



저작자표시-비영리-변경금지 2.0 대한민국

이용자는 아래의 조건을 따르는 경우에 한하여 자유롭게

- 이 저작물을 복제, 배포, 전송, 전시, 공연 및 방송할 수 있습니다.

다음과 같은 조건을 따라야 합니다:



저작자표시. 귀하는 원저작자를 표시하여야 합니다.



비영리. 귀하는 이 저작물을 영리 목적으로 이용할 수 없습니다.



변경금지. 귀하는 이 저작물을 개작, 변형 또는 가공할 수 없습니다.

- 귀하는, 이 저작물의 재이용이나 배포의 경우, 이 저작물에 적용된 이용허락조건을 명확하게 나타내어야 합니다.
- 저작권자로부터 별도의 허가를 받으면 이러한 조건들은 적용되지 않습니다.

저작권법에 따른 이용자의 권리는 위의 내용에 의하여 영향을 받지 않습니다.

이것은 [이용허락규약\(Legal Code\)](#)을 이해하기 쉽게 요약한 것입니다.

[Disclaimer](#)

February 2023

Doctorate Dissertation

**A Comparative Study of Edgar Allan Poe's  
Gothic Fiction and Pu Songling's *Strange  
Tales from a Chinese Studio***

Graduate School of Chosun University

Department of English Language and Literature

Lin Zhu

**A Comparative Study of Edgar Allan Poe's  
Gothic Fiction and Pu Songling's *Strange  
Tales from a Chinese Studio***

에드거 앨런 포우의 고딕소설과 포송령의  
『요재지이(聊齋志異)』 비교연구

February 24<sup>th</sup>, 2023

Graduate School of Chosun University

Department of English Language and Literature

Lin Zhu

# A Comparative Study of Edgar Allan Poe's Gothic Fiction and Pu Songling's *Strange Tales from a Chinese Studio*

Advisor Cheol-soo Kim

This dissertation is submitted to Chosun University in partial  
fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of  
Philosophy

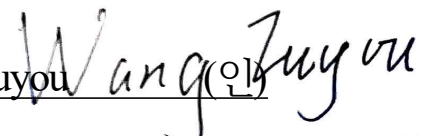
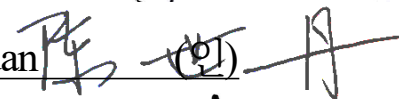
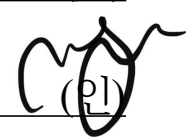
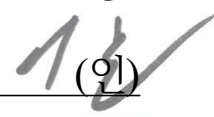

October, 2022

Graduate School of Chosun University

Department of English Language and Literature

Lin Zhu

## 주림의 박사학위논문을 인준함

- 위원장 Taizhou University, China Wang Zuyou  (인)
- 위원 Remin University of China Chen Shidan  (인)
- 위원 Chosun University, Korea Kyeong-kyu Im  (인)
- 위원 Chosun University, Korea Hyub Lee  (인)
- 위원 Chosun University, Korea Cheol-soo Kim  (인)

2023년 1월

조선대학교 대학원

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

TABLE OF CONTENTS .....	I
ABSTRACT .....	IV
요약 .....	XI
I. Introduction .....	1
II. Literature Review .....	12
A. Generic Terms and Histories .....	12
1. Zhiguai & Chuanqi .....	12
2. The Gothic in Western History .....	18
3. The Original Gothic Romance and Modes, American Gothic .....	21
B. Edgar Allan Poe and His Gothic Fiction .....	28
C. Pu Songling and His <i>Strange Tales from Chinese Studio</i> .....	38
D. Recent Comparative Study between Allan Poe and Pu Songling .....	42
III. Comparative Study from the Perspective of Culture and Literature .....	48
A. The Influence of the Culture and Literature on Poe's Works .....	50
1. Influence from Social Situation .....	50
2. Influence from European and American Literature .....	51
3. Influences from Religion .....	55
B. The Influence of the Culture and Literature on Pu's Works .....	59
1. Influence from Social Situation .....	59
2. Influence from Chinese Traditional Literature .....	65
3. Influences from Religion .....	70
C. The Influence of Poe and Pu on Later Literature .....	76

IV. Comparative Study from the Perspective of Mimetic and Expressive Aesthetics .....	81
A. Mimetic Aesthetics of Poe and Pu .....	83
1. Mimesis in Chinese Aesthetics .....	84
2. Pu’s Portrayal of Social Reality .....	89
3. “Poetry for Poetry”: Poe’s Representation of Beauty .....	98
4. Poe’s Objection to the Scientific Truth .....	103
B. Expressive Aesthetics of Pu and Poe .....	107
1. The Source of Pu’s Expressive Aesthetics: “Tongxin Shuo” .....	109
2. Pu’s Aesthetics of the “Authenticity” .....	113
3. Poe’s Mourning for Women .....	117
4. Poe’s Insistence on Originality: “To Be Read” .....	121
C. Non-conventional Aesthetics of Pu and Poe .....	126
1. Pu’s Anger: The Rejection of Inner Peace in Expressive Aesthetics .....	128
2. Poe’s Order: The Challenge to the Muse in Mimetic Aesthetics .....	133
D. Conclusion .....	137
V. Comparative Study on Poe’s and Pu’s Works .....	140
A. Comparing Similarities and Differences between Their Works from the Perspective of Plot .....	140
1. Similarity and Difference of Grotesque .....	140
2. Similarity and Difference of Horror .....	153
B. Comparing Similarities and Differences between Their Works from the Perspective of Theme .....	166
1. Similarity and Difference of Death .....	167
2. Similarity and Difference of Beauty .....	176

C. Comparing Similarities and Differences from the Perspective of Narrative ..... 184

    1. Similarity and Difference in the Narrative Point of View ..... 184

    2. Similarity and Difference in the Narrative Time ..... 192

VI. Conclusion ..... 203

References ..... 208

Acknowledgments ..... 219



# ABSTRACT

A Comparative Study of Edgar Allan Poe's Gothic Fiction and Pu Songling's

*Strange Tales from a Chinese Studio*

Lin Zhu

Advisor: Prof. Cheol-soo Kim, Ph. D.

