



## Analysis of Edgar Allan Poe's "Annabel Lee" (Hermeneutic Structure of the Poem)

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### ABSTRACT

Our task is whom this poem was dedicated. For us by all indications it is clear the poem "**Annabel Lee**" was dedicated to his sister Rosalie Poe. He fell in love with Virginia because she was very similar in many ways to his sister.

**KEYWORDS:** Initial, Maiden, Up and bottom, Concept

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The first thing we should take into account is the beginning of the poem with the fairy tale motifs. "**It was many and many a year ago...**" We know that Edgar Poe's creativity goes beyond of one genre namely prose, he also was excelled in poetry and if we had chosen between these two literary genres as the most significant genre of the writer's personality, then poetry would be the first to choose. The Fairy-tale motives are connected with the writer's childhood as a consequence of one story that happened in the far past. It becomes apparent this is a special occasion for him still memorable in his mind. It is known from writer's biography he was born in Boston in a place where the most part of the city is surrounded by water. Everything in this poem is **initially** determined and involved regarding Time and Space. The time of the story is a Childhood and Space is writer's born place. There lives a mystical and beautiful girl named Annabel Lee. A Name Annabel Lee is consonant with the name of Lenore from "Raven" (... sorrow for the lost Lenore...) Writer describes her as lost as Annabel Lee. This is a girl to whom he connected with the soul. The ancient Jews had a superstition about the life of the soul in the blood. It is important to note the image of Annabel Lee and Lenore has lived in his subconscious since childhood then. Yes, it happens at times he is increasing or is cutting something when it comes to main character, for example, in the poem "Raven" image of Lenore has no different from the image of Annabel Lee. But in the poem "**Eulalie**" main character is "...fair and gentle...blushing bride"<sup>i</sup> For the most part it is an image where the writer's beloved heroine is a girl with the shining eyes.

"...for the rare and radiant maiden whom the angels name Lenore" ("Raven")

"...with love in her luminous eyes" ("Ulalume", pg.24)

"...for her this rhyme is penned, whose luminous eyes" ("A Valentine", pg.31)

<sup>i</sup> Edgar Allan Poe. The poems. – London. George Bell sons New York: Macmillan C., 1900



“...Eyes...lighting my lonely pathway, home that night” (“To Helen”, pg.40)

“...And the stars never rise but I see the bright eyes” (“Annabel Lee”, pg.42)

“...with the thought of the light of the eyes of my Annie” (“For Annie”, pg.45)

In accordance with the psychological behaviorism an image is formulated from the subsequent impressions is not characterized by constancy and is always under the influence of dynamics than an image which was invented in childhood. Therefore, this is the exactly type of the image which was used to accompany at all stages of his life full of difficulties. This image turns out so clean, so lovely and blessed for him as a result. The writer keeps it so carefully so as not to break it into pieces. But almost always how it happens an Evil finds him. He, like someone who desires the pure and the beloved, but lives with the cruelties of reality, does not stay in dreams for long. He is of the opinion of pure and bright love and that is why when it is not happening, he gets offended and this offense has no boundaries. It reaches for the sky. Specifically, for the heavens, he is harboring a grudge. Edgar Poe as an educated man with a rarely writing talent knows that “everything is in the hands of heaven” He sees no salvation on earth and help from other people. This is something to pay attention to, as this character trait will play a key role in his life. As is also known from biography, his foster father was at odds with him. “John Allan, it seems, retained such a lively memory of the household controversies prior to Poe’s departure for the University, that, either through previous deliberate intention, or an after-developed unwillingness to give where it hurt—probably the latter—his remittances to his foster-son were not only inadequate but almost nil”<sup>ii</sup> and he called him “ungrateful” and forced to leave the house for earning money by his own. (pg.157) From the letter of Edgar Poe where he writes to his father:

“If you wish me to humble myself before you, I am humble—  
Sickness and misfortune

have left me not a shadow of pride...” (pg.265)

His hostility can be explained by his adopted son. Poe was not son by blood to him. Not accepting it as one’s own gives rise to everything and leads to the fact that even the smallest things or, with age disappearing actions become visible to the eye. Thus, Allan Poe admit no debts while Poe was studying at the University of Virginia nor any relationship Poe had with other family members. The writer’s seemingly the smallest actions are condemned and punished by his foster father. It brings to the situation that image of Edgar Poe does not go in the best way within society. He is a stranger everywhere because everyone has accustomed to considering him a stranger. Habitual becomes comfortable over time. Simple to the eye terms but exactly these simple terms defined all further existence of the writer. This process is pure phenomenon because of its rarity. But when it happens there will be an effect for every one and for a long time. A lot of questions arise, creating an impression of movement from the bottom up and vice versa.

