sohier 2011, 8). In the fear of degeneration, we find again the origin of Lovecraft's xenophobia which finds expression in the use of the word 'white' in HWR, not to say that Dahl uses it to the same end. A last feature that strangely keeps reappearing throughout LL is that the landlady keeps forgetting Billy Weaver's name and those of her previous guests. She calls him "Mr. Perkins" and "Mr. Wilkins" (Dahl 1990, 178; 180). Sohier states that "the uncanny is concerned with identities and the names of objects becoming unstable and uncertain. The whole story becomes rampant with uncanny effects. Billy Weaver's very identity becomes subjected to drifts" (Sohier 2011, 6). In conclusion, repetitions in LL concern particular words, eyes, the colour white and the forgetting of names.

The first theme of the other, crossing the limits of life and death, has to do with this forgetfulness. The landlady namely insists that her 'guests' write their name down in the guest book. Sohier notes that "the insistence on writing, on 'signing the book', is pregnant with frightful implications that connect writing with issues of death and life. [...] Writing one's name, signing the book, becomes the equivalent of a first step, the first graph, into the world of death" (Sohier 2011, 6). What the landlady does – stuffing human corpses (taxidermy) – is a scientific crossing of boundaries between life and death like reanimating the dead (Herbert West). She "harbours the frightful fear of death and degradation", refuses "to acknowledge mortality" and "is shown as accelerating briskly the life span of her visitors in a mad attempt to suspend life" (8). So, LL uses the transgressions between life and death in a way comparable to HWR, artificially extending life.

Concerning the limits of sexuality, Sohier makes notice of "an incestuous desire for *a mother* who is not *the* mother" in Billy Weaver (Sohier 2011, 7). Moreover, when the landlady describes one of her victims: "There wasn't a blemish on his body. [...] His skin was just like a baby's", there are clear indications of necrophilia (Dahl 1990, 183). As in FHU, both incest and necrophilia are thus present in LL.

The third transgression between mind and body is parallel to that in FHU in that the exteriors and interiors represent mind and body. The reader discovers that the neat exterior – or body – of the bed and breakfast and the landlady are in great contrast with the gruesome events that take place inside the house and the landlady's mind. Slowly this boundary is crossed when the cracks in their façade

become visible to the reader. Analogue to HWR, human beings are objectified and deprived of their mind and soul. The landlady, like Herbert West, is ultimately only looking for a body that is “exactly right” for her purposes. Billy Weaver falls in that category and the landlady looks at him from top to toe: “her blue eyes travelled slowly all the way down the length of Billy's body, to his feet, and then up again” (177). She objectifies him and desires only his body without his mind. This is exactly what characterized Herbert West too. She tells him about her other victims: “They were tall and young and handsome, my dear, just exactly like you” (180). To conclude, LL both brings mind and body together in the deceiving exterior of the bed and breakfast, and separates them in the landlady treating her guests as meat.

Different from both FHU and HWR, “The Landlady” has a heterodiegetic narrator. This is not the rule in Roald Dahl's short stories. In *Tales of the Unexpected* there are eleven stories with a extradiegetic homodiegetic narrator, twelve stories with a extradiegetic heterodiegetic narrator and one story within a story (mise en abyme) with an intradiegetic heterodiegetic narrator. The difference between FHU and HWR, and LL is that, “since Billy Weaver is very slow and naïve before it dawns on him that his landlady is a murderess, the uncanny becomes reader-oriented as we are made to fear that the young man will become the perfect prey in the hands of his executioner”. Billy Weaver is perfectly at ease in the bed and breakfast and “instead of feeling uneasy at the sight of stuffed animals he had first thought to be alive, and in the very presence of the taxidermist herself, the character feels, of all things, admiration for the technical skills involved in stuffing animals” (Sohier 2011, 5). This makes the reader doubt the intentions of the landlady and the way he/she interprets what is written in the story. The fact that the ending is suggestive rather than factual enhances this effect. The uncanny references in the story do, however, create a single effect in the way Poe and Lovecraft write their stories. It does not mean, that because the climactic event is not literally written down, the story does not build towards it. Sohier writes that “the short-story undergoes a process of intensification of the uncanny as the very signs and objects that were given as stable begin to alter” (Sohier 2011, 5). So, LL makes no use of a doubting narrator, which implies that the uncanny hesitation becomes reader-oriented and Dahl builds up to the point at which the reader is fully aware of the horror that awaits Billy Weaver.

In conclusion, “The Landlady” is an uncanny story where the unfamiliar is situated in houses, the bed and breakfast, the weather and the landlady. The repressed familiarity that attracts Billy Weaver is a longing for a mother and home. This mother, the landlady, has already gone slightly mad, but Billy is not infected by this. Therefore, he feels no fear, although the reader is made aware of the danger by the smell of drugs. The uncanny repetitions of certain words, the theme of vision, the colour white and the landlady who keeps forgetting names, all contribute to the hesitation of the reader. The themes of the other are manifested in a prolonging of life, incest and

necrophilia and the colliding and dividing of mind and body. The fact that the narrator does not doubt his story, causes the reader to hesitate up to the last sentence after which the single effect has been reached in the realization of the reader that Billy Weaver will be killed and stuffed.

2. The Grotesque

In this chapter, the first story under analysis is “Ligeia” by E.A. Poe. The demented, opium using narrator recounts that he was once married to a beautiful, smart woman called Ligeia. However, she falls ill and dies, after which he moves to an isolated Gothic house and marries Rowena. She also gets sick and seemingly dies. When the narrator keeps watch over her body, she repeatedly shows signs of being alive and in the end rises up before him transformed into Ligeia (Poe [1845] 1978).

The second story is “Cool Air” by H.P. Lovecraft. Here again the narrator is not to be trusted and doubts his encounter with the grotesque supernatural. He meets an upstairs neighbour, Doctor Muñoz, who lives in a room constantly cooled down by machinery and who tells stories of strange scientific experiments trying to prolong life by preserving the body. When one day the machinery breaks down, Dr. Muñoz gruesomely dies and the narrator finds his last scribbles on his desk saying he had already been dead for eighteen years, preserving his body so that his will and mind could live on (Lovecraft 2011, 130-138).

The last story we will look at is “William and Mary” by Roald Dahl. The narrative point of view is heterodiegetic and the story is related as factual. William is a Doctor of Philosophy who has cancer and dies. A week after his death, his wife receives a letter telling her he has participated in an experiment by Doctor Landy who has preserved his brain, keeping it alive with an artificial heart pumping blood and one eye still attached to his brain so that he can see, read and think. This way he could live on for hundreds of years. Mary goes to visit him and, strangely, is not repelled by the sight of him, but rather endeared and a fan of this quiet version of William. She would like to take him home, but Landy does not allow it (Dahl 1990, 185-218)

Every story will be first considered for its situation in the genre of the fantastic with events either uncanny or supernatural. We will see that Poe and Lovecraft make more use of the supernatural than Dahl. Secondly, grotesque transgressions of the body into the world will appear to be present more in Dahl's story. However, all three stories use transformations of this body to conquer death. A third grotesque aspect returning in every story, is the monstrous and importance of physical features. The three writers resemble each other in this aspect, but have different body parts which they stress. The resemblance of the body to a puppet, controlled and artificial, is a fourth grotesque feature they share. They all deal with the survival of the will after death through the use of (pseudo-) science and technology ending in a bestial, repelling posthuman. Finally, whether all

the narrated events are true or not, depends on the narrator who is far more uncertain in Poe's and Lovecraft's stories than in Dahl's. The short stories all make use of the single effect, but Dahl's climax is situated at another point in the story than Poe's and Lovecraft's.

Poe – “Ligeia”

In his preface to *Tales of the Grotesque and Arabesque*, Poe comments on his use of the 'arabesque': “I am led to think it is this prevalence of the 'Arabesque' in my serious tales, which has induced one or two critics to tax me, in all friendliness, with what they have been pleased to term 'Germanism' and gloom”. However, he defends his origin of terror as being “not of Germany, but of the soul” (Poe [1839] 1978, 473). Poe does not discuss the grotesque in his preface. Mabbott notes that “grotesque decoration (so called as found in ancient grottoes, as the Italians termed excavations) combines plant, animal, and human motifs. Arabesque uses only flowers and calligraphy” (474). Other sources that Poe possibly distilled his meaning from, are Sir Walter Scott and Victor Hugo: “Scott views the literary grotesque as an unnatural, startling, and repugnant combination of elements, the textual equivalent of madness. [...] Hugo gives a positive valuation to the grotesque, which includes representation of the unnatural and horrible, as well as hybrid literary forms and those forms that puncture the appearance of harmony and unity, such as the comic and burlesque”. In conclusion, it “involves deformation, disillusionment, estrangement” and “both Scott's grotesque and Hugo's seem to include Poe's category of the arabesque or tale of terror” (Carlson 1996, 283).