Department of English Language and Literature

Graduate School of Chosun University

Comparing Edgar Allan Poe's Gothic fictions with Pu Songling's *Strange Tales from a Chinese Studio* is a challenging topic. Therefore, there are three reasons for this. First, Gothic fiction is a research field worthy of full attention and with promising prospects both in China and the West. However, Chinese study of Poe's Gothic fiction is clearly insufficient and undervalued. Second, in the history of Chinese literature, Pu Songling's *Strange Tales from a Chinese Studio* is prominently shown in the fact that he takes the Strange tales as the text, and it is far from enough to explore the depth and breadth of literary, artistic and other aspects. In particular, the previous research on Pu Songling's *Strange Tales from a Chinese Studio* was mostly closed and isolated, that is, it was studied within the national literature. It lacked a worldwide perspective under the eyes of comparative literature, and rarely looked at the world's importance and significance from a global perspective. Third, it is still a new attempt to conduct a comparative study of the two in order to highlight their shared aesthetic characteristics as well as their respective uniqueness and value, in order to realize the profound cultural

exploration that can be realized from the superficial comparison of similarities and differences.

The reason why I chose this topic is based mainly on the following considerations: As similar ghost stories, Poe's Gothic fictions and Pu Songling's *Strange Tales from a Chinese Studio* have had a profound impact on the literary creation of later generations that cannot be underestimated. What are the reasons for this? Is it common for them to run into the same or similar problems on a regular basis? Are there some common charms among them? The author tries to bring them into the vision of comparative literature for mutual reference and verification, so as to highlight their common aesthetic characteristics and their respective uniqueness and value, so as to not only realize the transition from the shallow comparison of similarities and differences to the deep cross-cultural exploration, but also to seek some general principles of creation and the true meaning of the novel as an art that returns to the same destination by different routes on a certain ideal level.

In accordance with the viewpoint and concept of equal dialogue, communication, and complementarity across various cultures, this dissertation primarily employs the parallel research technique of comparative literature with the theory of aesthetics. It investigates the shared aesthetic essence and fundamental rules of ghost stories by contrasting Poe's Gothic fictions with Pu Songling's *Strange Tales from a Chinese Studio*. This comparison also illuminates and expounds their separate literary traditions. This study promotes comparability, diversity, and dialogism. Several unique elements of fiction (such as plot, theme, and narration) are employed to organize and run through the text, emphasize problem consciousness, and drive comparison research with problems in the study.

The dissertation intends to draw some fresh ideas and innovations in some aspects: 1. It systematically studies the thought value, artistic achievements and the influences of Poe's Gothic fictions in the American literary history from a comparative point of view. Some of the most influential Poe's Gothic fictions will be in detail analyzed, which will serve as a avant-garde academic work of Poe's Gothic fictions study in China. 2. It identifies for the first time the textual achievement of Pu's Strange tales and its literary glamour which has long been ignored. By taking Poe's Gothic fictions as reference, the research of the Pu's Strange tales brings forth a breakthrough comparing with the previous study in this field. 3. It will look at the Poe's Gothic fictions and Pu's Strange tales in the whole system of world literature, make it possible for the two literary systems to have a "dialogue" and hence communication, and tries to merge the two systems which are formerly isolated. 4. It clarifies the literary expression forms of the horrors and grotesques of the Gothic fictions and the Chinese Strange tales, and probes into the theoretical connotation, unique aesthetic value and significance of the two literary types.

The dissertation consists of six chapters. Chapter one is the introduction, which explains the reason, comparability, purpose, methods and significance of the comparative study between Poe's Gothic fictions and Pu's Strange tales.

Chapter two gives a literature review of the two authors and their works. In order to explain the origin, the history, and the stylistic features of the two literary traditions, this chapter describes the terms of Gothic and *Zhiguai* & *Chuanqi* respectively.

Chapter three expounds the comparative study from the cultural and literature perspectives. It examines the historical situation, cultural atmosphere, the religious beliefs and literature against which Poe's Gothic fictions and Pu's Strange tales

developed, providing some premises for recognizing the differences and similarities of the two literary types. It shows some common aesthetic features in creative thinking brought about by the similar social situation in the process of its formation. In short, both writers achieved great success and make their attribution to the development of literature. Both works are the product of social unrest, early classical literary and the challenge of mainstream ideology.

Chapter four explores the comparative studies of Pu and Poe in the aspect of aesthetics. In reviewing the existing discussions of Chinese aesthetics and Western aesthetics in which Pu and Poe situate their aesthetic views, we can find that the aesthetics of Pu and Poe is not limited to one fixed type but proved both mimetic and expressive. The parallel study in a broad way helps to prove wrong the classification that the Chinese aesthetics is expressive, while the Western aesthetics, mimetic. The aesthetic parallel study between Pu and Poe thus firstly serves as a supplement to the insufficient studies on the two writers, secondly reflects the influence of social background and personal experiences on the aesthetics of the two writers.

Chapter five analyzes the differences and similarities of Poe's Gothic fictions and Pu's Strange tales from the plot, theme and narrative characteristics, which clarified the theoretical connotations and aesthetic significance of the two literary in respective aspects. It will start with the grotesqueness and horror of the plot, compare the similarities and differences between Poe's Gothic novels and Pu's Strange Tales from a Chinese Studio. Their works create grotesqueness and horror to show people's various emotions and desires that are difficult to achieve in real predicaments, eager to rebuild the destroyed and fascinating Garden of Eden in fantasy and restore its unity fundamentally. The grotesqueness in Poe's Gothic fictions is closely related to the nature of horror, and horror has become an

important factor in the grotesque. The grotesqueness and horror in *Strange Tales from a Chinese Studio* mostly focus on the themselves, and what they shows is a kind of fantasy beauty and warmer taste. In this way, compared with the multiplicity and openness of the western novel, the Chinese function of the novel has obviously shown the characteristics of singleness and closure. Naturally, extreme and bloody cannot be tolerated in Chinese novels. This is not only the main reason why the Pu's Strange tales generally fail to appear as strong and universally characteristic as the Poe's Gothic fictions. This is also the main reason why Gothic fictions have not been widely translated and studied in China like other outstanding foreign literary works.

And then it focuses on the differences and similarities, and their causes of the two dominant themes, death and beauty in Poe's Gothic fictions and Pu's Strange tales. Their consciousness of death has differences due to a deep imprint of Chinese and the Western culture. Pu's death can be transcended to continue life through death. While Poe regarded death as final pursuit to lead to the heaven, which is Paramount. Poe pays attention to the protagonist's experience and the change in the beauties, while Pu attaches importance to the sweet love between the beauties and their lovers. Poe confers more prestige on women, however, in the end, this prestige is broken up with the women's death. Comparing with Poe, Pu intended for the story to be viewed as a parable of human desire and its negative consequences, and endorses belief in karma and retribution. It reflects women having a low social status in the male-dominated society.

It also makes a minute analysis of the differences and similarities of the two literary types in the aspects of the choice of narrative perspectives and the expression forms of the narrative time. Edgar Allan Poe is renowned for his Gothic style of writing, which incorporates themes of suspense, terror, horror, and death.

