

## **Edgar Allan Poe's Linguistic Talent in formulating Terror and Horror in "The Tell-Tale Heart"**

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### **Abstract**

This paper argues that the transition from syntactic structures of inversions and dashed statements to structures following the underlying structure [NP VP [NP/0] [PP]] in Edgar Allan Poe's "The Tell-Tale Heart" induces the effect of perceiving two levels of fear — terror and horror. The story is full of PPs' fronting as in "Above all was the sense of hearing acute". Also there are other inversions and numerous parentheticals as in "True!—nervous—very, very dreadfully nervous I had been and am; but why will you say that I am mad?" In contrast to these structures, the story has sentences with no syntactic inversions or even parentheticals as in "He was stone dead". By the syntactic inversions and the parentheticals, we, as readers, perceive terror. When reading the sentences composed with no inversions or parentheticals, however, we experience a frozen level of fear — the horror. Linguistically, the story has transitions from a factive world, the world of horror, to a reflective world, the world of terror, and vice versa. As Arthur Palacas (1989) puts it, "each and every meaning expressed in a (spoken or written) text is assigned to a linguistic world" (p. 508). Poe creates gothic in "Tell-Tale Heart" through syntactic and pragmatic transitions.<sup>2</sup> Due to moving from one linguistic world to another, the story conveys terror and horror.

**Keywords:** Poe, terror, horror, syntactic structure, pragmatic transitions

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\* قسم اللغة الإنجليزية، جامعة مؤتة، الأردن.

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## الموهبة اللغوية لإدغار آلان يو في صياغة الهلع والرعب في قصة "القلب الشاهد"

عنود زياد الطراونة

### ملخص

توضح هذه الورقة بأن الانتقال من البنى النحوية للانقلابات والجمل المتقطعة إلى البنى التي تتبع البنية الأساسية (اسم- فعل- اسم- تعبير الجر) في قصة القلب الشاهد لإدغار آلان يو يؤدي إلى تأثير إدراك مستويين الخوف - الهلع والرعب. القصة مليئة بتقديرات الجار والمجرور كما في "قبل كل شيء كان الشعور بالسمع". هناك أيضا بعض الانقلابات اللغوية والجمل المعترضة كما هو الحال في "صحيح- عصبي، شديد التوتر بشكل مخيف كنت وما زلت؛ ولكن لماذا تقول إنني مجنون؟" على النقيض من هذه البنى النحوية، فإن القصة تحتوي على جمل دون أي انقلابات لغوية أو حتى جمل معترضة كما في "لقد كان ميتا كالحجر". من خلال الانقلابات النحوية والجمل المعترضة، نحن كقراء نتصور الهلع. عند قراءة الجمل المكونة من دون أي انقلاب نحوي فإننا نشهد مستوى متجمدا من الخوف-الرعب. لغوياً، تنتقل القصة من عالم حقيقي، عالم من الرعب، إلى عالم انعكاسي، عالم الهلع. والعكس صحيح. كما وضح آرثر بالاكاس (1989)، "يتم تعيين كل معنى معبر عنه في نص (منطوق أو مكتوب) إلى عالم لغوي". (ص. ٥٠٨) يخلق بو الخوف في قصته القلب الشاهد من خلال الانتقالات النحوية والبراغماتية. بسبب الانتقال من عالم لغوي إلى آخر، تنتقل القصة الهلع والرعب.

## **Introduction:**

Poe's (1843/2004b) "Tell-Tale Heart" is a short, yet complex and impactful, gothic story told by the killer himself. The narrator attempts to prove his sanity, but ultimately he admits the deed: "'Villains!' I shrieked, 'dissemble no more! [...]--tear up the planks! here, here! --It is the beating of his hideous heart!'" (Poe, 1843/2004b, p. 312). Poe creates linguistic complexity in this and in similar statements to intensify his gothic message. In his famous article "The Philosophy of Composition", Poe (1846/2004a) declares his preference for commencing his writings with "the consideration of an effect" (p. 676). Readers of "Tell-Tale Heart" perceive terror and horror, two feelings of fear which are closely related. Ann Radcliffe, a pioneer of gothic fiction, and literary critics differentiate between these two levels of fear. In "On the Supernatural in Poetry" (1826), Radcliffe states, "Terror and Horror are so far opposite, that the first expands the soul and awakens the faculties to a high degree of life; the other contracts, freezes and nearly annihilates them" (p. 149). David Punter (1998) also articulates the opposition between the two concepts: terror denotes "a limitless implication of the self in a series of actions which persuade us of their inexorability", whereas horror "provides us with shock and surprise" (pp. 236-237). Dani Cavallaro (2002), nevertheless, argues that terror and horror do not oppose one another and that they interact in the same gothic context. Poe represents the erratic and the frozen status of fear in "Tell-Tale Heart" by stylistic, syntactic and pragmatic choices.