In “Ligeia” (LI), there is a tension between the uncanny and the supernatural. Poe makes use of what he calls “the most poetical topic in the world”: “the death [...] of a beautiful woman” and “the lips best suited for such topic are those of a bereaved lover” (Poe 1846, 165). He calls it “the best story I have ever written” and “my best tale” (Carlson 1996, 176). There are many different opinions about the meaning of the story. One possibility is an alchemic interpretation in which the revitalisation process is mirrored in the death of Rowena and resurrection of Ligeia – triggered by the elixir of life (Carlson 1996, 381-385; Poe [1845] 1978, 308): “three or four large drops of a brilliant and ruby colored fluid” (325). Also a feminist reading is possible, but “Poe's treatments of women [...] continue to haunt feminists” and it is unclear whether the tale represents “inherent misogyny” or “interest in recovering women's stories” (Carlson 1996, 400). LI contains many uncanny characteristics, but according to Byers, “the obvious and traditional reading of 'Ligeia' is, of course, that the dead Ligeia returns to life through the strength of her own will or that of her husband, and through the body of her replacement, the dead Lady Rowena Trevanion, of Tremaine”. He states that “the story probably achieves its greatest merit as a tale of horror through the reader's temporary acceptance of the supernatural” (Byers 1980, 40). In “Cool Air” by Lovecraft (CA) there

is a similar appearance of a supernatural revelation at the end of the story, but in “William and Mary” (WM) by Dahl, although it makes use of enhanced science and is therefore instrumental marvelous (Todorov 1975, 56), the technology used is so recognizable that the story feels more uncanny than it does marvelous. Byers continues to say that LI can also be read as an allegory, which – following Todorov's line of thought – excludes the existence of the fantastic (Byers 1980, 40). So, we can choose to see the story as uncanny, in which case the supernatural is explained by opium use and/or madness of the narrator, or as the supernatural accepted in the revival of Ligeia through Rowena's body.

Either way, in the context of the story, there is a grotesque transformation from Rowena into Ligeia: “Through the charged moment of transformation, the hated Rowena becomes the beautiful and beloved Other, fusing the two wives into 'a beautiful undying woman’” (Carlson 1996, 186). As Bakhtin puts it: “the life of one body is born from the death of the preceding, older one” (Bakhtin 1968, 322). David Halliburton, a 20th century American scholar, says it is “Ligeia's powerful intelligence [that] survives death in returning and taking over the body of Rowena”, thus “defeating death” (Carlson 1996, 184). In her article “Unburying the Wife: A Reflection Upon the Female Uncanny in Poe's 'Ligeia’” (2010), Elisabete Lopes also mentions the “double role” of Ligeia's body: “It's the place where death and birth/maternity conflate. As a maternal repository and owner of a transcendental knowledge, Ligeia holds also the sign of death because she is also material, flesh, substance” (42). When the narrator looks at her he feels like looking at a star that is “double and changeable” (Poe [1845] 1978, 314). The “arabesque” tapestry in the bridal chamber is also described as “changeable in aspect” (322) and when the narrator writes about the “contemplation of a moth, a butterfly, a chrysalis, a stream of running water” (314), he is referring to “an implicit cycle of birth, death and transformation into something different, facts that indicate Ligeia's superhuman capability to metamorphose herself” (Lopes 2010, 45). Although the transforming double body (see Chapter I.3) is most explicitly present in LI, the grotesque theme of transformation is also prominent in CA and WM.

The second grotesque aspects of the monstrous and strange physical appearances are present in all three tales. Ligeia impersonates both the “angel” and the “monster” (Lopes 2010, 44). Lopes describes her as “inhuman” and “monstruous” with her “facial irregularity, unearthly features, conspicuous bodily elasticity, hypnotizing voice and ageless expression” (46). She has an air of grotesque strangeness: “Although I saw that the features of Ligeia were not of a classic regularity – although I perceived that her loveliness was indeed 'exquisite,' and felt that there was much of 'strangeness' pervading it, yet I have tried in vain to detect the irregularity and to trace home my own perception of 'the strange’” (Poe [1845] 1978, 312). Lopes detects in Ligeia's countenance a “reptilian motif” and compares her to a siren (with her hypnotizing voice) which, “in scientific

terms, points to a reptile, which some endue with magical qualities: the salamander (also known as siren)” (Lopes 2010, 45). In a note to this comment, she writes that “the salamander is said to be imbued with the power of regenerating previously lost body parts and to be fire-resistant, characteristics that contribute to turning it into a magical, almost immortal being” (49). This calls to mind the grotesque theme of bodily excesses and, again, transformation. Furthermore, Dr. Muñoz (CA) and William (WM) regenerate too in one way or another. Regarding grotesque physical features, the veiling of the body and the bridal chamber (with tapestries) is typical of LI. This is “allied to the fear of castration” (49): “the narrator of the tale is compelled to veil not only the female identity but also the female body, susceptible of inducing castration” (45). Her entire body is “enshrouded”, but in particular her mouth is mentioned (Poe [1845] 1978, 326; 329). The mouth that the narrator so admired at the beginning of his relationship with Ligeia (“the triumph of all things heavenly”) is recognized in the covered mouth of Rowena: “The bandage lay heavily about the mouth – but then might it not be the mouth of the breathing Lady of Tremaine” (312; 330)? Characteristic of the grotesque in Poe, her teeth are also described: “the teeth glancing back, with a brilliancy almost startling, every ray of the holy light which fell upon them in her serene and placid, yet most exultingly radiant of all smiles” (312). Moreover, on Rowena's death bed, when she has one of her revivifications, there is a “tremor upon the lips. In a minute afterward they relaxed, disclosing a bright line of the pearly teeth” (328). Teeth are even more important in another grotesque story of Poe: “Berenice” (Poe [1835] 1978). In CA the mouth and teeth are not as important as, for example, the nose and eyes, and in WM it is somewhat the entire body that is made grotesque. The eyes and expression of Ligeia and “the blue-eyed Lady Rowena” are a final physical feature extensively described by the narrator of LI (Poe [1845] 1978, 321; 330). In the beginning of the story, Ligeia's grotesque eyes appear to be “larger” and “fuller” than normal eyes, and of “the most brilliant black”. However, there was a “strangeness” in her expression: “Those eyes! those large, those shining, those divine orbs! They became to me twin stars of Leda, and I to them devoutest of astrologers” (312-313). When Rowena is slowly coming back to life, her eyes are conveniently closed and it is only when the narrator touches the resurrected woman that “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” (330)! In conclusion, the monstrous, voice, enshrouding, mouth, teeth and eyes are significant in LI.

These grotesque characteristics lead to the third aspect of a repelling exterior which is the result of the will artificially overcoming death. Of the last scene in LI just mentioned, Carlson writes that the narrator “has now, momentarily at least, become whole again, reintegrated with his psyche or anima, and with the Divine Will, 'the great will pervading all things by nature of its

intentness” (Carlson 1996, 182). This is a reference to the epigraph to the story by Joseph Glanvill, a 17th century English philosopher, in which he implies that the will can survive death. This stands in contrast to the poem “The Conqueror Worm” which Ligeia has written and in which death (“the Conqueror Worm”) is victorious over “the tragedy, 'Man'” (Poe [1845] 1978, 319). With the revival of Ligeia, “the Glanvill quotation, which she affirms with her dying breath, proves victorious” (Schroeter 1961, 402). The topic of the will surviving death, returns in CA and WM. The human being as artificial puppet returns in the poem “The Conqueror Worm”, where “the characters are without individuality or free will. 'Mere puppets' danced about at the will of invisible puppet masters; they bumble their way through an incoherent 'motley drama’” (Carlson 1996, 92-93). Schroeter notes it is “deterministic and grimly pessimistic” and “views man as a creature without will, a 'puppet' controlled by indifferent or hostile forces” (Schroeter 1961, 402). This is analogue to the world view displayed in Lovecraft's short stories. The image of humans as puppets is grotesque, as is the relatedness to waxen figures called up by the narrator's description of the sick Ligeia: “The wild eyes blazed with a too – too glorious effulgence; the pale fingers became of the transparent waxen hue of the grave and the blue veins upon the lofty forehead swelled and sank impetuously with the tides of the most gentle emotion” (Poe [1845] 1978, 316). Contributing to this picture is that Ligeia was “tall, somewhat slender, and, in her latter days, even emaciated” (311) and also Rowena had an “emaciated countenance” (324). These images are related to an artificial concept of man achieved through the pseudoscience of alchemy. In CA and WM the mechanical side of humans will prove even more important in creating eternal life. Thus, in LI, the theme of the will surviving death is prominent and linked to the image of humans as puppets and waxen figures, though not yet as mechanical as they will be in CA and WM.

A last aspect that recurs in LI is the unreliable homodiegetic narrator with his “uncertainties” (Carlson 1996, 180). He mentions six times that he takes opium and just as much that he feels like he is dreaming: “I had become a bounden slave in the trammels of opium, and my labors and my orders had taken a coloring from my dreams” (Poe [1845] 1978, 320). He starts his story by saying: “My memory is feeble through much suffering” (310). Ligeia herself may even be seen as “a hallucinated aspect of the narrator's imagination” (Carlson 1996, 181). And Rowena too has been called “a pseudo-wife and pseudo-corpse, a product of his opium shifting mind” (Byers 1980, 44). Poe initiated “a new order of experience that marked the transition of the terrifying from 'the spectacle' to 'the spectator or perceiving mind,' as in, for example the narrator in 'Berenice,' 'Usher,' and 'Ligeia’” (Carlson 1996, 182). As we will see, the narrator in CA is also uncertain of what has happened, in contrast to the WM. However, the stories both build up to a climax similar to the single effect Poe establishes. In LI everything works up to the apparition of the ghost, or in this case, the resurrected Rowena who has metamorphosed into Ligeia.

In conclusion, the grotesque in LI implies a double body conquering death through multiple transformations. Whether these are perceived as uncanny or supernatural, is up to the reader. There are clear references to the monstrous and strange countenance of Ligeia, in particular mentioning her voice, veil, mouth, teeth and eyes. Her grotesque looks can be ascribed to her will surviving death creating a materialized human resembling a puppet or waxen figure. The narrator of LI is unreliable and the story spirals towards the apparition of the phantom making use of the single effect.