In a large number of his fictions, Poe employs the first-person point of view. Poe can hone the character's uniqueness thanks to the first-person narrative. First-person point of view gives the narrator authority over the story and lets the reader see the world from his or her perspective. The narrator frequently describes his or her own morbid behavior in such detail that it makes clear just how insane they truly are. They become unable of distinguishing their own madness at that point. In *Strange Tales from a Chinese Studio*, third-person narrative is the dominant, such as "she said", "he said", "the woman said" and "the child asked", etc. Because many stories concern ghosts, fox fairy, and goblins which do not exist in reality, these stories will lack of authenticity and the author can not show his emotion attitude toward life and the world if they are narrated with first point of view. The narrator took the omniscient and limited omniscient point of view to depict a beautiful picture of ghosts and fairies and perform highly developed artistic skills and achievement. Many short stories from *Strange Tales from a Chinese Studio* were narrated in chronological order, and the choice of prolepsis and analepsis in *Strange Tales from a Chinese Studio* symbolizes the maturity of the classical Chinese novels. Analepsis first sets suspense and then reveals it. This is true of western short stories. Poe took analepsis to hide suspense. When readers read the story, they may forget time or sometimes get an unexpected surprise. The narrator may lead them back sometimes to reconstruct the time order. Such narrative technique will leave readers some questions and suspense and enhance their thinking about the traditional narrative methods and force them to make judgment about the story.

Chapter six summarizes the whole dissertation; reemphasize the great significance of a comparative study of Poe's Gothic fictions and Pu's Strange tales. It points out that the purposes of the dissertation is to establish a sort of mutual

communication, lay a foundation for constructing a colorful and ideal world literature rather than comparison for the sake of comparison. It will advocate that though Western people and Chinese people have their respective religions and cultural traditions, they have some same principles and much commonness in psychology for mutual understanding. It's really good to speak out and talk when we have different ideas. This is exactly what the dissertation is for. Increased understandings will make our world a more peaceful place.

**Key words:** Edgar Allan Poe; Pu Songling; Comparative Study; Gothic Fictions; Strange Tales

# 요약

에드거 앨런 포의 고딕소설과 포송령의 『요재지이(聊齋志異)』

비교연구

주림

지도교수: 김철수

영어영문학과

조선대학교 대학원

에드거 앨런 포의 고딕 소설과 포송령(蒲松齡)의 <요재지이>의 비교는 도전적인 주제라 할 수 있다. 여기에는 세 가지 이유가 있다. 첫째, 고딕소설은 중국과 서양 어느 곳에서든 충분히 중시할 가치가 있고 전망이 넓은 연구 분야이기 때문이다. 그러나 중국의 앨런 포 고딕 소설에 대한 연구가가 현저히 부족하고 과소평가 되어 있다. 둘째, 중국 문학사에서 포송령의 <요재지이>는 지괴소설을 텍스트로 하여 문학, 예술 등의 방면에서 그 깊이와 폭에 대한 탐구가 두드러지게 부족하기 때문이다. 특히 포송령의 <요재지이>에 대한 기존의 연구는 대부분 폐쇄적이고 고립되어 있는데 이것은 민족문학의 범위안에서만 연구되어졌기 때문이다. 그 연구들은 비교문학의 시각에서 세계적인 관점이 부족하며 세계적인 관점에서 그 소설의 중요한 가치와 의미를 관찰하는 것이 결핍되었다. 셋째, 두 소설에 대한 양자의 공유된 미적 특성 뿐만 아니라 각각의 고유함과 가치를 부각시키기 위한 비교 연구의 수행은 여전히 새로운 시도라 할 수 있으며 이것은 표면적으로 나타난 공통성 및 차이점의 비교라는 심층 문화 탐구도 실현시기 위함이기 때문이다.



필자가 이 제목을 선택한 것은 앨런 포의 고딕 소설과 포송령의 <요재지이>가 비슷한 귀신 이야기로서 후대 문학 창작에 과소평가가 될 수 없는 지대한 영향을 미쳤다는 생각에 그 바탕을 두고 있다. 그 이유는 과연 무엇인가? 그들은 번번이 동일하거나 유사한 문제에 직면했을까? 그들 사이에 공통적인 매력이 있는 것은 아닐까? 필자는 이들을 비교문학의 시야에 포함시켜 서로 참고하고 검증하면서 그들의 공통된 심미적 특징 및 각자의 독특함과 가치를 부각시켜 표면적으로 보이는 공통점과 차이점의 비교에서부터 심층적인 비교문화적 탐구로의 전환을 실현했을 뿐만 아니라 일정 수준의 이상적 측면에서 일반적인 창작 통칙과 서로 다른 경로를 통해 동일한 목적지에 도달하는 예술적인 의미로서 소설이 지니는 진정한 의의를 모색하고자 했다.

본 논문은 다문화 간의 평등한 대화, 교류, 상호보완의 관점과 이념에 입각하여 주로 비교문학과 미학이론을 병행하여 연구하는 방법을 채택했다. 앨런 포의 고딕 소설과 포송령의 <요재지이> 소설의 비교를 통해 귀신 이야기의 공통된 심미적 본질과 기본 규칙을 탐구했다. 이러한 비교는 또한 그들 각자의 문학적 전통을 조명하고 논술했다. 이 연구는 비교 가능성과 다양성 및 대화를 촉진하였다. 소설의 몇 가지 독특한 요소(예: 줄거리, 주제 및 서술)는 텍스트를 구성하고 관통하며 문제의식을 강조하고 연구 문제의 비교 연구를 촉진하는 데 사용된다.

본 논문은 다음과 같은 측면에서 몇 가지 새로운 아이디어와 혁신 포인트를 제시하였다. 첫째, 이 글은 비교의 관점에서 미국 문학사에서 앨런 포 고딕 소설의 사상적 가치, 예술적 성취 및 영향을 체계적으로 연구하였다. 본문은 앨런 포의 가장 영향력 있는 몇 편의 고딕 소설을 상세히 분석하여 앨런 포 고딕 소설에 관해 중국에서 이루어질 연구의 선구자적 학술 연구로 활용되어질 것이다. 둘째, 포송령 지괴 소설의 텍스트적인 성과와 오랫동안 등한시 되어진 문학적 매력을 최초로 명확히

하였다. 앨런 포 소설을 참고함으로써 본 논문의 포송령의 지괴소설에 대한 연구는 이전 연구와 비교하여 획기적인 발전을 이루었다. 셋째, 앨런 포의 고딕 소설과 포송령의 지괴 소설을 세계 문학 체계 전반에 걸쳐 조명함으로써 양대 문학 체계의 '대화'와 '교류'를 가능하게 하고, 고립되어 있던 양대 문학 체계를 융합하려 하였다. 넷째, 고딕 소설과 중국 지괴 소설의 공포와 기괴한 문학 표현 형식을 명확히 하고 이 두 문학 유형의 이론적인 함의, 독특한 미적 가치와 의의를 탐구하였다.