## **2 Theoretical Background**

My argument develops on the previous stylistic analyses of the story, and the argument goes further to investigate how terror and horror are featured through syntax and pragmatics. Tsai-Yo Chu (2018) argues that gothic is rendered in Poe's tales through parentheses and figurative language (p. 180). Chu explains that parentheses and "periodic sentences" evoke the thrill sense required for the terror effect (p. 180). Meanwhile, metaphor and simile are the devices that evoke the horror in Poe's stories (p. 181). Yufang Ho (2010), in reading "Tell-Tale Heart", argues that interrogative sentences, exclamatory statements, repetitions, and the use of anaphora and alliteration

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are deployed in the story to demonstrate how the narrator's "anxiety and hysterical emotions" are linguistically conveyed and to contribute to the story's overall effect of terror (p. 150). Shamaila Amir (2018) contends that repetitions help to intensify the tension and insanity in the story (p. 22). Theresa Heyd (2006) examines the narrator's madness which is mocked through pragmatics. Heyd argues that Poe's narrator is "unreliable" and "mad monologist", due to him unintentionally flouting the Gricean maxims of cooperative communication (pp. 231-232). Brett Zimmerman (2005) suggests that the stylistics (syntax, grammar, lexis, and even punctuation) Poe uses in prose complements theme and characterization (p. 8). Zimmerman points out that "Tell-Tale Heart" contains parataxis, phrases and clauses that are not linked to other phrases by coordinating conjunctions (such as and, or, but) (p. 8). The story also has asyndeton, omissions without linking the clauses by conjunctions (pp. 8-9). The presence of these syntactic structures, Zimmerman notes, affects the sentence's speed (p. 9). Zimmerman also suggests that the heavy use of dashes and exclamation marks in "Tell-Tale Heart" features the narrator's hallucinations and shifts of mood (pp. 19-20). The style Poe features indicates the narrator's confusion but also intensifies the story's gothic message.

My argument develops Arthur Palacas' (1989) pragmatic analysis of parentheticals. Palacas (1993) maintains that parentheticals – dashed statements – are reflecting voices that comment on the present "factive world" (p. 259). Diane Blakemore (2009), who examines the use of parentheticals in literature, emphasizes that parentheticals create "meta-representations of someone's thoughts, and, perhaps, more generally, his state of mind" (p. 135). Blakemore suggests that parentheticals "can be used to interrupt a character's train of thought" (p. 140). The current paper considers the structures of the "Tell-Tale Heart" story's questions, its sentences with dashes, and the narrator's movement from simple structured sentences to structures with inversions. Within "Tell-Tale Heart" there are 18 paragraphs consisting of 142 sentences. The sum of the sentences composed with transformations and dashed phrases is 94.<sup>3</sup> In contrast, 48 sentences are composed without these features. This paper first examines samples of syntactic transformations and dashed sentences to manifest the terror readers perceive. Second, there is a syntactic and pragmatic analysis to the orderly composed sentences to clarify the horror readers also experience. Third, there is a linguistic examination to the transition between

the worlds of terror and horror being obviously blended in 46 sentences — the sentences having parentheticals - in the story.

### **3 . Erratic Syntactic Structures: Evoking the Terror**

Everyday usage of language, according to Jan Mukařovský, “‘automizes’ or conventionalizes language to the point that its users no longer perceive its expressive or aesthetic potential; poetry must de-automatize or ‘foreground’ language by violating the norms of everyday language” (as cited in Traugott, 1980, p. 31). The underlying structure, the syntactic structure which does not violate “the norms of everyday language”, is [NP VP [NP/0] [PP/0]]. This syntactic structure is frequently used. In “Tell-Tale Heart”, however, 94 sentences with 10 PPs’ fronting, 10 subject-verb inversions and 46 parentheticals dominate the story as its norms. Inconsistent syntactic structures induce our hearts to perceive terror. This becomes the normal usage of language in the story. PP fronting, subject-verb inversions, and parentheticals make terror the background of “Tell-Tale Heart.”

In PP fronting, the prepositional phrase is moved to be the topic of the sentence; the sentence deviates from the structure [NP VP [NP/0] [PP]]. Violating this structure triggers a poetic engagement. In sentence (1.1) below: “Above all was the sense of hearing acute”, the narrator introduces the PP “Above all” to be the topic of the sentence.

(1.1) Above all was the sense of hearing acute. (p. 317)

(1.2) For his gold I had no desire. (p. 317)

(1.3) Upon the eighth night I was more than usually cautious in opening the door. (p. 318)

(1.4) For a whole hour I did not move a muscle, and in the meantime I did not hear him lie down. (p. 318)

(1.5) With a loud yell, I threw open the lantern and leaped into the room. (p. 319)

(1.6) In an instant I dragged him to the floor, and pulled the heavy bed over him. (p. 319)

(1.7) At length it ceased. (p. 319)

(1.8) In the enthusiasm of my confidence, I brought chairs into the room, and desired them here to rest from their fatigues. (p. 320)

The underlying structure of all these eight PPs’ fronting is [NP VP [NP/0] [PP]]. Placing the prepositional phrase in the surface structure, as the narrator does, at the beginning of the sentence differs from its syntactic location at the end of the sentence. When placing the PP “Above all” in front position, as in (1.1), there is a syntactic movement breaking the underlying structure. The syntactic tree of the underlying structure in (1.1): “Above all was the sense of hearing acute”, and the movements occurring in it are shown in Figure 1.