Lovecraft – “Cool Air”

In Lovecraft's Cthulhu Mythos we find the existence of “sentient beings of grotesque amphibious physiology” called “Old Ones” (Ingwersen 2013, 3). Ingwersen compares Lovecraft's “imagery” to “the surreal spaces depicted in the artworks of early 20th century Cubism and the *Grotesque*” (1). He creates a different set of universal rules that do not correspond to the ones we know. This can be linked to what Kayser states about the grotesque: “[w]e are so strongly affected and terrified because it is our world which ceases to be reliable, [...] it presupposes that the categories which apply to our world view become inapplicable” (6).

Although CA is not part of the Cthulhu Mythos and there are no supernatural beings present, we do recognize the idea that “science [...] is turned into a signifier of the monstrous” (5). Lovecraft “creates that mysterious and terrifying connection between the fantastic and the real world which is so essential for the grotesque” (6). So, despite the supernatural revelation in the end that Dr. Muñoz has been dead for eighteen years, the reader does not conceive it as marvelous, because he/she has been sufficiently prepared and given enough possible scientific explanations why this is the case: “The monster must be revealed within a context realistic enough to make it stand out, but not so realistic that it ceases to evoke horror, wonder, or repulsion” (Kneale 2010, 96), because, as the narrator of CA puts it, “the abnormal always excites aversion, distrust, and fear” (Lovecraft 2011, 133). This is very similar to the way Dahl constructs the story of WM. In CA, as in LI, the reader can choose for an uncanny interpretation (supernatural explained) or a marvelous one (supernatural accepted).

The first grotesque theme of transformation is also present in CA. There are two significant levels on which they occur. Firstly, there is the overall life span of Dr. Muñoz which starts with him being alive and experimenting with “psychological stimuli which might conceivably have singular effects on the substance of a nervous system from which organic pulsations had fled” (Lovecraft 2011, 134). This period, the reader later discovers, ends in his death and artificial preservation of his body so that his mind can live on for another eighteen years. The final metamorphosis is that into

something “unutterably” when he ultimately dies (138). This course of events can be compared to LI in that she too first lived, then transformed into a mere living will in the body of Rowena and only at the point of death metamorphoses back into herself to have eternal life after death. The second level of transformation is that of the narrative itself. When the narrator describes Dr. Muñoz when he meets him for the first time, he says that “the whole picture was one of striking intelligence and superior blood and breeding” (132) and refers to him as “my new friend” (134). However, as time passes, “the livid aspect of his countenance was intensified” and the narrator states that in this “sad change [...] little by little his expression and conversation both took on a gruesome irony which restored in me something of the subtle repulsion I had originally felt” (134), concluding that “all in all, he became a disconcerting and even gruesome companion” (135). So, Dr. Muñoz does not only fall ill and (almost) die once, but twice. Again, we can draw an analogy with LI as she too experiences two periods (as Ligeia and as Rowena) of degradation before finally meeting her end.

A second typical grotesque feature which is discernible in Poe's, Dahl's and Lovecraft's work is the monstrous: “While his [Lovecraft's] fictional creations are often hybrid, polluting and grotesque, they are also monstrous in what they reveal, in their becoming visible, tangible or audible” (Kneale 2010, 103). A characteristic of this in much of his work is the “explosion of tentacles [...], Lovecraft is the high priest of the tentacle” (“Weird Tales: The Strange Life of H.P. Lovecraft” 2006, my transcription). In CA, the monstrous is found in the human, not in tentacles or other forms of the supernatural. The human invention of artificially preserving life and the way Dr. Muñoz gruesomely dies in the end, are monstrous. Grotesque physical traits in CA return in voices, strangeness of countenance and eyes, nose/smelling and covering up of the face. As in LI, the sound of Dr. Muñoz's voice is repeatedly described. It is “curious” (Lovecraft 2011, 132), “finely modulated though oddly hollow and timbreless”, “if queer, [it] was at least soothing; and I could not even perceive that he breathed as the fluent sentences rolled urbanely out” (133). Parallel to his looks, his voice “became more hollow and indistinct” (134), “utterly frightful”, he “cursed in a tone whose lifeless, rattling hollowness surpassed description” (136) and ends up with “a thick voice croaking” as he approaches death (137). The strangeness that pervaded Ligeia's countenance can also be found in Dr. Muñoz. His figure is described as “short but exquisitely proportioned” with a “high-bred face of masterful though not arrogant expression [...] adorned by a short iron-grey full beard, and an old-fashioned pince-nez shielded the full, dark eyes and surmounted an aquiline nose which gave a Moorish touch to a physiognomy otherwise dominantly Celtiberian”. His “thick, well-trimmed hair that argued the punctual calls of a barber was parted gracefully above a high forehead” (132). “Nevertheless,” the narrator declares, “as I saw Dr. Muñoz in that blast of cool air, I felt a repugnance which nothing in his aspect could justify” (133). The importance of the grotesque nose is emphasized by the constant references to the smell of ammonia, chemicals and exotic incenses

(131; 134-135) and finally, the smell of death: “Now, noses protected by handkerchiefs, we tremblingly invaded the accursed south room which blazed with the warm sun of early afternoon” (137). The narrator uses the word “grotesque” once: “The moribund hermit’s rage and fear, swelling to grotesque proportions, seemed likely to shatter what remained of his failing physique; and once a spasm caused him to clap his hands to his eyes and rush into the bathroom. He groped his way out with face tightly bandaged, and I never saw his eyes again” (136). His bandaged face and the covered noses of the narrator and company, call to mind the enshrouded figure, and particularly mouth and eyes, of Rowena/Ligeia at the point of dying/coming back to life. A last physical sensation is the feeling of cool air, which gives the narrator goose bumps until this day, reminding him of the horror he once experienced. In conclusion, the monstrous in CA can be found in human ideas and grotesque physique, parts of which are situated in the voice, strange facial features, smelling, shrouding of the face and feeling cold air.

A third shared grotesque idea of LI and CA which returns in WM is that of the will surviving death through the use of technology. Dr. Muñoz insists “that will and consciousness are stronger than organic life itself” and it is possible “to live—or at least to possess some kind of conscious existence—without any heart at all” (133). However, towards the end “his mind and will displayed less resilience and initiative” (134). And, much as in the poem “The Conqueror Worm”, Dr. Muñoz gives in to death by writing down with his last powers: “What I said about the will and the nerves and the preserved body after the organs ceased to work. It was good theory, but couldn’t keep up indefinitely” (138). The grotesque aspect of turning into something mechanical to escape death, is what repulses the narrator who “felt a repugnance” towards Dr. Muñoz because of “his lividly inclined complexion and coldness of touch” and “the ice-coldness and shakiness of his bloodless-looking hands” (133). The fact that Mary, in WM, does not have this natural sensation of aversion, is what surprises the reader and Dr. Landy (see below). Both CA and WM create a sort of posthuman through real, plausible or at least imaginable scientific procedures. Dr. Muñoz mentions the way he ‘survived’: through “artificial preservation – *for you see I died that time eighteen years ago*” (138). He repeats the idea Herbert West and Dr. Landy (WM) had of extending life after natural death has occurred: “If a bodily frame be but originally healthy and carefully preserved, it may through a scientific enhancement of these qualities retain a kind of nervous animation despite the most serious impairments, defects, or even absences in the battery of specific organs” (133). However, his existence is dependent on pumps, machinery and mechanics and his room has to stay cool all the time: “Any marked rise in temperature might, if prolonged, affect him fatally; and the frigidity of his habitation – some 55 or 56 degrees Fahrenheit—was maintained by an absorption system of ammonia cooling, the gasoline engine of whose pumps I had often heard in my own room below” (133-134). When the cooling system breaks down, however, Dr. Muñoz seems to melt (at

least partly) and dies: “A kind of dark, slimy trail led from the open bathroom door to the hall door, and thence to the desk, where a terrible little pool had accumulated. [...] Then the trail led to the couch and ended unutterably. What was, or had been, on the couch I cannot and dare not say here” (137-138). Thus, we find in CA technological enhancements used to conquer death and creating a repulsive posthuman.

Next to this couch, there is a note on the desk containing “nauseous words” written by Dr. Muñoz. They “seemed well-nigh incredible [...], yet I confess that I believed them then. Whether I believe them now I honestly do not know. There are things about which it is better not to speculate, and all that I can say is that I hate the smell of ammonia, and grow faint at a draught of unusually cool air” (138). In this passage we discern the doubt of the homodiegetic narrator with regards to the supernatural meaning of what has happened also found in Poe's LI, but not present in Dahl's WM. Dahl does however make use of the single effect, but in a slightly different way from Poe and Lovecraft. In CA the story spirals towards the discovery that Dr. Muñoz had already been dead for eighteen years. The Lovecraftian hallmark of ending a story when the narrator or a character is no longer capable of writing anything down because he/she is too scared or dead, can also be traced back to Poe. An example of this technique can be found in “MS. Found in a Bottle” discussed in Chapter II.4.

In conclusion, we find the supernatural in CA, but it is encapsulated in realism, creating an uncanny effect. This is comparable to LI and WM. So are the grotesque transformations of characters on different levels. The monstrous returns too and particular grotesque strangeness can be found in voices, fragrances and the feeling of cool air. These weird features are the result of the will surviving death through the mechanization of a human, creating a repellent posthuman. A last feature CA has in common with LI, is a doubting narrator, in contrast to WM. Also Lovecraft's use of single effect differs from that of Dahl.

Dahl – “William and Mary”

In general, Dahl uses the grotesque in the same way as Poe and Lovecraft. He describes transgressive and transformative qualities of a body which survives death. There are repeated references to body parts in many of his stories from *Tales of the Unexpected*, in particular those body parts pertaining to the face. And he links the body to science and technology very explicitly so in WM. When asked in an interview how he created interesting characters for children, he said: I “exaggerate all their good or bad qualities. [...] That, I think, is fun and makes an impact” (Dahl 1988, my transcription). Although this statement refers to his work for children, the use of grotesque excesses and extremes can also be found in his short stories for adults.