논문의 전문은 총 6장으로 나누어 지는데, 제 1 장은 서론으로 앨런 포의 고딕 소설과 포송령의 지괴 소설을 비교 연구한 이유와 비교 가능성, 목적 및 방법과 의의를 설명하였다.

제 2 장에서는 두 저자와 그의 작품에 대한 문헌을 종합하여 서술하였다. 이 두 문학 전통의 기원 및 역사와 문체적인 특성을 설명하기 위해 이 장에서는 고딕 소설과 지괴 소설의 두 가지 용어를 각각 설명하였다.

제 3 장에서는 이들을 문화와 문학의 두 가지 관점에서 비교 연구하였다. 본 논문은 앨런 포 고딕 소설과 포송령 지괴 소설의 역사적 배경과 문화적 분위기 또한 종교적 신념 및 문학 전승을 조사하고 두 문학 유형의 유사점과 차이점을 이해하기 위한 몇 가지 전제를 제공하였다. 논문 기술 과정에서 유사한 사회 상황이 가져온 창조적 사고의 몇 가지 공통적인 심미적 특성을 보여주었다. 요컨대, 두 작가 모두 큰 성공을 거두었고 자신의 공로를 문학의 발전에 귀결시켰다. 두 작가의 작품은 모두 사회 불안과 초기 고전, 주류 이데올로기에 대한 도전의 산물이다.

제 4 장에서는 앨런 포와 포송령을 미학적으로 비교 연구하였다. 포송령과 앨런 포의 심미적 위치를 살펴보면 포송령과 앨런 포의 미학은 고정된 유형에 국한되지 않고 모방과 표현성을 모두 가지고 있음을 발견할 수 있다. 이러한 넓은 의미의 평행 연구는 중국 미학이 표현적인 반면

서양 미학은 모방적인 것으로 분류되는 것이 잘못되었음을 입증하는 데 도움이 된다. 따라서 포송령과 모방성에 대한 심미적 평행 연구는 먼저 이 두 작가의 부족한 연구를 보완하고 다음으로 사회적 배경과 개인적 경험이 두 작가의 미학에 미치는 영향을 반영한다.

제 5 장에서는 모방성 고딕 소설과 포송령의 지괴 소설의 유사점과 차이점을 줄거리, 주제, 서사등의 특징적인 측면에서 분석하고 두 문학의 이론적 함의와 미적 의의를 각자의 관점에서 설명하였다. 앨런 포의 고딕 소설과 포송령 <요재지이> 소설의 유사점과 차이점을 줄거리의 괴기스러움과 공포감부터 시작해서 비교할 것이다. 이들의 작품은 인간의 다양한 감정과 현실의 딜레마 속에서는 도달하기 어려운 욕망을, 폐허가 되었지만 매혹적인 에덴동산을 환상 속에 재건하고 그 통일성을 근본적으로 회복하려는 열망과 갈망을 보여주기 위해 괴상함과 공포를 만들어 낸다. 앨런 포의 고딕 소설 속 괴기는 공포의 본질과 밀접한 관련이 있으며 공포는 괴기스러움내에서 중요한 요소가 된다. <요재지이> 소설 속의 기괴함과 공포는 더욱 자신에게 집중되어 일종의 환상적 아름다움과 한결 부드러워진 취향을 표현하고 있다. 이처럼 소설 안에서 중국어가 보여주는 기능은 서구 소설의 다원성과 개방성에 비해 획일성과 폐쇄성이라는 특징을 뚜렷하게 드러내고 있다. 극단적이고 유혈이 낭자한 것들은 중국 소설에서는 당연히 용납할 수 없는 것이다. 이것은 포송령의 지괴 소설이 앨런 포의 고딕 소설처럼 강렬하고 보편적인 특징을 보여주지 못한 주된 이유는 아니다. 이는 또한 왜 고딕 소설이 다른 우수한 외국 문학 작품처럼 중국에서 널리 번역되고 연구되지 못했는가에 대한 주요 이유이기도 하다.

이어서 앨런 포의 고딕 소설과 포송령의 지괴 소설 안에서의 죽음과 아름다움이라는 두 가지 주요 주제의 공통점과 차이점 및 그 원인을 중점적으로 분석했다. 중국과 서양 문화의 뿌리 깊은 각인(刻印)으로 인해

그들의 죽음에 대한 생각에는 차이가 존재한다. 포송령의 소설에 나오는 죽음은 초월할 수 있고, 죽음을 통해 생명을 이어갈 수 있다. 반면 앨런 포의 고딕 소설은 죽음을 가장 높은 이상인 천국으로 가는 마지막 갈구로 간주한다. 앨런 포는 주인공의 경험과 미인의 변화를 포송령은 미인과 연인의 달콤한 사랑을 중시한다. 앨런 포는 여성에게 더 많은 신망을 부여했지만 결국 그 신망은 여성의 죽음과 함께 무너졌다. 앨런 포와 비교하여 포송령은 이야기가 인간의 욕망과 그 부정적인 결과에 대한 우화로 간주되기를 희망하며 인과응보의 신념을 지지한다. 이것은 남성이 주도하는 사회 안에서 여성의 사회적 지위가 낮은 현실을 반영한 것이다.