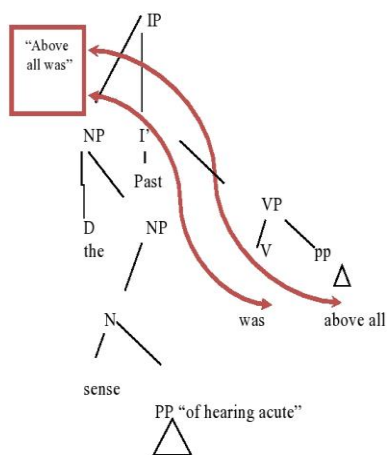


Figure 1. tree diagram for the sentence “Above all was the sense of hearing acute”.

PP fronting in this example from “Tell-Tale Heart” resembles the beatings of the heart while in terror. The fronting of prepositional phrases reflects that the transformed PP establishes the reader’s engagement with the narrator’s state of fear. If omitting any of the above highlighted PPs in (1.1) to (1.8) or even moving it to its original place at the end of the structure [NP VP NP PP], there would be a different impact on us experiencing the terror. The state of terror shatters if not fronting the PPs as the narrator does. Here are suggestions in (1.8 a) and (1.8 b) of replacing and omitting the transformed PP to manifest the terror perceived with the PP fronting that the narrator originally does in (1.8).

(1.8) In an instant I dragged him to the floor, and pulled the heavy bed over him (p. 319).

(1.8 a) I dragged him to the floor and pulled the heavy bed over him in an instant.

(1.8 b) I dragged him to the floor and pulled the heavy bed over him.

Sentence (1.8): “In an instant I dragged him to the floor” presents the PP to the beginning of the sentence. If (1.8) were composed as I suggest in (1.8 a) or even in (1.8 b), the narrator’s emotional state would be consistent due to following the structure [NP VP [NP/0] [PP]]. The narrator, however, deviates from this structure. The narrator formulates the structure [[PP] NP VP [NP]]. The narrator himself is in an abnormal state. It is the state of terror. Readers perceive this state of abnormality due to encountering several PPs’ fronting.

Since “Words differently arranged have a different meaning, and meanings differently arranged have different effects” (Pascal, 1910, p. 15), readers perceive further terror by 10 questions raised in the story. Subject-verb inversion in a question’s structure is a syntactic transformation; the auxiliary verb precedes its subject. In a question such as (2.1) below: “How, then, am I mad?”, the narrator moves the verb “am” to be placed before its subject, the NP “I”. Similar movements occur in the following quotes:

(2.1) How, then, am I mad? (p. 317)

(2.2) Ha!—would a mad man have been so wise as this? (p. 317)

- (2.3) Never before that night, had I felt the extent of my powers—of my sagacity? (p. 318)
- (2.4) And have I not told you that what you mistake for madness is but over acuteness of the sense? (p. 319)
- (2.5) It grew louder, I say, louder every moment! - do you mark me well? (p. 319)
- (2.6) I went down to open it with a light heart,-- for what had I now to fear? (p. 320)
- (2.7) I smiled, —for what had I to fear? (p. 320)
- (2.8) Yet the sound increased—and what could I do? (p. 320)
- (2.9) Why would they not be gone? (p. 320)
- (2.10) Oh God! What could I do? (p. 320)

Figure 2, a syntactic tree-diagram for the question in (2.10): “What could I do?”, for instance, reflects the syntax of the surface structure. There are movements flouting the structure [NP VP [NP/0]]. The subject-auxiliary verb inversion in “could I do?” and the fronting of what, the wh-word, evoke the perception of intense feelings.

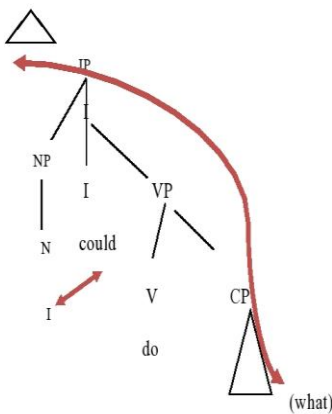


Figure 2. tree-diagram of the question “What could I do?”



By the parentheticals — phrases between dashes or commas — readers experience extreme terror; 46 sentences out of the 94 erratic sentences in the story have parentheticals. Palacas (1989) defines parentheticals as “structures [that] are produced ‘pragmatically’ by being inserted into a sentence, interrupting its normal flow, with the effect of creating a personal voice” (p. 506). To Diane Blakemore (2009), the parenthetical is the author’s means to comment on the character’s thoughts and emotions (p. 146). In “Tell-Tale Heart”, parentheticals reflect the status of terror that readers perceive. If omitting the dashed phrases, the parentheticals, in (3.2) below: “You should have seen how wisely I proceeded—with what caution—with what foresight— with what dissimulation I went to work!”, the impact of terror shatters. Placing the parentheticals between dashes most the time, as the narrator does here, makes the sentence (3.2) more complex. The dashed upward series of parentheticals in “—with what caution—with what foresight— with what dissimulation” emulates the narrator’s abnormal condition reflected in eliciting the terror’s perception in the reader. As Palacas argues, parentheticals “project a reflective voice”; “Syntactically ... parentheticals share a distinctively loose structural connection in the sentence, verging on the absence of any structural connection” (pp. 512, 514). All the parentheticals in “Tell-Tale Heart” reflect the terror readers perceive. If omitting these dashed choppy phrases — the parentheticals — in the following examples (3.1) to (3.10), for instance, the inconsistent terror’s impact implodes.