ii Hervey Allen. Israfel. The life and Times of Edgar Allan Poe. Farrar Rinehart, Inc. On Murray Hill. New York., 1934



And on face of harmonious, orderly movement there is someone who is not aware where to go, where is support. He realizes that in the end there are only people around him and accepts what is happening under the impression of a true believer. Gospel motifs about vicious passions and total remission of all humanity are sounding more and more in his poems. The source of all this is the Bible. Edgar Poe of those times is as victim as Jesus. His words about God’s mercy and remission upon people remind the parable:

“Two other men, both criminals, were also led out with him to be executed. When they came to the place called the Skull, they crucified him there, along with the criminals—one on his right, the other on his left. Jesus said, “Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing.” And they divided up his clothes by casting lots”<sup>iii</sup>

Here is the main reason of his resentment for the heavens.

**I was a child and she was a child,  
In this kingdom by the sea,  
But we loved with a love that was more than love –  
I and my Annabel Lee  
With a love that the winged seraphs of Heaven  
Coveted her and me**

Writer does not remain in the light for long. Behind the sun and bright, one senses the approach of darkness. In almost all of the writer’s works, dark times are presented not simply as darkness, but are enhanced by elements of horror.

“It was now about noon, and darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon for the sun stopped shining” (Bible of Luke, ch.23)

Poe inherited the vision of evil as darkness from folklore, which has a connection with the Bible. Composure of writer justifies itself completely. He was undeservedly offended, deprived, and cruelly punished. They did not act fairly by not recognizing him. It is difficult to imagine the full scale of the writer’s experiences and all this deep disappointment, which leads to a natural end – the death of his beloved

And this was the reason that, long ago  
In this kingdom by the sea,  
A wind blew out of a cloud, chilling  
My beautiful Annabel Lee  
So that her highborn kinsman came  
And bore her away from me  
To shut her up in a sepulcher  
In this kingdom by the sea

iii Bible of Luke. New International version (online, biblegateway.com)

In his opinion “Envy of Heaven” is a reason for that. “...winged seraphs of heaven, coveted her and me”

But here is the paradox. The feeling of envy is not inherent to Good, unlike Evil. As the saying goes “Envy is the gateway to Devil” in Christianity. Then where Edgar Poe exhausted the idea where Good and Evil are intertwined? It is known that even from his student years Poe was influenced by Latin and European culture in general. Studying Po requires knowledge of Latin and Greek. In the years when United States, after the formation of the republic and the constitution, began to develop strongly in economic terms and enter the market industry, Poe was a literary phenomenon where the source of his inspiration was where it originally came from, namely, Europe. There was a huge flow of migrants from England to America, “new land” as it was called later. Poe was enrolled in a faculty of ancient languages although he studied for one semester. He was inclined for writing in Latin or in one of the European languages. His interest to the ancient mythology of the others came from there. Po was, so to say, a connecting bridge between European culture and the American side. Therefore, our analysis is directed towards the all-consuming circle of the writer’s thinking. Answer to this question will be the Greek mythology where even Gods wear the mask of Evil especially when they are angry on somebody.

In this aspect, the object of our interest consists of the “wind” which serves as the killer of his beloved.

**...that the wind came out of the cloud by night**

**Chilling and killing my Annabel Lee**

A similar motif appears in Homer’s **“Odyssey”** To ensure safe passage home for Odysseus and his men Aeolus gave him a bag of wind containing all the winds, except the gentle west wind. But when almost home, Odysseus’ men thinking the bag contained treasure, opened it and they were all driven by the wind back Aeolia.

The image of wind in the classical sense is always change, and it is almost directed to the right path. But Poe has an independent imaginary world transverse to others where is another Time and area. His world is completely engulfed in darkness, and if joy comes, it doesn’t last long. Even Good, so invincible and unchanging, wears its opposite mask there, the mask of evil. Is it any wonder, then, that the Wind, in the poem’s poetic system, is negative and an element of evil, which, in a culminating manner, with decisive cruelty, deprives the poet of his most beloved person. The poem’s very tone initially points toward sadness and grief. This intonation is evident from the very first lines. It feels like a long-standing sadness, a familiar pain. Aren’t there too much the first instances in one text? And what can a person have initially, i.e. at the beginning? We’re inclined to believe that “initial” here is the **key holder** to the intended personage of this poem. Many, if not most, literary scholars interested in Poe’s life have assumed this poem was dedicated to his wife, Virginia Poe. When they have been met each other? Well, Hervey Allen writes:

“August, 1829, marks the beginning of an association that was a vital one in Poe’s life. He had gone to live with the Clemms. ...In this

house the

poet first met his cousin, Virginia Maria Clemm, then a little girl seven

years old who later became his wife” (pg.203-204)

From the poet’s biography it is known that his relationship with his wife was more like a brother-sister relationship.