Dahl's work is similar to Poe's and Lovecraft's in this respect, but differs from it when looking at its position on the scale of the uncanny, fantastic and marvelous. As mentioned before, LI and CA both have a touch of the supernatural at the end. Rowena transforms into Ligeia, which is truly marvelous, and Dr. Muñoz appears to have been dead for eighteen years while still being able to walk around and talk. This is quite surprising, because even in the end of CA the reader does not know how this could be possible in real life. In WM it may seem equally supernatural that a brain is capable of living on without its body, but the setting is so realistic and the process explained in so much detail, that it creates the air of the supernatural explained, and is therefore situated in the uncanny literature.

The first grotesque aspect recurring in WM, is that of bodily transgression, transformation and eternal life. The transgression of the body into the world is more typical of Dahl's story than it is of Poe's and Lovecraft's. When Dr. Landy is finished with William after he died, Mary sees “the stubs of the four big arteries and the two veins coming out from the base of him and the neat way in which they were joined to the plastic tubes; and with each throb of the heart machine, all the tubes gave a little jerk in unison as the blood was pushed through them” (Dahl 1990, 213). The eye that is still attached to this installation is described as “an outpouching of the brain itself” and now floats around on the surface of a basin filled with fluid, looking up to the ceiling and connecting the inner parts of the body to the outside world (200). Like in LI and CA, there are multiple levels of transformations in WM. The first one is the arranged transition from “dead body” to “living brain” which William goes through (196). Again (see HWR, LL, LI and CA) the purpose is the prolongation of life (after death). Landy wants to “remove the brain from the skull of a human and keep it alive and functioning as an independent unit for an unlimited period after he is dead” (192). The ethical boundaries of this intervention are unclear and William says to Landy: “It seems to me there'd be some doubts as to whether I were dead or alive by the time you'd finished with me” (193). He does however choose to go through with the experiment and ends up as something between human and machine. A second transformation is that of Mary whose features “must have been quite pleasant once, [but] had now gone completely. The mouth was slack, the cheeks loose and flabby and the whole face gave the impression of having slowly but surely sagged to pieces through years and years of joyless married life” (211). After William died, she also changed from being dependent and submissive to independent and free. When she is going to call Landy to find out what had happened to her husband, something William explicitly asked for in his letter, “she hesitated, fighting hard now against that old ingrained sense of duty that she didn't quite yet dare to shake off” (209). At the end of the story, however, she is no longer William's inferior, but sees him as her “pet” (218). So, in WM there are many transgressions between body and world and we encounter once more the theme of transformation in order to escape death.

The second typical grotesque motif encountered, is the monstrous and the recurrence of physical aspects and excretion. The whole idea of preserving a living brain seems “monstrous, obscene, unholy” to William in the beginning (205). This is similar to the thoughts of the narrators in LI and CA when experiencing the grotesque. In WM there are many references to the body and its features. The 'ear' is discussed as not being suited for preservation by William and Landy (201). The protruding body part 'eye' (200) is mentioned forty-three times in total. The eyes were also very prominent in LI and CA. Mary has bad memories of William's eyes which were “cold disapproving eyes” (215), “strangely impersonal, as if calculating something. She had never liked those eyes” (187). Especially his pupils (mentioned five times) were “tiny black pinheads. They used to glint at you, stabbing into your brain, seeing right through you, and they always knew at once what you were up to and even what you were thinking” (214). After the procedure, however, the one that was left, was “large and soft and gentle, almost cowlike” (214). His eye had become his face: “It was a queer sensation peering into her husband's eye when there was no face to go with it. All she had to look at was the eye, and she kept staring at it, and gradually it grew bigger and bigger, in the end it was the only thing that she could see – a sort of face in itself” (213-214). The eye as a mirror for the personality is also present in Poe's work and to a lesser degree in Lovecraft's. To taunt her husband, Mary blows out smoke in his face (eye) from her cigarette while he hates the fact that she smokes. Cigarettes and the grotesque motif of smoking do not occur in Poe's or Lovecraft's stories, but do so many times in Dahl's (Dahl 1990). William asks Mary not to smoke in his farewell letter and afterwards she remembers “the last time he had caught her smoking a cigarette” and how angry he was (208). After his “death”, she starts smoking a lot (at least during the narrative) and defies his authority: “Don't be a naughty boy again, will you, my precious,' she said, taking another pull at the cigarette. 'Naughty boys are liable to get punished most severely nowadays, you ought to know that’” (218). Then there are the grotesque mouth and teeth, which are also present in LI, and the motif of eating, which appears once in CA when Dr. Muñoz is coming closer to death: “The pretence of eating, always curiously like a formality with him, he virtually abandoned” (Lovecraft 2011, 136). In WM, Landy's mouth and teeth are described (Dahl 1990, 191). Also, William forbids Mary to “drink cocktails” and “eat pastry” in his letter (207). The contrast is made between on the one hand William eating “blue grapes” (194), “gobbling an enormous lunch” (206) and again “eating a grape. Delicious it was, and there were three little seeds in it which I took out of my mouth and placed on the edge of the plate” (206). And on the other hand his post-mortem condition without “hunger or thirst” (203) having “no legs to run away with. No voice to scream with. Nothing. I'd just have to grin and bear it for the next two centuries. No mouth to grin with either” (205). The dog that the experiment already had been performed on, still had an entire head and “when food was smeared on the dog's lips, the tongue would come out and lick it away, and the

eyes would follow a person moving across the room” (192). A last food related motif is the comparison between the body and food. Landy looks at William “with a queer kind of hungriness, [he] might have been a piece of prime beef on the counter and he had bought it and was waiting for them to wrap it up” (191). Landy describes a part of the procedure as “slowly biting off the rest of your skull, peeling it off downward like an orange” (199). And when Mary visits her husband after she learns he is still “alive”, she describes his brain as “an enormous pickled walnut” (213) or a “great grey pulpy walnut” (215) and the “optic nerve” as a “short length of grey spaghetti” (213). Two more grotesque features typical to Dahl are the mentioning of excretion when William considers he might get phantom “indigestion” or “the feeling that my poor bladder [...] was so full that if I didn't get to emptying it soon it would burst” (205). And secondly, something Lovecraft does too, describing the inside of the body in some detail: “Now, let's assume that I've succeeded in peeling off your skull and removing everything else that surrounds the sides of the brain. That leaves it connected to the body only at the base, mainly by the spinal column and by the two large veins and the four arteries that are supplying it with blood” (199). In conclusion, in this story, Dahl shares the use of the monstrous and grotesque eyes with Poe and Lovecraft, the mouth with Poe, eating and the insides with Lovecraft and he adds smoking and excretion to this list.

The third grotesque characteristic is the use of technology and science to enable the will or mind to survive death and the aversion towards this entire process. The fear and revulsion which the narrator of LI and CA feel, is a normal reaction to the unnatural transgression of the border between life and death. William and Mary too, have this reaction at first: His “immediate reaction after he had gone was one of revulsion towards the whole business. Somehow, it wasn't at all nice. There was something basically repulsive about the idea” (204) and Mary “said that the thing was revolting, disgusting, horrible, unthinkable” (207), “just too awful to think about. Beastly and awful. It gave her the shudders” (208). However, they change their minds when thinking about the benefits involved. He obviously lives much longer than he would have done and she realizes she “could live very comfortable with this kind of a William” (215). But even Landy, whose experiment it is, is surprised by Mary's reaction: “She seemed almost pleased to have her husband over there in the basin. He tried to imagine what his own feelings would be if it were *his* wife's brain lying there and *her* eye staring up at him out of that capsule. He wouldn't like it” (217). The scientific creation of a posthuman is similar to what happens in CA. Everything is scientifically well-founded: “We've completed a number of fairly successful trials with laboratory animals” (191) and the underlying idea is that “no true philosopher could object to lending his dead body to the cause of science” (193). In both stories the word “pump” or its derivations are used five times and the survival of Dr. Muñoz and William relies on a machine “which must never stop pumping” (196). William considers his brain a “prodigious store of information” (206) which is reminiscent of a hard drive and Landy

says “the thinking brain throws off electrical and chemical discharges [which] go out in the form of waves, rather like radio waves” (202). A normal “radio” is mentioned one time in the story (208) and other recurring machines are the “telephone” (208; 209) and “television” (207-209; 215). Similar to the way humans are puppets in LI, in WM William is mechanical and therefore depend on exterior objects or subjects for his fate and survival. He becomes a dependent object and Landy even calls him “it”: “Very well, Mrs Pearl. We'll give it The Times. We naturally want to do all we can to keep it happy.' 'Him,' she said. 'Not it. Him!'” (210). Landy tells her that there is “absolutely no difference mentally between this William here and the one you used to know back home” (215). However, Mary sees him as her “pet” (218) confirming his worst fears: “I'd be like that Russian dog” (196). Like Ligeia and Dr. Muñoz, his will survived, but he has become despicable to others and bound to a mechanical life.

In contrast to LI and CA, the narrator is heterodiegetic and does not doubt that his/her story has happened the way it is told. Also, it is not the appearance of the supernatural event (LI) or discovery of its existence (CA) that the story builds up to. Rather, the scientific procedure is explained to the reader and it is the acceptance and even liking of the grotesque result by Mary that surprises the reader and creates an uncanny reading experience. This way, Dahl still makes use of the single effect.