- (3.1) True!—nervous—very, very dreadfully nervous I had been and am; but why will you say that I am mad? (p. 317)
- (3.2) Hearken! and observe how healthily —how calmly I can tell you the whole story. (p. 317)
- (3.3) I think it was his eye! Yes, it was this! He had the eye of a vulture—a pale blue eye, with a film over it. (p. 317)
- (3.4) Whenever it fell upon me, my blood ran cold; and so by degrees—very gradually—I made up my mind to take the life of the old man, and thus rid myself of the eye forever. (p. 317)
- (3.5) I moved it slowly—very, very slowly, so that I might not disturb the old man’s sleep. (p. 317)

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- (3.6) And then, when my head was well in the room, I undid the lantern cautiously—oh, so cautiously —cautiously (for the hinges creaked) —I undid it just so much that a single thin ray tell upon the vulture eye. (p. 317)
- (3.7) Now you may think that I drew back—but no. (p. 318)
- (3.8) It was not a groan of pain or of grief—oh, no! —it was the low stifled sound that arises from the bottom of the soul when overcharged with awe. (p. 318)
- (3.9) So I opened it—you cannot imagine how stealthily, stealthily—until, at length a single dim ray, like the thread of the spider, shot from out the crevice and fell full upon the vulture eye. (p. 319)
- (3.10) When I had waited a long time, very patiently, without hearing him lie down, I resolved to open a little— a very, very little crevice in the lantern. (p. 319)

To reflect the perceived terror in (3.1), for instance, the sentence with which the story begins, “True!—nervous—very, very dreadfully nervous I had been and am”, the narrator fronts choppy adjectives in parentheticals. The dashed adjectives, the series of parentheticals in “True!—nervous—very, very dreadfully nervous I had been and am” show the narrator’s abnormal condition. The underlying structure of this sentence is “I had been and am true- nervous- very, very dreadfully nervous”. This consistent [NP VP AP] structure makes things sound systematic in the narrator’s heart and mind. Fronting the APs “True!—nervous—very, very dreadfully nervous” and placing them between dashes as parentheticals — reflections on reflections —, however, emulates erratic status. The narrator’s heart and ours in response are pulsing upwardly similar to the incoherent AP fronting placed between dashes as reflections on reflections. Below in Figure 3 is a tree-diagram showing the AP movement of the dashed AP in “True!—nervous—very, very dreadfully nervous I had been and am”. This AP movement breaks what is frequently normal in the structure [NP VP AP].

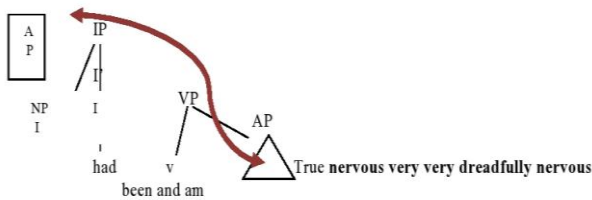


Figure 3.

Also in the dashed sentence (3.2): “Hearken! and observe how healthily —how calmly I can tell you the whole story”, the parenthetical “—how calmly” induces our perceptions to more terror. In (3.2), further, there is an imperative structure in “Hearken” and “observe”. Instead of using a simple patterned sentence as saying, for instance, “Let me tell you what happened with me healthily and calmly,” the narrator uses a pattern other than the [NP VP [NP]]. “[T]he underlying subject of an imperative sentence is a second person NP” (as cited in Green & Morgan, 2011, p. 26). Omitting the “second person NP [you]” in “Hearken! And observe” is to engage us with feeling the narrator’s terror mimicked through placing “—how calmly” in a parenthetical. There is no distance between the I of the narrator and the you of us as readers. By omitting the “second person NP [you]” in the imperative structure of “Hearken” and “observe”, readers experience the narrator’s feelings. This terror mirrors the syntax of placing “—how calmly” in a parenthetical before the VP “tell”. Placing the AP “calmly” in a parenthetical, as the narrator does, is as erratic as the heart’s beatings of terror.

Omitting any of the parentheticals in examples (3.1) to (3.10) influences the terror readers perceive. If sentence (3.8): “Now you may think that I drew back—but no” is composed by omitting the reflective voice in “—but no”, the sentence is structured as if the narrator is relaxed. The dashed phrase “—but no”, however, reflects a secondary voice. Palacas (1989) writes, “physical pauses and intonation shifts – literal shifts of the voice – signal an associated mental shift to a reflective world, which we can equate with a reflective voice” (p. 514). This “reflective voice” is embodied in all the previously quoted examples which have parentheticals and PPs’

fronting. The previously highlighted parentheticals, as this paper's last section shows, occur linguistically in a reflective world that is the world of terror.

By the 94 erratic sentences of the overall 142 sentences in "Tell-Tale Heart", terror functions as the norm of the story. The incoherent 10 PPs' fronting, 10 subject-verb inversions, and 46 parenthetical [ized] sentences ratchet up terror in our hearts to the extent of feeling the erratic heart's beatings of an unrelaxed condition.