이 논문은 또한 이 두 문학 유형의 서사적인 관점의 선택과 서사적 시간의 표현 형태 등의 유사점과 차이점을 자세히 분석하였다. 에드거 앨런 포는 두려움과 공포, 죽음과 우울함 및 서스펜스의 요소를 포함하는 고딕 문학 스타일로 유명하다. 앨런 포는 그의 많은 단편 소설에서 1인칭 시점을 사용한다. 1인칭 서술을 통해 포는 인물의 개성을 발전시킬 수 있다. 1인칭 시점은 화자가 서사를 통제하고 독자가 자신의 눈으로 볼 수 있도록 해 준다. 화자는 자신의 병적인 행동을 아주 잘 표현함으로써 자신의 진정한 광기 어린 정신 착란 상태를 묘사한다. 그리고 화자는 자신의 광기를 스스로 분별할 수 없다. <요재지이> 소설에서는 3인칭 서술이 '그녀가 말한다', '그가 말한다', '여자가 말한다', '아이가 묻는다' 등이 지배적이다. 유령, 여우, 요정, 도깨비 등 현실에는 존재하지 않는 것들을 다루는 이야기가 많기 때문에 1인칭 시점으로 서술하면 진정성이 떨어지고 삶과 세상에 대한 작가의 감정적 태도가 드러나지 않는다. 화자는 전지전능하거나 제한된 전지전능의 시시점으로 유령이나 요정이 나오는 아름다운 그림을 그리고 발달된 예술적 기교와 성취를 표현했다. <요재지이> 중의 많은 단편소설이 시간순서에 따라 서술되어 있는데 소설 중의 예서와 역서의 선택은 중국 고전소설의 성숙을 상징한다. 역설

적으로 말하면 먼저 서스펜스를 설정하고 나중에 서스펜스를 드러낸다. 서양 단편 소설도 마찬가지다. 앨런 포는 서스펜스를 반전으로 숨긴다. 독자들은 이야기를 읽다가 시간을 가는 줄 모르거나 예상치 못한 놀라움을 느낄 수도 있다. 화자는 때때로 시간 순서를 재구성하기 위해 그들을 과거로 안내하기도 한다. 이러한 서사 기법은 독자들에게 약간의 의문과 서스펜스를 남기고 전통적인 서사 방법에 대한 생각을 강화하며 이야기를 판단하도록 강요할 것이다.

제 6 장에서는 전문을 요약하고 앨런 포 고딕 소설과 포송령 지괴 소설의 비교 연구의 중요성을 다시 한 번 강조하였다. 이 글의 목적은 비교를 위한 것이 아니라 상호 교류를 구축하여 다채롭고 이상적인 세계 문학을 구축하는 토대를 마련하는 것이라고 지적하였다. 중국과 서양은 각자의 종교와 문화적 전통을 가지고 있지만 심리학적인 면에서 서로 이해할 수 있는 몇 가지 동일한 원칙과 많은 공통점을 가지고 있기 때문에 서로 충분히 이해가 가능하다. 우리가 서로 생각이 다를 때 큰 목소리로 이야기 해 보고 소통하는 것이 정말 좋다. 이것이 바로 본 논문의 목적이며 이해를 증진시키는 것은 우리의 세상이 더욱 평화로운 곳이 되도록 할 수 있을것이다.

**주제어:** 에드거 앨런 포 , 포송령, 비교 연구, 고딕 소설, 지괴 소설

# I. Introduction

Due to the differences in living environment, life style, historical tradition, national belief, aesthetic thinking and other aspects, different cultures with distinct national characteristics have been generated. The differences between different ethnic cultures are self-evident. However, the commonality of different nationalities in their thoughts, emotions, behaviors, and other aspects determines their cultural commensurability. This is true of the cultures of all human nations, and literature, as an important part of the cultures of all nations, is no exception. The literary works of many nations have been translated into different languages and spread widely in the world, becoming the worldwide literary classics recognized by different nations, which fully proves the common understanding of literary aesthetics among different nations. As a young discipline, comparative literature was born at the end of the 19th century, so it can rapidly develop and expand in the world, and even become a major prominent study today, which is an irrefutable proof of the actual existence of the same phenomenon between the literature of different nations.

Many foreign literary and Chinese researchers have explored comparative literature, which is an attractive field. Although many problems and phenomena have been solved and clarified, it is not difficult to find that there are still many literary phenomena that have not yet been recognized or need to be further recognized.

The phenomenon of ghost novels, which is common to different nations, is one of the meaningful topics that need further study. Ghost fictions are a very special form of expression in human literature creation. It is special because it is

the product of people's imagination and creation of another unknown and illusory alien world in the real world. For this other unknown illusory alien world, different nations have their own national characteristics of the imagination and construction. "This invisible and untouchable world does not come from the imagination of one person as in novels, but exists in the imagination of a nation, a society and an era. No matter how maturely this nation adheres to materialistic viewpoints, has strict logical thinking, and has advanced scientific knowledge, those ghosts handed down from ancient times always wander in this imaginary world, haunting our various lives, and they have a great impact on real life. The illusory world that cannot be believed and cannot be done seems to be inseparable from our real world" (Ying 109).

The Gothic fictions in the West and the strange tales in China can be called ghost fictions, which are characterized by romance, horror, mystery, strangeness and supernatural. Edgar Allan Poe's Gothic fictions and Pu Songling's *Strange Tales from a Chinese Studio* (聊斋志异) are typical ghost fictions with their own national characteristics. However, the comparative study of these two ghost fictions with their own national characteristics is still a new and challenging topic. The author chooses this topic mainly based on the following considerations: Edgar Allan Poe's Gothic fictions and Pu Songling's *Strange Tales from a Chinese Studio*, both of which belong to ghost fictions, both occupy marginal positions in the literary history of their respective nationalities, and have not received due attention and research for a long time. All of them have had a profound impact on the literary creation of later generations that cannot be underestimated. What is the reason for this? Is there some kind of same or similar regular problem in their common encounter? Is there some common charm among them? Therefore, the author would like to try to bring them into the comparative field of vision for mutual

reference and verification, so as to highlight their common aesthetic characteristics and their respective uniqueness and value, so as to realize the cultural exploration from the shallow comparison of similarities and differences to the deep cultural origin.

The comparative study of Edgar Allan Poe's Gothic fictions and Pu Songling's *Strange Tales from a Chinese Studio* will be carried out in the ideas of comparability, heterogeneity and dialogism, and its research value and significance will also be presented along with the development of this idea. The comparative study of Edgar Allan Poe's Gothic fictions and Pu Songling's *Strange Tales from a Chinese Studio* is a parallel study without any factual influence on each other. Since it is a parallel study, it is necessary to discover and study the similarities and correspondence between them in terms of content, form, theme, plot, image, narrative art, and other aspects, which so-called comparability. Therefore, emphasizing comparability is not only an important logical starting point of this dissertation, but also one of the important issues that this dissertation focuses on.