In conclusion, Dahl's story has a realistic setting with an uncanny twist, whereas Poe's and Lovecraft's stories contain true supernatural events (this can depend upon the personal interpretation of the story). In WM, Dahl makes more use of transgressing bodies, but the multiple transformations have the same goal of crossing the boundaries between life and death. He also shares the use of monstrous and grotesque physical references, adding smoking and excretion. The survival of the will occurs in LI and CA as well and has similar gruesome results involving (pseudo-) science, alchemy and technology creating a posthuman. The narrator of WM is not doubting his story like the narrators in LI and CA. The story does however create a single effect which culminates not in “the appearance of the ghost” but the reaction to this appearance (Todorov 1975, 87).

3. The Supernatural

In this chapter, the first story discussed is “MS. Found in a Bottle” by E.A. Poe. The narrator writes that he embarked on a voyage on a ship in Batavia. One evening he notices that a storm is coming and that night the ship is flooded by a violent wave and everyone dies except for the narrator and one other passenger. The tempest swells over the next days and suddenly a gigantic ship appears which collides with theirs and the narrator is swung on board by the crash. The other passenger

sinks together with the ship. The narrator discovers that the men on board of the 'ghost ship' are old and cannot see him. He finds writing equipment in the captain's cabinet which he uses to write his story down. He will enclose this manuscript in a bottle at the end. While the storm still grows fiercer, the boat seems to be protected from the enormous waves and is driven southwards by a current. As they approach some hidden secret, the crew gets more and more excited. The narrator ends his story just before they are swallowed by a violent whirlpool (Poe [1833] 1978).

The second story under analysis is "The Colour Out of Space" by H.P. Lovecraft. A surveyor is sent out to look at a heath west of Arkham which will be made into a water reservoir. In the town nearby people whisper of the strange days that took place there and the narrator goes to a local called Ammi Pierce, who has gone slightly mad, but is the only one willing to talk about what happened. One day, a meteorite crashed into the 'blasted heath' where a farmer, Nahum Gardner, his wife and three sons, lived. At first, everyone is excited to examine its supernatural qualities and scientists visit to take a closer look. The stone, however, shrinks and leaves globules of 'colour' behind which have also vanished after one night. Then, the landscape around the farm starts to change, emanating a weird colour. Trees are moving without wind, plants and animals become mutated, grey and brittle, and die. The place is shunned and the Gardner family slowly loses its mind. The mother and one of the sons are kept in the attic where the son eventually dies. A second son goes missing near the well which contains water infected by the colour. When Ammi has not heard from Nahum in two weeks, he goes to pay him a visit. He finds him delirious on his sofa and discovers the third son has also disappeared near the well. Ammi then goes to look at Nahum's wife who is still alive in the attic. He finds her mutated, but still moving body and puts her out of her misery. When he returns downstairs, Nahum has turned grey and brittle and dies as well. That afternoon, Ammi returns to the dreadful scene with three policemen, a coroner, a medical examiner and a veterinary. They discover the remains of the two sons at the bottom of examine the remains of Nahum and his wife, not knowing how to make sense of it. Then, the well starts to emanate a light which turns into the colour enveloping everything around the well. The men flee the farm as the colour shoots towards the sky. When Ammi looks back, however, he sees that a small portion of the colour still remains on earth. The narrator ends his story by saying he will be glad when the water reservoir covers up the heath, but expressing concern that the colour still remains in its soil (Lovecraft 2011, 170-199).

The third story is "Royal Jelly" by Roald Dahl. The heterodiegetic narrator tells the story of Albert, a beekeeper, who has always had a special relationship with bees. He and his wife Mabel have had a baby, but the child does not want to eat and has even lost weight since she was born. As Albert is reading about royal jelly – a special substance that transforms ordinary larva into queen bees – he gets the idea of feeding it to the baby. She starts to grow and gain weight very quickly, but

when he confesses to his wife what he has done, she is not happy. She notices that Albert looks suspiciously like a gigantic bee himself and also the baby has a disproportionate body and develops a yellow-black fuzz. To prove to his wife the miraculous qualities of royal jelly, he tells her he has been taking it for over a year and that is how the baby was conceived, increasing his fertility after they had been trying for nine years. The story ends with the image of the baby resembling a giant grub and Albert calling her “our little queen” (Dahl 1990, 288-321).

All stories will firstly be put in a general category between the uncanny and the marvelous. Using Todorov's categories of the marvelous (Chapter I.4), the three authors seem to make use of the hyperbolic and scientific marvelous. Poe and Lovecraft also apply the exotic marvelous. And Dahl mainly makes use of the instrumental marvelous. Second, the concrete existence of supernatural powers will be examined, which are most present in Lovecraft's story. However, Poe's and Dahl's stories defy reason too. Next, the importance of the dread and suspense the story creates in its characters and the reader, will be discussed. This feature was vital to Lovecraft when reading and writing a weird story, as mentioned in Chapter I.4. Fourth, typical of the hyperbolic marvelous, and present in all stories, is the exaggeration of proportions. In Lovecraft's and Dahl's story this is clearly connected to the fifth characteristic of the supernatural: metamorphosis. In “MS. Found in a Bottle” this motif is not as obvious as in FHU and LI. The last supernatural aspect, which Todorov mentions, is the importance of the motif of vision apparent in all three stories and accompanying sights of the unnatural, excess or change. To conclude, the type of narrator is again different in Dahl's story from Poe's and Lovecraft's and Poe makes use of a typical Lovecraftian narrative structure. All three create a single effect ending in a supernatural climax.

Poe – “MS. Found in a Bottle”

As mentioned before, Poe's stories include events that could be perceived as supernatural, but the unreliable narrator makes the reader doubt them and search for other explanations: Poe “brings the reader to the edge of the supernatural, as it were, then leaves him confronting, through an 'unnerved' narrator, the luminous eyes of Ligeia, or the pale figure of Madeline Usher returned from the grave” (Cornwell 1990, 85). Bloom agrees to this statement: “Whilst Poe's tales invoke the supernatural they never exploit it, rather Poe's tales were those of the irrational, concerned with perversity, monomania and obsessions [...] in which knowledge of the unknown coincides with knowledge of the self. In this sense all Poe's tales can be rationally explained” (Bloom 2007, 5). However, “MS. Found in a Bottle” (MS) is one of his stories in which the marvelous does seem to be present. Poe exaggerates the proportions of a boat, which is characteristic of the hyperbolic marvelous, he uses laws that are not of this universe (the crew does not see the narrator and the boat is made of

unknown material), which is typical of the scientific marvelous and there are traces of the exotic marvelous in the incomprehensible “foreign tongue” of the seamen and the fact that the ship sets sail in Batavia (Poe [1833] 1978, 144). So, although Poe's tales are mostly psychologically explainable, he does use supernatural features.

The first example of this, is the mentioning of unnatural aspects which transcend our scientific knowledge. The narrator starts his manuscript by saying that “no person could be less liable than [himself] to be led away from the severe precincts of truth by [...] superstition.” He wants his “incredible tale” to be “considered rather the raving of a crude imagination, than the positive experience of a mind to which the reveries of fancy have been a dead letter and a nullity” (135). Thus, he employs the reader not to believe what he saw, but rather consider it his imagination. That way, his scientific certainties are not destroyed. During his voyage, however, he experiences something inexplicable by science: “I shall never – I know that I shall never – be satisfied with regard to the nature of my conceptions. [...] A new sense – a new entity is added to my soul” (141). He calls it a “miracle [he] escaped destruction” (137) and that he was “not instantly buried” by the water (139), mentions an “unaccountable power” (138) and discovers the ship is “built of a material to which I am a stranger” (142): wood which was “distended by any unnatural means” (143). The narrator even writes about the “kraken,” a mythological monster believed to live in the sea and destroy ships (139). In the end, he states that “it is evident that we are hurrying onwards to some exciting knowledge – some never-to-be-imparted secret” (145). But he still tries to explain everything by reason: “The colossal waters rear their heads above us like demons of the deep, but [...] forbidden to destroy. I am led to attribute these frequent escapes to the only natural cause which can account for such effect. I must suppose the ship to be within the influence of some strong current” (144). In conclusion, MS has supernatural aspects to it, but the narrator tries to explain them employing the scientific laws he knows.

The narrator cannot help being scared because of all the unnatural things he encounters. He mentions words such as terrific, terror, terribly, horror, horrible, awe, fears, frightful, and gloom throughout his account: “All around were horror, and thick gloom, and a black sweltering desert of ebony. Superstitious terror crept by degrees into the spirit of the old Swede, and my own soul was wrapped up in silent wonder” (139). When describing the ship, he also mentions the supernatural accompanying his fear:

But what mainly inspired us with horror and astonishment, was that she bore up under a press of sail in the very teeth of that supernatural sea, and of that ungovernable hurricane. When we first discovered her, her bows were alone to be seen, as she rose slowly from the dim and horrible gulf beyond her. For a moment of intense terror she paused upon the giddy

pinnacle, as if in contemplation of her own sublimity, then trembled and tottered, and – came down (140).

Right before the sea swallows them, he exclaims: “Oh, horror upon horror” (146)! Concerning reader-oriented suspense, Poe deliberately elongates moments of terrible events such as the storm flooding their ship, the collision with the 'ghost ship' and the spiralling down of the ship in the end, all the time making sure the reader feels the threat of the storm hanging over the narrator like the sword of Damocles. The lengthening of supernatural scenes or important revelations, will return in Lovecraft's and Dahl's stories. To conclude, Poe creates an atmosphere of fear and suspense in the narrator and reader.