#### **4 Consistent Syntactic Structures: Evoking the Horror**

In *The Gothic Flame*, Devendra P. Varma (1988) argues that "The difference between Terror and Horror is the difference between awful apprehension and sickening realization: between the smell of death and stumbling against a corpse" (p. 16). Horror, the feeling of a shock, is represented in the syntax and the pragmatics of thirteen paragraphs out of eighteen in "Tell-Tale Heart". In the story, 48 sentences follow the structure [NP VP [NP/0] [PP/0]]. This structure, different from the 94 sentences which evoke terror, pragmatically goes against the story's norms. Therefore, it is odd to the natural maxims of language in our real world. This reversal of the frequent usage of the language elicits the shock. As readers drawn to the fear mimicked in "Tell-Tale Heart", we presuppose the narrator (as he recalls the murder's experience) to break some Gricean Maxims of cooperative communication.<sup>4</sup> To Grice, the maxim of manner is presenting the information "in an orderly way, and in most cases that includes mentioning events in the order in which they occurred" (Fasold & Linton, 2006, p. 161). In Poe's story, the narrator violates this maxim when using inconsistent syntactic structures to reflect terror. At certain points, though, the narrator speaks in an orderly way. The narrator flouts the dominant erratic maxim of the "orderly" manner in the context of the story. What is syntactically consistent in this story, in contrast to what is normal and natural in the context of the real world, evokes the shock feeling. The sentences without any syntactic transformations or parentheticals activate

our perception of the frozen level of fear. The implied meaning of the syntactically consistent sentences, quoted in the following chart, challenges the dominant pragmatic supposition of inconsistency in the story. This structure elicits perceiving horror. Readers experience a shock due to the narrator's using the following sentences.

Paragraph Number	Examples of untransformed, un-fragmentary, and un-parenthetical sentences
1	I heard all the things in the heaven and in the earth. I heard many things in hell.
2	I loved the old man. He had never wronged me. He had never given me an insult. I think it was his eye.
3	You fancy me mad. Madmen know nothing. I was never kinder to the old man than during the whole week before I killed him. I took me an hour to place my whole head within the opening so far that I could see him as he lay upon his bed.
4	-
5	-
6	I kept quite still and said nothing.
7	I knew the sound well. I say I knew it well. I knew what the old man felt, and pitied him, although I chuckled at heart. I knew that he had been lying awake ever since the first slight noise, when he had turned in the bed. His fears had been ever since growing upon him. He had been trying to fancy them causeless, but could not.
8	-
9	-

10	I knew that sound well, too. It was the beating of the old man's heart. It increased my fury, as the beating of a drum stimulates the soldier into courage.
11	I held the lantern motionless. Meantime the hellish tattoo of the heart increased. The old man's terror must have been extreme! I have told you that I am nervous: so I am. I thought the heart must burst. The old man's hour had come! I then smiled gaily, to find the deed so far done. The old man was dead. I removed the body and examined the corpse. I placed my hand upon the heart and held it there many minutes. He was stone dead. His eye would trouble me no more.
12	If still you think me mad, you will think so no longer when I describe the wise precautions I took for the concealment of the body. The night waned, and I worked hastily, but in silence. First of all, I dismembered the corpse. I cut off the head and the arms and the legs.
13	I then took up three planks from the flooring of the chamber, and deposited all between the scantlings. I had been wary for that.
14	-
15	I bade the gentlemen welcome. I took my visitors all over the house. I showed them his treasures, secure, undistributed.

16	The officers were satisfied. My manner had convinced them. They sat, and while I answered cheerily, they chatted of familiar things. My head ached, and I fancied a ringing in my ears: but still they sat and still chatted.
17	And still the men chatted pleasantly, and smiled. Anything was more tolerable than this decision! I could bear those hypocritical smiles no longer!
18	-

These 48 untransformed sentences lack syntactic movements and parentheticals, and this syntax reflects the narrator’s deliberate cold status. This deliberate usage is natural to the narrator. But, such sentences need to be more erratic; they are about murder. In response to the narrator’s syntactic usage which violates our pragmatic presupposition, readers are shocked. The narrator says the above quoted sentences as if orderly in his mind. Yet, this goes against readers’ pragmatic implicature derived from what is regular. The narrator recalls the death of the old man in the middle of the eleventh paragraph more than any other paragraph, as shown in the above chart. The deliberate coldness in narrating this part creates a shock for us. We presuppose all the sentences in the story to have erratic transformations reflecting the abnormal state of terror. Yet, against this pragmatic and syntactic presupposition — different from ordinary usage of the language — the narrator uses un-fragmented sentences heavily in paragraphs 11 and 12 to represent a weird state of feeling. All of a sudden, there is a shift to avoid fronting even the PP. The narrator is in his own factive world of horror — a world which also pragmatically flouts the norms of inconsistency in the context of the story. This flouting elicits in readers the feeling of horror.