**“...There is also the very likely possibility that**

**Poe and Virginia had not been living together as man and wife, but that**

**there had been an understanding at the time of the first marriage that**

**he was to wait till Virginia was mature (pg.381)**

We think that text of the poem and heroine is not the visionary one to the naked eye. There is a need to study the text of the verse in the style of hermeneutics as it was done by Augustine. “Rather he sought to explain the nature of the act of belief by analyzing the cognitive value of this way in the larger context of human knowing in general and by carefully distinguishing believing (credere) from, on the one hand, knowing based on evidence (scire) and imagined knowing (opinari) and, on the other, from gullibility (credulitas)<sup>iv</sup>

For Augustine every interpretation should be considered until it becomes an expression of the dominion of love. But if this dominion is already manifested in a literal sense, there is no need to look for a figurative one.

That is how hermeneutics was created in a simple word. So, Poe is connected with the initial instances of life. What would be initial for human being during his lifetime? It would be a childhood, wouldn’t it? “I was a child, and she was a child...” It is interesting that Holidays in honor of Hermes (hermeia) primarily were intended for children and adolescents. There are two methods in hermeneutics for analyzing the text. So, if we decide to analyze a text using hermeneutics, we first need to determine the form of the text. Poe gives us a whole form of it:

**...To shut her up in a sepulchre**

**In this kingdom by the sea**

This is a form of the text where Poe’s Love was bored. Our attention is drawn to the tomb in which the writer’s beloved was buried. We can say that this is the “hidden” form of the entire poem. In hermeneutics, the quadrangle acts as a corpus called a herm. In his subconscious, Poe lives with precisely this restricted world. A world that leaves him limited, where he has no right to go beyond the established boundaries. The writer himself often breaks out of this framework passively and with outside help. It is surprising that Poe, in life, was the opposite example of obedience; he often had arguments with people around him about this. In the end, it turns out that his love is the strongest of all – it is the love that rises (**neither the angels in Heaven above... nor the demons down under**)

iv The works of Saint Augustine. On Christian belief. “New city Press”, New York, Hyde park. Part I.-1990., pg.115

the sea) and continues to exist beyond good and evil. In other words, his love entered the stage of perfection and reached its peak at the moment of death. After her death, she is locked in a tomb that reflects the writer's form of love. As soon as his love goes beyond the temporal world, everything around changes its appearance. “For the moon never beams...the stars never rise...” His love turns everything 360 degrees. It upsurges from the very lowest. The top becomes the bottom, and the bottom becomes the top. (foot and head)

Poe's poems feature the sound of the letter “L.” Lenor, Leonora—the name of a mysterious maiden he often wrote about—is also Consonant with the name of Annabel Lee which was a heroine of his last poem.

“...It was now Summer, and the hot valley of the James took on the  
glittering green of June woodlands and the pied hues of many-colored  
grass. The calmest hours that Poe was ever to know in manhood were  
swiftly passing, a brief respite between poverty and tragedies, the  
memory of this time he has preserved in the tropical idyl of *Eleonora*:

She whom I loved in youth, and of whom T now pen calmly and distinctly  
these remembrances, was the sole daughter of the only sister of my mother long  
departed. Eleonora was the name of my cousin. We had always dwelled together,  
beneath a tropical sun, in the Valley of the Many-Colored Grass. No  
unguided footstep ever came upon that vale; for it lay far away among a range  
of giant hills. . . . Thus, it was that we lived all alone, knowing nothing of the

world without the valley,—I, and my cousin, and her mother...” (pg.320) Edgar Poe writes. This is the girl he loves from a young age and only after getting married does he pass on her qualities to his wife. As we mentioned, his relationship with wife was a sibling relationship above all. What others said about Poe?

“The end of the affair with Mary was to be typical of several to follow  
later. She bears testimony that Poe was passionate. Evidently, he meant to have what all men desire— “Poe didn't value the laws of God or man”—and the cause of the quarrel on the stoop Alary didn't care  
to talk about, but it is also evident that the great excitement of sex,  
like all other “stimulants,” completely unnerved Poe. He was

never  
capable of remaining calm and collected, even rational enough, to overcome  
the normal and proper difficulties that stood between love and the  
prize...” (pg.271)

From a young age he taught himself to love the highest and to stand above earthly pleasures. But what was the reason that he loved so dispassionately, purely and from a distance? Referring to the key holder “initial” we think the reason was his sister Rosalie Poe.