The comparative study of Edgar Allan Poe's Gothic fictions and Pu Songling's *Strange Tales from a Chinese Studio* not only involves the comparison between the novels that cross the Chinese and Western cultural systems, but also the more important in comparative research is cross-epoch comparison, because the two are staggered in time for nearly two hundred years. Indeed, in the history of comparative literature, some scholars are skeptical about the comparability between literatures belonging to different cultural origins. Among them, the famous American comparative literature scholar Ulrich Weisstein's viewpoint is the most representative. He believes: "I don't deny that some studies can be done...But still hesitating to extend the parallel study of literary phenomena between two different civilizations. For it seems to me that only within a single civilization can we find in



thought, feeling, and imagination the common elements that sustain tradition, whether consciously or unconsciously....The attempt to find similar patterns between Western and Middle or Far Eastern poetry is harder to make sense of”(Ulrich 5). Of course, such a view is untenable. Later Weisstein changed that view. At the beginning of this dissertation, it has been stated that there must be some common factors of aesthetic thinking and artistic expression between literature spanning different cultural systems, no matter what their differences are or what their different historical stages are. The essential similarity of human beings provides them with the psychological and theoretical basis for their comparability. Goethe declared as early as 1827, “The Chinese are so nearly like us in thought, behavior, and feeling that we soon feel that they are our kind” (Eckermann 45). Hegel also believed that: “In terms of artistic types, the modes of conception and expression of various nations are often mixed with each other, so that the basic types which we consider as belonging to a particular national worldview can be found in earlier or later peoples as well” (Hegel 23). Therefore, literature in different cultural systems is always interlinked, which makes it possible to study the common characteristics and laws of literature from an international perspective, breaking through the limitations of language and mono-cultural traditions.

Proceeding from this line of thinking, and according to the three essential elements of comparability in comparative literature, namely, literariness, transcendence and compatibility, this dissertation argues that the comparability of Edgar Allan Poe’s Gothic fictions and Pu Songling’s *Strange Tales from a Chinese Studio* is indisputable. Because both of them are literary works spanning different cultural systems, and both belong to ghost fictions in terms of genre. The two seemingly different concepts of *Zhiguai* and Gothic contain something compatible.

This is exactly the commonality or similarity we are looking for in the first place. Firstly, it has the characteristics of grotesque and horror in the plot. Secondly, there are common themes, such as the theme of death and beauty. There are also similarities in the artistic methods of characterizing the characters, such as outline the appearance and character characteristics of the characters with stick strokes, express the psychological state and thoughts and feelings of the characters in fictions, and write the characters in conflict. Thirdly, there are common forms of expression in the narrative, such as the selection and application of narrative perspective, similar treatment of narrative time and so on. In short, as the same type of literary works, both Allan Poe's Gothic fictions and Pu Songling's *Strange Tales from a Chinese Studio* use ghosts to write about people. Ghost stories are the fantasy fulfillment of human desires. It is the Gothic fictions of Edgar Allan Poe and Pu Songling's *Strange Tales from a Chinese Studio* that use ghost fantasy to show people's emotions and desires that are difficult to achieve in reality, and to meet human's innate desire to explore the unknown field. The general principle of creation is also the true meaning of the same goal as the fiction art. As a result, both of them have gained enduring artistic charm and profound aesthetic value. In this dissertation, the above-mentioned commonalities of the two will be carefully sorted out and analyzed in detail, so as to avoid the drawbacks of blind comparison and make the comparison based on the real comparability.

The second problem to be highlighted in this dissertation is heterogeneity. After all, comparison in comparative literature is different from analogy. The method of analogy is a logical method that applies general analogical reasoning to the study of human cultural history. Based on the fact that two phenomena are the same in a series of properties and it is known that one phenomenon has other properties, the conclusion is deduced that the other phenomenon must have the

same other properties. The comparison of comparative literature should not only compare the similarity between objects, but also compare their heterogeneity. Especially in cross-cultural comparative studies of Chinese and Western literature, heterogeneity has become a focus of comparability.

Comparative literature has exactly two functions. On the one hand, it is to communicate, seek the common points between the literatures of different countries and make them integrated. On the other hand, in order to achieve mutual complement and mutual reflection, it is complementary to explore the differences between the literatures of different countries so that the literature of different countries in the contrast with each other more clearly highlight their own national characteristics, literary personality and unique value (Cao 208). It is precisely because of the attention and emphasis on heterogeneity in comparative literature across different cultures that it is required that this comparison be an equal dialogue. “Only the principle of interactive subjectivity and equality confirmed by the position of dialogue can guarantee the bidirectional equivalence of the comparison between different cultures, and thus can guarantee the objectivity and academe required by the discipline of comparative literature. However, the parallel studies of the American academic faction obviously do not have the vision of dialogue. For the American academic faction, comparison is not an intercultural dialogue, but the exploration of various literary experiences and their theoretical expressions from the perspective of Western poetics. In this kind of excavation that predetermines what literature and poetry are, in fact, the logical orientation and meaning standard of the prescriptive statements of comparative literature have already been established. Here, the achievement of world literature is no longer the product of two-way comparison and dialogue between heterogeneous cultures, but the homogenization of different cultures to Western cultures” (Cao et al. 301).

Therefore, through the comparison of Edgar Allan Poe's Gothic fictions and Pu Songling's *Strange Tales from a Chinese Studio*, this dissertation mainly uses the method of parallel study of comparative literature, in line with the position and principle of equal dialogue and communication across different cultures, highlight their respective literary characteristics. Try to reveal and develop their respective literary traditions and their existential value, and then explore the aesthetic essence and basic laws that they share as ghost fictions. In the research, the elements of the fiction (plot, theme and narration) are used to structure and run through the text, highlight the problem consciousness, and use the problem to drive the comparative research.

The Gothic fictions of Allan Poe and Pu Songling's *Strange Tales from a Chinese Studio* are different in cultural soil and traditional background, so it is inevitable that profound heterogeneity appears in the commonality.

This dissertation holds that, in terms of plot, the Strange tales show warmth in the grotesque, which makes people linger back and forth. Gothic fictions find horror in the grotesque, which make people creepy. Moreover, horror is the dominant feature of Gothic fictions. Most of the Chinese Strange tales are quite scary at the beginning, then the tales that are deduced are not all terrifying, but unique, and the ending are bright. On this basis, this dissertation clarifies the theoretical connotation of weirdness and horror and their unique aesthetic value and significance, and makes a detailed cultural analysis of the major differences between the two.

In the aspect of theme, although both of them show the distinct moral and ethical concepts and the evaluation of good and evil right and wrong. In addition to the relationship between human, the relationship between human and nature, the relationship between human and objective law and the law of the universe are also

included in the vision of creation, thus enhancing the rational spirit and philosophical thinking quality of the works. Both the death theme and the beauty theme have their different characteristics. Lots of scholars and critics prefer to have done innumerable researches on Edgar Allan Poe's Gothic fictions or Pu Songling's *Strange Tales from a Chinese Studio* separately, rather than make a comparison on themes in their works. Poe and Pu came from different countries and lived in a different time, but both of their works contain the themes of death and beauty. We attempts to make research on their views of death and beauty with the comparative approach so as to understand their works deeply.