Differently from normal sensibilities, the narrator, without any syntactic transformation, says:

(4.1) The old man was dead. (4.2) I removed the bed and examined the corpse. (4.3) Yes, he was stone, stone dead. (4.4) I placed my hand upon the heart and held it there many times . . . (4.5) He was

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stone dead. (4.6) His eye would trouble me no more . . . (4.7) I cut off the head and the arms and the legs. (p. 319)

None of these seven quoted sentences has any syntactic transformation. Also in the following instances from (4.8) to (4.10), we perceive horror. We presuppose this recalling to be completely erratic — it represents the actual murder. Without even PP fronting, though, the PP is merged in an upward syntactic flow. The narrator says,

(4.8) I then took up three planks from the flooring of the chamber, and deposited all between the scantlings. (4.9) I then replaced the boards so cleverly, so cunningly, then no human eye—not even his – could have detected anything wrong. (4.10) There was nothing to wash out . . . I had been too wary for that. (4.11) A tub had caught all—ha! ha! (pp. 319-320)

The following figure represents (4.8): “I then took up three planks from the flooring of the chamber, and deposited all between the scantlings” as a sample of the narrator’s own factive world of horror.

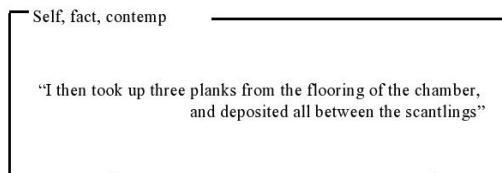


Figure 4.

All phrases in (4.8): “I then took up three planks from the flooring of the chamber, and deposited all between the scantlings” occur in the factive world. There are neither parentheticals nor frontings to be associated with the reflective world. This factive world is completely different from the reflective, erratic world of terror. The lack of PP fronting in the previous quotes (4.1) to (4.9) also reflects that at the moment of recalling the



committed crime, the narrator is weirdly deliberate and coldly orderly. In other words, there is no underlying structure that is syntactically different from the erratic surface structure. In response, readers read the previously quoted sentences, which are narrated without syntactic transformations, with a frozen response. This is the highest level of fear. It is horror. The heart's beatings at this frozen level are not as erratic as in the state of terror. Literally our hearts' beatings are shocked by the lack of syntactic transformations and due to the narrator's language breaking the norms of what is natural to our pragmatic knowledge. This shock is a stable emotional situation similar to the narrator's momentary cold condition. Without any syntactic transformation, the narrator ascertains, "I took my visitors all over the house. I bade hem search [...] I led them, at length, to his chamber" (p. 319). Similarly to this momentary stability in the narrator's syntactic structure, readers are not in a state of terror. Instead, they are shocked due to suddenly experiencing lots of sentences without transformations reflecting what is abnormal.

Using 48 consistent sentences to represent inhumane actions deviates from the norms of our pragmatic presupposition and from the dominant inconsistency represented in 94 erratic sentences projected in the story. By this stylistic deviation from what is already deviant from our frequent usage of the language, we experience horror.

## **5 . The Linguistic Transition between Terror and Horror**

Each "linguistic world", Palacas (1993, p. 242) points out, contains three parameters that define each world: source, mentality, and time. "The primary world of a text", Palacas (1989) writes, "is the speaker's present time factive world, the world of speaker-facts, to which meanings are attributed when there is no call to do otherwise. But meanings expressed by the text may also be attributed to other worlds, as well" (p. 509). Since "Parentheticals offer a speaker's second- order reflection on what he or she is saying" (Palacas, 1993, p. 259), there are factive and reflective worlds in the sentences with parentheticals in "Tell-Tale Heart". The following figure represents "True-nervous- very, very dreadfully nervous I had been and am; but why will you say that I am mad?" as a sample. This sample clarifies the transition between the factive and the reflective worlds of horror and terror within the same sentence.

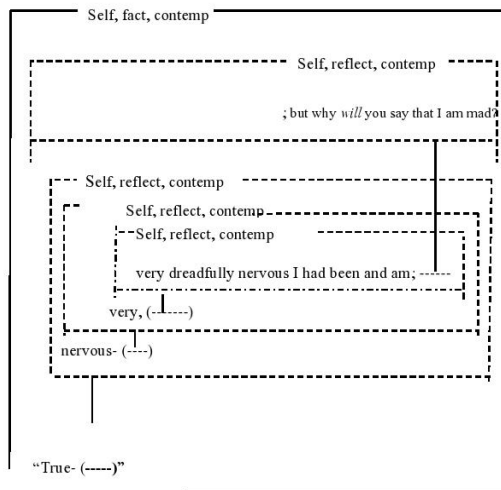


Figure 5.

The series of parentheticals in “-nervous- very, very dreadfully nervous I had been and am” occurs in the narrator’s self, reflective, and present worlds. These worlds are domains of terror. Similarly is the world of the question “but why will you say that I am mad?” due to its subject-auxiliary verb inversion. Ann Banfield (1981) points out, “To ask oneself a question is to bring the content of the question to the level of reflection” (p. 69). Questions occur in the reflective world of terror rather than in the factive world of consistency, the domain of horror. By contrast, the 48 sentences composed without any parentheticals or syntactic inversions, as the following figure manifests, are associated with the factive world that is the world of horror.

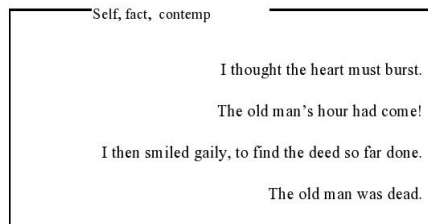


Figure 6.