“This “trouble” took the form of clandestine correspondence with the fair virgins immured behind the walls of Miss Jane. The missives were, it appears, supplemented by candy and offerings of “original poetry.” It was Edgar's habit to make pencil sketches of the girls who had most smitten his fancy, and to request these favored maidens to attach locks of their hair to the cards. Little sister, Rosalie, who is described at this time as a “pretty child with blue eyes, rosy cheeks, and of a sweet disposition,” was the postman for Eros until the indignation of Miss Jane and the slipper of Mrs. Mackenzie rudely discouraged the messenger of romance” (pg.85)

They were separated from each other since childhood, and Poe was very worried, sad and upset about this. Various rumors about their family and separated orphans came out and this inevitably created different ideas and relationships in Poe's mind. Hervey Allen wrote:

“Henry, it seems, was considerably upset and impressed by the innuendoes, and as late as 1827 published in the North American in Baltimore a poem entitled Lines on a Pocket Book in which “Rosalie” is addressed as being of doubtful paternity. This poem constitutes the closest approach to an explanation of the Poe family mystery that exists” (pg.117)

Rosalie was to Poe like a distant, unknown, but beautiful girl, whom he always felt warmly. Perhaps this was the main cause for the fullness of roses in Poe's poems. If you compare his sister with his wife, then they will have a lot in common. He painfully searched for his family in the faces of others and developed a habit of loving those who are similar to his loved ones.

“And it is Virginia, too, who is embodied  
in the wasting frame of the Lady Madeline. “The disease of  
the Lady Madeline had long baffled the skill of the physicians. A settled apathy, a gradual wasting away of the person,” her strange relations  
with her brother in the story, and his unmentionable reason for wishing to entomb her alive, all recall the long tortures that Poe underwent  
by the bedside of his slowly fading wife and cousin” – notes Hervey Allen.

In 1812, Rosalie Poe baptized and christened with the name of

Rosalie Mackenzie after separation with Edgar Poe. Well known that Poe sometimes visited her during the school years. In 1849, shortly before his death Poe traveled to Richmond and visited Rosalie. She was the one who was close by blood to the writer and perhaps that **secret maiden** of his poems.

**And so, all the night-tide, I lie down by the side  
Of my darling—my darling—my life and my bride,  
In her sepulchre there by the sea—  
In her tomb by the sounding sea. —**

That's where his loyalty and devotion to her comes from. His sister and wife were so similar that they resembled one spirit in a different body. They both were ill. Hervey Allen describes the illness of Rosalie so:

“...Later on, this propensity to follow Edgar was to become embarrassing, due largely to an unfortunate development, or rather lack of development, which came over the girl when she was about twelve years old. Up to that age she seems to have developed in a healthy and usual way, but from then on, she ceased to function as a normal human being. Probably due to a defective heredity, the sister of Edgar Allan Poe, while apparently healthy physically, retained the mentality of an adolescent. To the extent that Edgar was plus, Rosalie was minus... they were both abnormal types. Poe was a genius; Rosalie was a high-grade moron...” It felt like he was secretly and alone feeling pain for everyone. In his illusions, he often revolved around his family and people he knew, giving them the appearance of his heroes. Poe has married to his cousin and they were close relatives. On the one hand, this can be looked at as incest<sup>vi</sup>

From another point of view, incest can be a cause of psychological disorders. If a person is morally strong and does not allow physical needs to prevail, then this is most evident in his behavior, which is controlled by his consciousness. But this is another theme. Our task is whom this poem was dedicated. For us by all indications it is clear the poem **“Annabel Lee”** was dedicated to his sister Rosalie Poe. He fell in love with Virginia because she was very similar in many ways to his sister. Illness of Virginia was described by H. Allen with these words:

“But there were gloomy days, too, when Virginia was **faint and ill**, when Eddie was in the depths of melancholia, or in one of those fits

of abstraction, utter lassitude, or even semi-madness induced by a drug” (pg.371) It is like spinning in a circle on the scale of one family with both psychologically and physically.

The word itself “maiden” attracts our attention which contains following meanings (semantic) – poor, not married, not educated, the first, **virgin**, clean and etc. It is clear he was in love and looking for

similar to his soul.

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vi Incest – this typically includes any kind of sexual activity between people in consanguinity (blood relations), and sometimes those related by lineage