Another characteristic of the (hyperbolic) marvelous, is exaggeration of dimensions. In MS this pertains mostly to the “gigantic ship” which was “at a terrific height directly above us, [...] upreared upon the summit of a wave more than hundred times her own altitude, her apparent size exceeded that of any ship of the line or East Indiaman in existence” (140). A few more times the narrator mentions her “huge hull” (140), “the huge timbers of the ship” (141), her “huge size and overgrown suits of canvass” (142) and her “enormous bulk” (143). Also the end scene contains excessive dimensions: “we are whirling dizzily, in immense concentric circles, round and round the borders of a gigantic amphitheatre, the summit of whose walls is lost in the darkness and the distance” (146). So, Poe uses exaggeration in his construction of the supernatural.

What is not as explicitly present in MS as in Poe's other narratives and Lovecraft's and Dahl's stories, is a metamorphosis. In FHU there is the death of Roderick and Madeline and “what we call 'death,' is but the painful metamorphosis” from “worm” into “butterfly” (Poe [1844] 1978, 1037). And in LI, of course, there is the transformation of Rowena into Ligeia. MS contains a more subtle change of the rational narrator into someone who feels “as [he has] never felt before” after encountering so many unimaginable sights (Poe [1833] 1978, 145). The weather and, along with it, the movement of the sea keep on changing throughout the story: The sea “was undergoing a rapid change and the water seemed more than usually transparent. [...] The air now became intolerably hot, [...]. As night came on, every breath of wind died away, and a more entire calm it is impossible to conceive” (136). In conclusion, the main character, the weather and the sea are subject to metamorphosis.

All these supernatural occurrences are accompanied by references to vision. The change of the weather is announced by an elaborate observation:

One evening, leaning over the taffrail, I observed a very singular, isolated cloud, to the N.W. It was remarkable, as well for its color, as from its being the first we had seen since our

departure from Batavia. I watched it attentively until sunset, when it spread all at once to the eastward and westward, girding in the horizon with a narrow strip of vapor, and looking like a long line of low beach. My notice was soon afterwards attracted by the dusky-red appearance of the moon, and the peculiar character of the sea (136).

Also the exaggerations in MS are accompanied by the motif of sight. When the gigantic 'ghost boat' appears, the narrator's companion cries: "See! see! [...] Almighty God! see! see! [...] Casting my eyes upwards, I beheld a spectacle which froze the current of my blood" (139-140). The excessive sea has "billows a thousand times more stupendous than any [he has] ever seen" (143) and in the end "about a league on either side of us, may be seen, indistinctly and at intervals, stupendous ramparts of ice, towering away into the desolate sky, and looking like the walls of the universe" (145). The supernatural aspects are also highlighted this way. The narrator is "looking at the [unnatural] timbers of the ship" (142), the captain has a "fiery, unquiet eye" (144), "his gray hairs are records of the past, and his gray eyes are sybils of the future" (144). The eyes of the other members of his crew "glistened with the rheum of years" (143) and they "glide to and fro like the ghosts of buried centuries; their eyes have an eager and uneasy meaning" (144-145). A striking observation is that they cannot see him: "Concealment is utter folly on my part, for the people *will not* see. It was but just now that I passed directly before the eyes of the mate" (141). Thus, the metamorphoses, exaggerations and supernatural aspects in MS are addressed through the motif of vision.

The homodiegetic narrator of MS is again doubting his own sanity which enables Poe to explore the boundaries of the natural and supernatural. Punter asserts that "Poe [...] uses the brevity of his tales as a way of withholding the judgement on even the existence of the supernatural, which after all may not be present" (Punter 1980, 210). This is analogue to previous findings concerning FHU and LI. Unique to MS is that it uses the Lovecraftian hallmark of finishing the story when the narrator is no longer capable of writing or about to die. This typical feature does not occur in HWR or "The Colour Out of Space," but in CA the end of the story is the end, not of the narrator's, but of Dr. Muñoz's life. It does concern the narrator in other narratives from *The Call of Cthulhu and Other Weird Tales* (2011) such as "Dagon," "The Hound," "The Call of Cthulhu," and "The Haunter of the Dark". To return to Poe's story, everything contributes to the impact of the last scene in which the 'ghost ship' and its supernatural crew sink. Here we find its single effect. So, MS has a doubting narrator who tells his story spiralling towards the supernatural climax.

In conclusion, MS is a supernatural story in its mentioning of things that transcend our scientific knowledge. Its main character is scared which infects the reader through the suspense created. The unnatural aspects, the excessive dimensions of the boat and waves and the

metamorphoses of the narrator, weather and sea, are accompanied by motifs of vision. Everything is told by a narrator who doubts his own sanity while constantly coming closer to his own destruction.

Lovecraft – “The Colour Out of Space”

Lovecraft's narratives, in particular the Cthulhu Mythos, contain clear supernatural aspects: “We think we're in Gothic horror land. It starts with stories of werewolves and vampires, but ends with science fiction” (“Weird Tales: The Strange Life of H.P. Lovecraft” 2006, my transcription). As mentioned before, his cosmic tales give evidence of a deterministic world view in which supernatural beings have the power to destroy everything. The British fantasy writer Neil Gaiman describes it as follows:

Most horror, traditionally, has been essentially a ghost train ride: you climb onto the ghost train, you head off into the darkness where the horror is waiting and at the end of the story you bounce out back into the daylight, the monsters are defeated, things were hard, but you're okay. Lovecraft doesn't offer that: you don't get off the ghost train (“Weird Tales: The Strange Life of H.P. Lovecraft” 2006, my transcription).

His tales are also called 'cosmic' because Lovecraft “goes one step further than a lot of other fantasy writing. He does not merely say that there are strange and terrible things out there, but this is in fact the structure of the universe” (“Weird Tales: The Strange Life of H.P. Lovecraft” 2006, my transcription). These characteristics return in “The Colour Out of Space” (COS): The colour destroys whatever and whoever it wants and there is no relief at the end of the story, the threat lingers on. There are signs of the hyperbolic marvelous in the disproportionate fauna, flora and people. The unnatural character of 'the colour' and its effects, are indications of the scientific marvelous. And the exotic marvelous is represented in the “terrible language that was not of earth” (Lovecraft 2011, 183) – which the wife of Nahum and one of his sons speak after being affected by the colour – and the fictional setting “West of Arkham” (170). To conclude, the supernatural is very much present in Lovecraft's stories in general and COS in particular.

There is an enormous amount of references in COS to 'magic' (198), 'folklore' (171), 'secrets' (173), 'mystery' (170), 'legends' (171), the 'unreal' (171), the 'unknown' (174), the 'strange' (170) and 'bizarre' (175). These all stress the fact that the colour cannot be defined by our knowledge: “The colour [...] was almost impossible to describe; and it was only by analogy that they called it colour at all” (175-176). Its effects are just as inexpressible: “Something was taken away – she was being drained of something – something was fastening itself on her that ought not to be” (181-182). It

even “puzzled men of science [who were] faced by the unknown” (175). The narrator expresses his belief in science when he says that “city men and college chemists” and “botanists [...] might shed light on the country notion that the blight is spreading—little by little, perhaps an inch a year” (197-198). Ammi tries to think “scientific,” but concludes that “it wasn't right – it was against Nature – and he thought of those terrible last words of his stricken friend, 'It come from some place whar things ain't as they is here... one o' them professors said so...’” (192). This utterance refers to the cosmic aspect of the story:

What it is, only God knows. In terms of matter I suppose the thing Ammi described would be called a gas, but this gas obeyed laws that are not of our cosmos. This was no fruit of such worlds and suns as shine on the telescopes and photographic plates of our observatories. This was no breath from the skies whose motions and dimensions our astronomers measure or deem too vast to measure. It was just a colour out of space – a frightful messenger from unformed realms of infinity beyond all Nature as we know it; from realms whose mere existence stuns the brain and numbs us with the black extra-cosmic gulfs it throws open before our frenzied eyes (199).

This excerpt is a clear example of the scientific marvelous as defined by Todorov. Many other references are made to “the weird visitor from unknown stellar space” (174) that “was nothing of this earth [...] and as such dowered with outside properties and [was] obedient to outside laws” (176). It is “without a place among the known tints of earth” (180), “not any colour of our earth or heavens” (197) and a “lone, weird message from other universes and other realms of matter, force, and entity” (177). As Ammi puts it in his rural way of speaking: “They's more to this nor what we know. [...] It must be somethin' from away off in the sky like the men from the college last year says the meteor stone was. The way it's made an' the way it works ain't like no way o' God's world. It's some'at from beyond” (192). In conclusion, and parallel to MS, COS has a scientifically-minded narrator who is overwhelmed by supernatural signs.

This narrator and all characters involved in the story he tells, are at first fascinated by the meteorite, but when they see the effect it has on plants, animals and humans, become scared. This fear is partly created by the superstitious village mentality. Thus, Lovecraft creates “the kind of horror that does not focus on [...] blood, but rather on [...] fear, the fear that there is 'something' our tiny monkey brains cannot comprehend, and if we do witness it, this monkey brain explodes” (Voets 2015, 26, my translation). References to this anxiety are found in words such as 'anxious' (190), 'fear' (197), 'feared' (173), 'fearsome' (193), 'frightened' (172), 'fright' (185), 'frightful' (187), 'afraid' (182), 'shivered' (186), 'trembling' (187), 'shuddered' (184), 'nervously' (187), 'terror' (192), 'terrible'

(195), 'horror' (197), 'horrible' (198), 'horribly' (185), 'horrifiedly' (188), 'dread' (194), 'awe' (193) and 'awful' (194) throughout the story. The reader-oriented suspense is again created by lengthy descriptions of supernatural scenes such as that of the “blasted heath” on which the story unfolds: “Everything that had ever been living had gone. Five eldritch acres of dusty grey desert remained, nor has anything ever grown there since. To this day it sprawls open to the sky like a great spot eaten by acid in the woods and fields” (Lovecraft 2011, 197). Another dreadful passage is created when Ammi visits Nahum and his wife because he has not heard from them in over two weeks. Elaborately staged in over four pages, the narrator describes how Ammi finds the demented Nahum at home, visits and kills Nahum's mutated wife in the attic and how Nahum is physically disfigured and ultimately killed by the colour. The story ends in a cliff-hanger: “Something terrible came to the hills and valleys on that meteor, and something terrible – though I know not in what proportion – still remains” (199). Here, the narrator repeats the “dying words of Nahum's”: “Can't git away... draws ye... ye know summ'at's comin', but 'tain't no use...” (199). In Dahl's story we will find that the suspense during the story has a different subject, but he too ends with a cliff-hanger. To conclude, COS describes a fear of the supernatural in its characters and creates dread in the reader through suspense during and at the end of the story.