The transition between terror and horror within the same sentence, however, is more noticeable in the story. Out of 142 sentences, 94 have transformations and parentheticals. The below examples (5.1) to (5.7) present the return, as the beginning of the story does, to the blend of transformations, consistent sentences, and reflections.

(5.1) In the enthusiasm of my confidence, I brought chairs into the room, and desired them here to rest from their fatigues, while I myself, in the wild audacity of my perfect triumph, placed my own seat upon the very spot beneath which reposed the corpse of the victim. (p. 320)

(5.2) But, ere long, I felt myself getting pale and wished them gone. (p. 320)

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(5.3) Yet the sound increased—and what could I do? It was a low, dull, quick sound—much such a sound as a watch makes when enveloped in cotton. (p. 320)

(5.4) Why would they [the police] not be gone?, Oh God! What could I do? (p. 320)

(5.5) I foamed—I raved—I swore! I swung the chair upon which I had been sitting, and grated it upon the boards, but the noise arose over all and continually increased. (p. 320)

(5.6) I felt that I must scream or die!—and now – again!—hark! Louder! Louder! Louder! Louder!— (p. 320)

(5.7) I admit the deed!—tear up the planks! – here, here!—it is the beating of his hideous heart! (p. 320)

In (5.1): “In the enthusiasm of my confidence, I brought chairs into the room”, for instance, the narrator semantically is satisfied with the murder. Syntactically and pragmatically, though, there is a return to the PP fronting in “In the enthusiasm of my confidence”. This situates us, again, in the reflective world, the world of terror. However, by the complement “I brought chairs into the room”, which does not have syntactic transformation, we perceive horror. We move from the world of terror to the consistent world of horror within sentence (5.1).

Similarly, by placing the phrase “ere long” between commas in (5.2): “But, ere long, I felt myself getting pale and wished them gone”, the parenthetical “ere long” reflects inconsistent feelings. Readers also perceive horror by the factive sentence “I felt myself getting pale and wished them gone”. Figure 7 clarifies the transition from terror's world to horror's and vice versa within sentence (5.2).

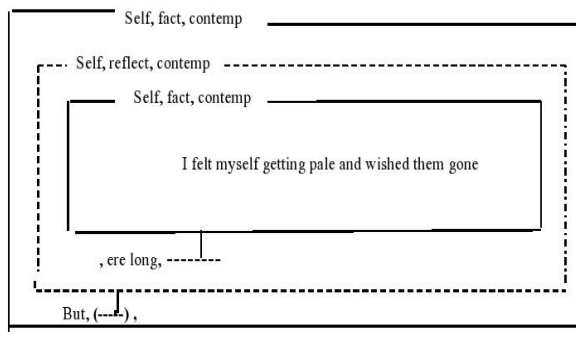


Figure 7.

Similar transitions between the two worlds occur in (5.5): “I foamed—I raved—I swore! I swung the chair upon which I had been sitting, and grated it upon the boards, but the noise arose over all and continually increased”. The sentence “I foamed” occurs in the factive world of horror — it has no syntactic inversions. However, the two parentheticals “—I raved—I swore!” occur in the reflective world of terror. There is another shift to the narrator’s factive world of horror when composing the sentence “I swung the chair upon which I had been sitting, and grated it upon the boards, but the noise arose over all and continually increased”. Figure 8 mimics the blended terror and horror while reading sentence (5.5).

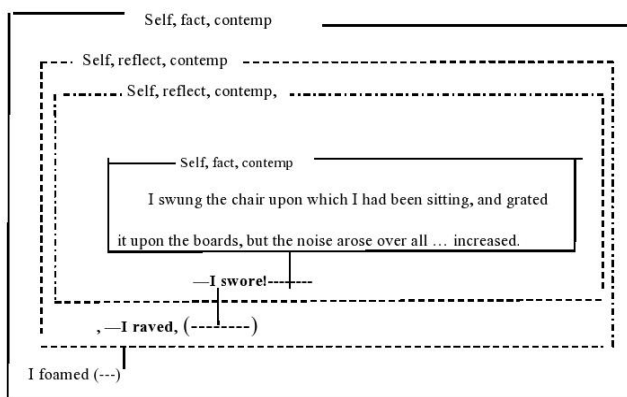


Figure 8.

The narrator’s story animates the tension of terror when projecting seven parentheticals in (5.6): “I felt that I must scream or die!— and now – again!—hark! Louder! Louder! Louder! Louder!--”. We perceive the intensity of terror by these series of parentheticals. The following figure represents the sentence (5.6) as a sample of the critical transition from the factive world of horror being reflected to the seven worlds which emulate terror.