In terms of narrative form, Pu Songling's *Strange Tales from a Chinese Studio* shows obvious objective narrative characteristics, while Edgar Allan Poe's Gothic fictions show strong subjective narrative characteristics. Gothic fictions do not use the third-person limited-knowledge perspective, while the Strange tales fully demonstrate their transcendence in the use of this perspective. In the Strange tales, the main narrative method is sequential narration, and flashback and pre-narration are rarely used. However, pre-narratives are used very prominently in Gothic fictions. The author will not only examine the manifestations of the above-mentioned heterogeneity in detail, but also make an in-depth cultural analysis of them.

This dissertation highlights the dialogism. The author believes that comparison of similarities and differences is not the ultimate goal. Emphasizing the same is to establish the basis of comparison, and emphasizing the heterogeneity is to face up to and recognize the respective characteristics, literary traditions and their existence value. But acknowledging heterogeneity is not about enclosing oneself and admiring oneself. It is fundamentally about the necessity and importance of dialogue. In order to better and more soberly inherit the strengths of

one's own tradition, and to learn the essence of others more consciously and purposefully, to achieve the purpose of communication, understanding, mutual understanding, and common development, and then jointly construct the ideal of equality, diversity, and mutual exchange of world literature.

In accordance with that purpose, this dissertation takes into consideration Poe's Gothic fictions including *The Black Cat*, *Ligeria*, *Berenice*, *The Fall of the House of Usher*, and with occasional references to others. And it also takes tales as the main analysis texts from Pu's *Strange Tales from a Chinese Studio* including *The Painted Skin* (画皮), *The Laughing Girl* (婴宁), *The Magic Sword and The Black Bag* (聂小倩), *Living Dead* (尸变), and others. The dissertation attempts to conduct a comparative study of Poe's Gothic fictions and Pu's Strange tales. By using the methods of textual analysis and cross culture study, the dissertation studies the aesthetic similarities and differences between them, and analyzes the different cultural origins which lead to the different and similar aesthetic pursuit of the two works. Through interpretation of the human-oriented Western culture and ethic-oriented Eastern culture, the meanings and values of the two works are further studied, and in the meanwhile, it is conducive to promoting equal dialogue and communication between Eastern and Western Cultures. But this topic is full of challenges, for the research of the Poe's Gothic fictions is inadequate in China and the study of Pu's Strange tales is far from sufficient; let alone to do comparative study of the two literary types and explore their cultural significance.

The dissertation draws some fresh ideas and innovations in some aspects: 1. it systematically studies the thought value, artistic achievements and the influences of Poe's Gothic fictions in the American literary history from a comparative point of view. Some of the most influential Poe's Gothic fictions will be in detail analyzed, which will serve as a avant-garde academic work of Poe's Gothic fictions study in

China. 2. it identifies for the first time the textual achievement of Pu's Chinese strange tales and its literary glamour which has long been ignored. By taking Poe's Gothic fictions as reference, the research of the Pu's Chinese strange tales brings forth a breakthrough comparing with the previous study in this field. 3. It will look at the Poe's Gothic fictions and Pu's Strange tales in the whole system of world literature, make it possible for the two literary systems to have a "dialogue" and hence communication, and tries to merge the two systems which are formerly isolated. 4. It clarifies the literary expression forms of the horrors and grotesques of the Gothic fictions and the Strange tales, and probes into the theoretical connotation, unique aesthetic value and significance of the two literary types.

The dissertation consists of six chapters with an introduction and a conclusion at the beginning and end of it. Chapter one is the introduction, which explains the reason, comparability, purpose, methods and significance of the comparative study between Poe's Gothic fictions and Pu's Strange tales.

Chapter two is a literature review of the two works and describes the terms of Gothic and *Zhiguai & Chuanqi* respectively.

Chapter three expounds the comparative study from the cultural and literature perspectives. It examines the historical situation, cultural atmosphere, the religious beliefs and literature against which Poe's Gothic fictions and Pu's Strange tales developed, providing some premises for recognizing the differences and similarities of the two literary types.

Chapter four explores the comparative studies of Pu and Poe in the aspect of aesthetics. In reviewing the existing discussions of Chinese aesthetics and Western aesthetics in which Pu and Poe situate their aesthetic views, we can find that the aesthetics of Pu and Poe is not limited to one fixed type but proved both mimetic and expressive. The parallel study in a broad way helps to prove wrong the

classification that the Chinese aesthetics is expressive, while the Western aesthetics, mimetic.

Chapter five analyzes the differences and similarities of Poe's Gothic fictions and Pu's Strange tales from the plot, theme and narrative characteristics, which clarified the theoretical connotations and aesthetic significance of the two literary in respective aspects. It will start with the grotesque and horror of the plot, compare the similarities and differences between Poe's Gothic novels and Pu's *Strange Tales from a Chinese Studio*. And then It also will focus on the differences and similarities, and their causes of the two dominant themes, death and beauty in Poe's Gothic fictions and Pu's Strange tales. Thirdly, it will make a minute analysis of the differences and similarities of the two literary types in the aspects of the choice of narrative perspectives and the expression forms of the narrative time.

Chapter six summarizes the whole dissertation; reemphasize the great significance of a comparative study of Poe's Gothic fictions and Pu's Strange tales. It points out that the purposes of the dissertation is to establish a sort of mutual communication, lay a foundation for constructing a colorful and ideal word literature rather than comparison for the sake of comparison. It will advocate that though Western people and Chinese people have their respective religions and cultural traditions, they have some same principles and much commonness in psychology for mutual understanding. It's really good to speak out and talk when we have different ideas. This is exactly what the dissertation is for. Increased understandings will make our world a more peaceful place.



## II. Literature Review

Edgar Allan Poe and his Gothic fictions, as well as Pu Songling and his *Strange Tales from a Chinese Studio*, have attracted a large numbers of readers and scholars. The studies on them branch out into two fields, including the introduction of the two authors and their works, and the critical researches about them both in China and the West. This chapter will give a literature review of the two authors and their works.

### A. Generic Terms and Histories

The Strange Tales have a lengthy and intricate past that dates back to the Six Dynasties (A.D.220-588). The generic terms most often used in discussing the Chinese strange stories include *Zhiguai* (志怪), *Chuanqi* (传奇), and yet there is no clear boundary between them. The Western term “Gothic” and the history of Gothic fiction require a brief discussion. A discussion of these key terms will serve the purpose of explaining the origin, the history, and the stylistic features of the two literary traditions.