Another feature of the marvelous is the exaggeration of dimensions, found here mainly in fauna and flora. Considering the plants, “the trees grew too thickly, and their trunks were too big” (171), resulting in “fat oaks” (199). Also the “fruit was growing to phenomenal size” (177) and the “skunk-cabbages [...] were monstrous”: “Never were things of such size seen before” (178). In relation to the animals, the narrator describes a rabbit that takes unnatural long leaps with “proportions [...] slightly altered in a queer way impossible to describe, while its face had taken on an expression which no one ever saw in a woodchuck before” (178). There are “strangely puffed insects” (182) and the “hogs grew inordinately fat, then suddenly began to undergo loathsome changes which no one could explain” (183). In the end, “something struck the cows. Certain areas or sometimes the whole body would be uncannily shrivelled or compressed, and atrocious collapses or disintegrations were common. In the last stages – and death was always the result – there would be a greying and turning brittle like that which beset the hogs” (183-184). So, in COS, the hyperbolic supernatural is conjured up by disproportionate fauna and flora.

These measurements are the consequence of metamorphoses: “Things moved and changed and fluttered” (181). The colour is changing everything to grey and brittle: “All the verdure was going grey, and was developing a highly singular quality of brittleness” (181), “the vegetation was turning grey and brittle” (182). The animals have the same fate: “The swine began growing grey and brittle” (183) and “poultry turned greyish and died very quickly” (183). Even Nahum falls victim to the colour: “Everything had happened in the last half-hour, but collapse, greying, and

disintegration were already far advanced. There was a horrible brittleness, and dry fragments were scaling off” (188). Also his two sons are found and “the fragments shewed that they had both suffered from the grey brittle death. Why was everything so grey and brittle” (191)? Besides these external metamorphoses, there is also the internal change of perception on the Gardner family. At first, they are popular because of the meteorite on their land, then, they are called crazy because of the changes around their house and in their mental state, and in the end they are hushed up when the town folk only whisper in fear of “the strange days” (170; 172; 173; 179; 193; 198). In conclusion, we find both physical and mental metamorphoses in COS.

The occurrences of the unnatural, exaggerations and metamorphoses are all expressed through the motif of vision. The “professors” could not believe the supernatural they “had indeed seen with waking eyes” (176) and “The Gardners took to watching at night – watching in all directions at random for something... they could not tell what” (180). They discover that trees are moving while there is no wind: “Mrs. Gardner was the next to see it from the window as she watched the swollen boughs of a maple against a moonlit sky” (181). When Ammi notices this, he is in the farm with policemen: “The others looked at him, and then quickly followed his own gaze upward to the point at which its idle straying had been suddenly arrested” (193). As they return from the farm, they “looked back” and saw “a fearsome sight. All the farm was shining with the hideous unknown blend of colour” (195). Seeing (the effects of) the colour made a big impression on Nahum: “I seen it... a kind o' smoke” (188), “I seen it the fust time this week” (188) and “I seen it time an' agin” (189). The entire essence of the colour may even be located in its observation: “Artists shiver as they paint thick woods whose mystery is as much of the spirit as of the eye” (198). Concerning the disproportionate metamorphoses that take place, “the change in grass and leaves became apparent to the eye” (181). However, in the corpses of Nahum and his wife, these changes are to gruesome witness: “No one could look long at them, and even the medical examiner admitted that there was very little to examine” (190). In Ammi, the metamorphosis is only partially completed and “his eyes drooped in a curious way,” not being able to cope with what he has seen (172). Todorov mentions the importance of mirroring, which would occur if the metamorphosis of the supernatural location into a water reservoir, would be executed: “Then the dark woods will be cut down and the blasted heath will slumber far below blue waters whose surface will mirror the sky and ripple in the sun” (170). Thus, in COS mention of sight co-occurs with the supernatural.

The contrast between natural and unnatural, believable and unbelievable, is stressed by the homodiegetic narrator who does not really doubt the story, but tries to interpret it as rational as possible: “Often I had to recall the speaker [Ammi] from ramblings, piece out scientific points which he knew only by a fading parrot memory of professors' talk, or bridge over gaps where his sense of logic and continuity broke down” (173). After hearing the entire narrative he states: “Do

not ask me for my opinion. I do not know—that is all” (198). However, he seems to be convinced that some of it was true: “I doubt very much if Ammi consciously lied to me, and I do not think his tale was all a freak of madness as the townfolk had forewarned” (199). It is still “troubling [his] sleep” (199). The story Ammi tells is a negative spiral starting with excitement because of the meteorite and ending in the destruction of plants, animals and humans. The narrator's narrative works towards the cliff-hanger that the colour still remains. So, COS has a rational narrator who cannot deny the supernatural story told with the single effect of destruction and lingering danger.

In conclusion, the story contains hyperbolic, exotic and scientific supernatural features which contrast with the accepted scientific laws. The characters are frightened because of these and COS creates suspense drawing in the reader who is left on the 'ghost train' in the end. Contributing to this effect are external and internal metamorphoses ending in supernatural proportions of fauna, flora and human beings. The motif of vision accompanies the supernatural described by a narrator who does not know what to think of the tale he hears and tells. Ammi's story ends in a supernatural climax of destruction and the narrator's tale concludes with a cliff-hanger of persistent danger.

Dahl – “Royal Jelly”

Dahl's previous two short stories discussed (LL and WM) are examples of the instrumental marvelous. The actions of stuffing humans and preserving a living brain are quite possible within the known laws of nature. Only a few other stories in *Tales of the Unexpected* can be called marvelous, most are uncanny or rationally explainable. “Royal Jelly” (RJ), however, belongs to the scientific marvelous or science fiction, because humans transforming into bees is impossible according to contemporary science, even though it is rationally founded within the narrative. It is also hyperbolic marvelous in its exaggeration of human dimensions. Thus, RJ shows characteristics of the scientific and hyperbolic marvelous.

Proof of the unnatural aspects can be discovered in the inability of the doctors to decide what is wrong with the baby: “If only they could *find out* what was wrong” (Dahl 1990, 289). Mabel cannot believe it is natural: “You can't tell me it's natural for a six-week-old child to weigh less, less by more than *two whole pounds* than she did when she was born” (289)! Also Albert has a supernatural quality to him in connection to bees: “He never got stung. [...] His father [...] said there must be some witch's stench about the boy, [...] and that no good would ever come of it, hypnotizing insects like that. But the mother said it was a gift given him by God” (291). And then there is the royal jelly which does “marvellous things” (305): “It's magic [...]. Pure magic” (303), one of the “miracles of the hive. In fact it's the biggest ruddy miracle of them all. It's such a hell of a big miracle that it's baffled the greatest men of science for hundreds of years” (310). When Mabel

notices the growth it causes in the baby, she is excited at first: “Isn't it wonderful” (299)? But when she discovers this is because of royal jelly, she does not want her husband to “go putting foreign bodies like that into a tiny baby's milk” (303). She does not think it is “normal for a child to start putting on weight at this speed” (317). Albert, then, wants to console her and provides her and the reader with the scientific background of the supernatural occurrences: “It's perfectly harmless, Mabel, otherwise I wouldn't have done it. It comes from bees” (303). He tells her all about apiculture (beekeeping) and how the larva that becomes a queen, gets more royal jelly than larvae who become worker bees (they receive it only the first three days). The positive effects are growth and the development of ovaries (293-294; 303-307). This, by the way, is true: “Thousands of people have proved it time and time again, famous scientists in every country in the world” (309). It is, however, also believed – but not proven – to boost fertility in humans. Albert mentions a scientific research in which royal jelly enables a man to father “a healthy boy child at the age of ninety” (313). He ascribes this to the fact that scientists found “royal jelly contained [...] eighty to eighty-five percent *unidentified* acids” (310)! When Mabel is still not convinced, he reveals that he has been taking royal jelly for over a year now (“It made me feel so absolutely marvellous”) and that is the reason why she got pregnant in the first place after nine years of trying (320-321). In conclusion, the supernatural connection between Albert and bees, is shunned by his father and cherished by his mother. This is analogue to the worried reaction of Mabel and the excitement of Albert concerning the unnatural growth of their baby and the supernatural effects of royal jelly.