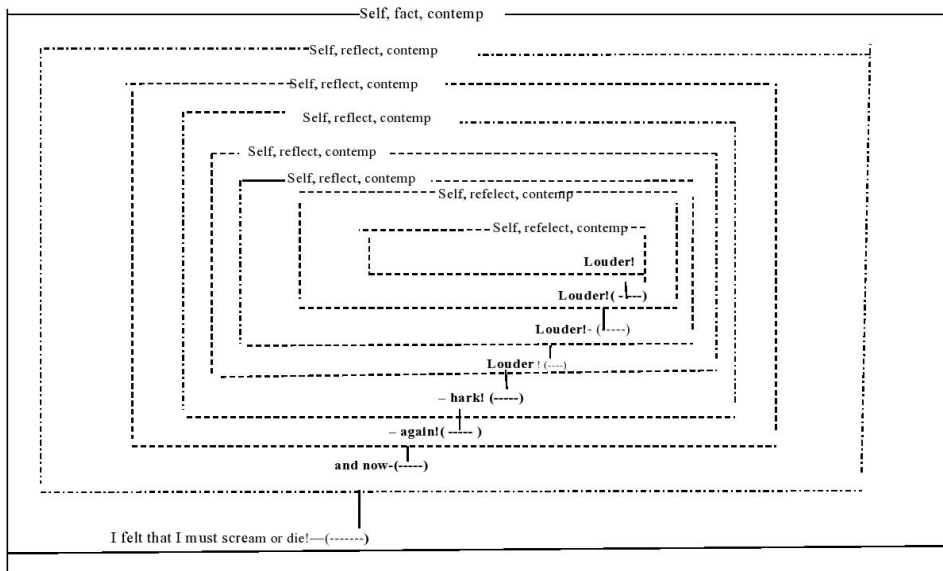


Figure 9.

Here the sentence “I felt that I must scream or die!” occurs in the narrator’s self factive present world of horror. However, the series of parentheticals “--and now – again!—hark! Louder! Louder! Louder! Louder!”— reflects the terror which is associated with the horror of “I felt that I must scream or die!”

Similarly, when admitting to the murder in (5.7): “I admit the deed!—tear up the planks! – here, here!—it is the beating of his hideous heart!”, the narrator presents both horror and terror. Using the consistent archetype in “I admit the deed!” reflects horror. Nevertheless, placing “tear up the planks!” as a parenthetical in addition to repeating the deictic word “here” twice in “tear up the planks! – here, here!—” reflects terror. The following figure represents “I admit the deed!—tear up the planks! – here, here!—it is the beating of his hideous heart!” to clarify the factive horror and the reflective domain of terror.

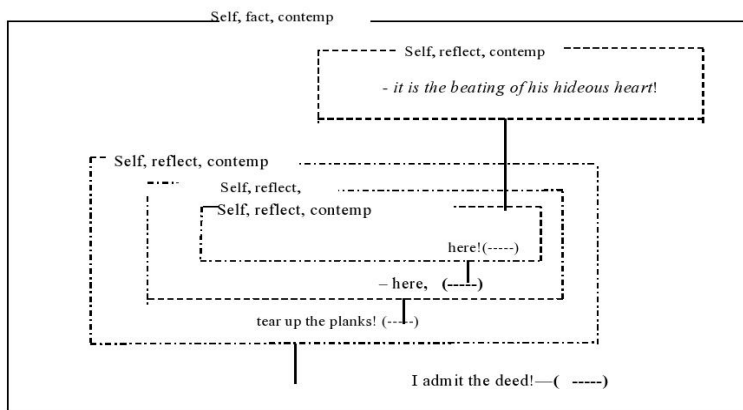


Figure 10.

This last sentence in the story has a series of three parentheticals in “tear up the planks! – here, here! —”. This dashed incoherence is further reflected by the last parenthetical “- it is the beating of his hideous heart!” Before this reflective terror, the sentence begins with the factive confession “I admit the deed”. A clear, sudden transition occurs between the world of horror and that of terror in such a sentence.

## 5. Conclusion

The transitions from syntactic structures of inversions and parentheticals to coherent archetypes in “The Tell-Tale Heart” induce readers to experience both terror and horror. As Michael Burduck explains, this narrator “suffers from fears that transform him into a warped criminal . . . Poe shows how fear often creates demonic effects” (as cited in Couzelis, 2012, p. 27). Through syntactic and pragmatic transitions readers perceive two fears. The transition from what is erratic to what is ordered and vice versa facilitates the perceiving of terror and horror. Also the shifts between the linguistic worlds affect readers’ involvement with two levels of fear. This engagement reflects Poe’s linguistic talent in formulating the gothic in stories such as ‘The Tell-Tale Heart’.



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## **Notes**

1. "The linguistics world model", Palacas (1989) continues, "is intended to capture intuitions" about certain "discourse notions" (pp. 508-509).
2. In her article "Poe and Gothic Creation", Maria Lima (2010) states that "Every creation is thus contaminated with the virus of its annihilation, which led Poe to create a perverse art that was, in part, responsible for his self-destruction" (p. 23). Lima clarifies Poe's "Gothic creativity": "As a site of reflection on the darkest side of creativity, Poe's fiction has become center of attraction for many ethical and aesthetical concerns connected to what has been called "Gothic Creativity", through which the transgressive effects of artistic and intellectual activities are expressed" (p. 25).
3. Sentences which are composed with syntactic inversions and movement do not follow the underlying structure [NP VP [NP/0] ]
4. See Fasold and Linton's (2006) discussion on pragmatics and the Gricean Maxims of cooperative communication in their *An Introduction to Language and Linguistics*, pp. 159-163.

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