This worry about the supernatural growth, is very prominent in Mabel who states two times: “It worries me to death” (288; 289). But also Albert is affected by it: “everything had gone pretty well for Albert until this strange little baby girl came along and started frightening them out of their wits by refusing to eat properly and losing weight every day” (292). When she starts gaining weight, however, Albert says he “certainly won't” worry anymore, because he believes in the positive effects of royal jelly (300). Mabel, on the other hand, calls it “horrid jelly” (305), is afraid “something terrible [will] happen” (312) and states: “I don't like it at all” (312). And: “It frightens me to death” (314). Also when she notices the changes in her husband and child she is “shocked” (311), “anxious” (317), “frightened” (317), “scared” (318) and “terrified” (318). Albert is frightened when he looks into the unnatural eyes of his child. This will be illustrated when discussing the motif of sight. The fear becomes reader-oriented through “suspense in the air” (299). An important scene in this respect, is the moment Albert tells his wife he has put royal jelly in the baby's milk. This lengthy conversation goes on for two and a half pages (301-303). The reader can already guess what he has done, so the passage is not about a revelation of the external supernatural, but about Mabel's internal reaction to it. Suspense in MS and COS is concentrated on supernatural sights such as weather, landscape or physical appearances. In RJ, however, the suspense is in the confession Albert

makes to his wife. Another example of such a revelation (which is also a surprise for the reader) is that he had been taking royal jelly himself to increase his fertility. Similarly to Lovecraft's COS, the story ends with a cliff-hanger in Mabel's and the reader's realization of what Albert has done and the uncertainty about the effects it will have on the baby that is already referred to as a "queen" (321). To conclude, RJ displays fear of the supernatural in the character of Mabel and suspense for the reader in the internal reaction to (confessions of) the supernatural concluding in a cliff-hanger.

The fear is a reaction to the hyperbolic marvelous found in the dimensions of bees, the child and Albert. The royal jelly causing the growth, is produced by a queen bee that has the excessive trait of being able to "lay her own weight in eggs in a single day" (306). Royal jelly causes a "honey bee larva [to increase] in weight fifteen hundred times in five days. [...] This is as if a seven-and-a-half-pound baby should increase in that time to five tons" (294). The exaggeration of the baby's proportions starts by contrast with it being "tiny": "Just look at those legs! They're nothing but skin and bone" (289)! Then she starts to gain weight (299; 317), gets "fatter" (296; 299; 317) and "bigger" (299; 317), ending in a disproportionate bee-like baby:

'But Mabel!' Albert cried. 'It's a miracle! She's fat as a puppy!' Indeed, the amount of flesh the child had put on since the day before was astounding. The small sunken chest with the rib bones showing all over it was now plump and round as a barrel, and the belly was bulging high in the air. Curiously, though, the arms and legs did not seem to have grown in proportion. Still short and skinny, they looked like little sticks protruding from a ball of fat (319).

Similar looks can be found in Albert who has a "thick forefinger" (308), a "big round face" (308), a "great bearded face" (318) and a "thick plump pulpy-looking body that was built close to the ground on abbreviated legs. The legs were slightly bowed. The head was huge and round [...]. He was rather grotesque to look at, there was no denying that" (310-311). Thus, supernatural exaggerations can be found in bees, the baby and Albert.

These dimensions are the result of metamorphoses caused by royal jelly which "can transform a plain dull-looking little worker bee with practically no sex organs at all into a great big beautiful fertile queen" (307). The baby starts off having skin of a "pearly translucent quality, and [...] a soft yellow glow all around her" (288), then developing "fuzz on the tummy" (319) and ending "fat and white and comatose, like some gigantic grub that was approaching the end of its larval life and would soon emerge into the world complete with mandibles and wings" (321). Albert too, is starting to "look just a teeny bit like a bee" (311) with his beard of "bee-ish" colour (311-312). Mabel watches him "as he buzzed around in front of the bookcase with his bristly head and

his hairy face and his plump pulpy body” and thinks there is “a touch of the bee about this man” (311). He had “no skin showing at all on the neck, not even at the sides below the ears. The whole of it, to a point where it disappeared into the collar of the shirt, was covered all the way around with those shortish silky hairs, yellowy black” (321). A final physical resemblance to a bee can be seen when he has “his hands clasped high in front of him, level with his chest, and he [is] rubbing one palm against the other, making a soft scraping noise” (320). And of course, Albert also goes through the metamorphosis of becoming fertile. Besides the external transformations, he also experiences an internal change. The royal jelly makes him “feel so absolutely marvellous [...] and so sort of completely different to what [he] was before” (321). In conclusion, RJ contains the physical metamorphoses of a larva into a queen bee, a baby into a giant grub, and the childless Albert into a fertile bee-like man who has also gone through a mental change.

The supernatural revelations, proportions and metamorphoses are accompanied by motifs of vision. The word 'eyes' (288) is mentioned thirteen times, and throughout the story the narrator uses (derivations of) the word 'watch' (297) seven times, 'look' (288) forty-one times, 'see' (288) twenty-four times, and 'gaze' (300) three times. Firstly, the unnatural relation between Albert and bees is related to “hypnotizing” (291). The supernatural conception of the baby clearly had implications concerning vision, because “when she had opened her eyes [...] he had gazed into them and seen something that frightened him to death – a kind of misty vacant stare, as though the eyes themselves were not connected to the brain at all but were just lying loose in their sockets like a couple of small grey marbles” (292). Also the revelations of Albert's wrongdoings which had supernatural implications, are accompanied by references to sight (301-307; 318-321): Mabel's eyes were “blazing, and she looked [...] as though she were about to [...] peck his eyes out” (319), whereas Albert's “eyes were glinting” (320). Secondly, the bodily excesses are connected to sight: “Doesn't she look better? [...] Doesn't she look fatter in the face” (296)? And: “Take a good look and tell me if you see anything different.' He peered closely at the baby” (317). And finally, the metamorphoses are observed too. Mabel discerns her man resembles a bee when she is “looking at him,” thinking that “she had often seen women grow to look like the horses that they rode, and [...] noticed that people [...] frequently resembled in some small but startling manner the creature of their choice” (311). Also in the last scene “the big heavy haunted-looking eyes of the woman were moving intently over the man's face and neck” (321). Noticing changes in the baby, Albert exclaims: “Look! [...] She's even beginning to get a bit of fuzz on the tummy to keep her warm” (319)! And: “Mind you,' he said, turning away from her, gazing lovingly now at the baby, 'it's going to work far better on a tiny infant than on a fully developed man like me. You've only got to look at her to see that, don't you agree?' The woman's eyes travelled slowly downward and settled on the baby” (321). To conclude, motifs of vision accompany signs of the unnatural, exaggerations and metamorphoses.

The narrator in RJ is heterodiegetic and the story is presented as factual. However, the doubts reflected by the narrators of MS and COS are present in the figure of Mabel. She says “I don't believe” it/that twice: when Albert confesses to putting something in the milk and when he tells her worker bees and queens are hatched out of the same egg (302; 308). When he explains to her how royal jelly transforms a larva into a queen, she replies: “It's pretty hard to believe, [...] that a food can do all that” (309). The story starts with explanations about bees and royal jelly, goes on to describe its effect on Albert and the baby and ends with the insight of how she was conceived and the question how she will turn out, thus creating a crescendo of supernatural revelations. So, RJ creates the doubt of the supernatural through a character instead of the narrator, and produces a single effect towards a supernatural disclosure and cliff-hanger.

In conclusion, this scientific and hyperbolic marvelous story reveals the supernatural in the relation of Albert with bees, the sudden growth of the baby and its conception as a result of taking royal jelly. Fear at the sight of the supernatural is present mostly in Mabel and lengthy descriptions of her reaction create suspense for the reader culminating in a cliff-hanger as to what her baby will become. The hyperbolic is found in physical proportions of bees, the baby and Albert. These are consequences of external metamorphoses occurring together with an internal change in Albert. The supernatural changes and dimensions are accompanied by motifs of vision. Although the heterodiegetic narrator presents RJ as factual, everything is questioned by Mabel who cannot stop the story from becoming more and more supernatural.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the reconstruction of the three major theoretical concepts and analysis of nine different short stories offer a more nuanced look into the similarities and differences in the use of Gothic themes by E.A. Poe, H.P. Lovecraft and Roald Dahl. In general, we find that Poe's narratives have a rational or psychological explanation and are therefore uncanny rather than marvelous. Although Lovecraft creates a realistic setting, his tales show clear signs of the scientific marvelous or science fiction. They contain cosmic horror and bring no relief to the reader in the end. Dahl's stories revolve to a great extent around the reaction of the characters or reader to the events which are mostly uncanny or instrumental marvelous.

There are clear similarities between the three authors in their use of uncanny, grotesque and supernatural characteristics. They all create an atmosphere of anxiety in their characters and reader-oriented suspense, working towards a climax in a single effect. In their descriptions, they play with dimensions and proportions using excess and exaggeration. These are usually connected to physical and mental transformations or metamorphoses. Furthermore, the motif of vision occurs in each of the nine stories discussed. Thus, this demonstrates there is great coherence in the themes of their Gothic short stories throughout two centuries.

The main difference is situated in the type of narrator employed and the implications for the credibility of the story. Dahl's stories have heterodiegetic narrators whereas Poe's and Lovecraft's have homodiegetic narrators who are not to be trusted because they are scared, demented or drugged. In their dreamlike state they try to create a rational setting for their tale, but it still revolves around the uncanny, grotesque or supernatural encounters. Dahl's narratives are more about the reaction of the character to the events and they stress the moment of revelation rather than the reason or impact of it.

It is remarkable how many influences of the Gothic can still be found in contemporary culture. Tim Burton has already been mentioned in connection to Poe and Dahl and is one of the main Gothic artists presently active. An example of Lovecraft's legacy can be found in the British science fiction series *Doctor Who*. The aliens known as the Ood have tentacles protruding from their face and resemble the Old Ones described in the Cthulhu Mythos as having a "squid-head" (Lovecraft 2011, 168). Also the first series of *True Detective* is called a "cross-pollination of crime fiction and the cosmic horror as popularised by H.P. Lovecraft" (Voets 2015, 26, my translation). Further interesting research could involve the analysis of visual aspects in Poe's, Lovecraft's and Dahl's work and why they are suited for adaptation in television series or movies.

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