#### 1. Zhiguai & Chuanqi

*Zhiguai* is a concise prose form that was written in classical language and describes unusual individuals, things, and occurrences.<sup>1</sup> The sources of *Zhiguai* records cover a wide range, including historiography, palace archives, religious texts, the writings of different philosophical schools, ancient myths, local histories

---

<sup>1</sup> For an introduction of the *Zhiguai*, see Kenneth J. DeWoskin, “Chih-kuai”, in William H. Nienhauser, Jr., ed., *The Indiana Companion to Traditional Chinese Literature* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, (1986): 280-283.

and anecdotes, and alleged eye-witnesses (Wang 6). It flourished during the Six Dynasties(六朝), continued throughout the pre-modern period, and blossomed for the second and last time in the Qing(清) dynasty.

Literally, “*zhi*” means to record, to describe, and “*guai*” means anomaly, strange.<sup>2</sup> The term first appeared in Chuang-tzu’s (庄子) Xiaoyaoyou (逍遥游), which means to record and describe anomalies<sup>3</sup>. During the Six Dynasties, a period of disunion and commonly recognized as the Chinese medieval age, intellectuals, repressed and frustrated by political pressure and social turmoil, showed a great interest in Daoism, Buddhism, and *yin-yang* (阴阳) theory, shifting their attention from pursuing political careers to pure conversation (*qingtan*).<sup>4</sup>

Consequently, topics and writings of the strange and the eccentric became popular among the social elite. The Six Dynasties witnessed the production of the most representative *Zhiguai* collections. Although some contemporaries questioned and disputed the existence of gods, ghosts, spiritual beings, and worlds other than the one in which we live, the authors and compilers of early *Zhiguai* collections earnestly believed the factual veracity of the weird accounts they recorded.<sup>5</sup>

A great number of *Zhiguai* collections were compiled after the Six Dynasties and yet the quality of those works in general fell well short of the standard set up by the medieval writers. It was not until the Qing dynasty that the *Zhiguai*

---

<sup>2</sup> Judith T. Zeitlin points out that the term “strange” is a cultural construct created and constantly renewed through writing and reading. For more discussions see Zeitlin, *Historian of the Strange*, pp. 5-7.

<sup>3</sup> Chuang-tzu, “Xiaoyaoyou.” The original text reads: “《齐谐》者，志怪者也” Translation reads: “*Qi Xie was a recorder of anomalies; Chuang-tzu, Xiaoyaoyou,*” in Zhuzi jicheng, vol.3 (Reprint, Beijing: Zhonghuashuju, 1986), p. 1. The translation is quoted from Robert Ford Campany, *Strange Writings*, p. 151.

<sup>4</sup> Qingtan literally means free and disinterested talks, and the witty talkers often show a cynical and skeptical attitude toward the subjects of their conversation. The subjects of the “pure conversation” include the study of characters as well as literary, artistic, moral, and philosophical problems.

<sup>5</sup> For a complete English translation of the preface, see Kenneth J. DeWoskin, “The Six Dynasties Chi-kuai and the Birth of Fiction,” in Andrew H. Plaks, ed., *Chinese Narrative Critical and Theoretical Essays* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, (1977): 32-33.

experienced a second blossoming. Throughout its history, the issues of defending and criticizing the values and the orthodoxies of the tradition have remained critical to its authors and readers. On the one hand, *Zhiguai* authors claim the credibility of their writings and take great pains to elaborate the affiliation between *Zhiguai*, the heterodox writing, and historiography, the orthodox writing.

It wasn't until the sixteenth century that *Zhiguai* was used as a generic term by the Qing critic Hu Yinglin (1551-1602).<sup>6</sup> From the beginning of the twentieth century, modern scholars and critics such as Lu Xun (1881-1936)<sup>7</sup> started to view it as a particular literary genre. Elements of Qing *Zhiguai* show that the motivation of the author or compiler, the functions of the stories, and the relationship between stories and collections and their historical and the cultural background have attracted tremendous attention from scholars.

Leo Tak-hung Chan examines the authors' prefaces of several representative eighteenth-century strange story collections and points out that the main purposes of compiling those collections include: 1) to encourage ethical behavior and elaborate moral value, 2) to broaden one's knowledge, and 3) to entertain oneself (Chan 17). More recently, Sing-chen Lydia Chiang proposes that writing and collecting strange stories serve the functions of "self-expression, gender and class identity construction, meaning creation, value generation, individual empowerment, and societal transformation (Chiang 7)."

For the first time, Chiang brings Pu Songling's brief *Zhiguai* stories under serious scholarly attention, and illustrates that by portraying grotesque bodies Pu "deconstructs the Qing orthodox discourses of the body, including the cult of

---

<sup>6</sup> Hu Yinglin recognizes *Zhiguai* as one of the six sub-categories of novel, and the other five sub-categories are *chuanqi*, miscellaneous records and anecdotes, miscellaneous notes, documented sources, and counseling and advising notes.

<sup>7</sup> Lu Xun, "Liuchao zhi guishen zhiguai shu," 六朝之鬼神志怪书, in *Zhongguo Xiaoshuo Shilue* 中国小说史略, pp.26-38.

chastity, lineage discourse, and Confucian ritualism where the physical body was taken to be an essentialized marker of cultural identity (Chan 57).”

In short, the *Zhiguai* texts have been examined as a cosmological, cultural, political, social, and religious discourse. It is impossible to discuss the discourse of the Qing strange story without investigating another closely related genre--the *Chuanqi*. The *Zhiguai* experienced an important transformational stage during the Tang (唐) dynasty (618-907), leading to the rise of the *Chuanqi*, which eventually came to full bloom and became one of the most unique and beautiful flowers in the Chinese literary garden.

*Chuanqi* literally means transmitting the strange. In contrast to *Zhiguai* stories, the style of *Chuanqi* tales is more elaborate, the language is flowering, and the subjects are primarily focused on humanity, especially their inner-world.<sup>8</sup>

Shen Jiji (742-805), one of the celebrated Tang *Chuanqi* writers, claimed that his intention of writing the tale *Renshi zhuan* (任氏传) was to illustrate the beauty of literary writing and convey subtle emotion and feeling. Shen’s statement highlights the essential characteristics and the significance of the *Chuanqi*. The *Chuanqi* writers explored the complex inner world of individuals for the first time in Chinese literary history, revealed a conflict between private feelings and public convention, and questioned and challenged the traditional moral codes and social structures--all while the beauty of the language had long been praised.

The high standard set up by the Tang writers remained unchallenged for over six centuries. During the Tang and the Qing dynasties, numerous *Chuanqi* tales were written in the form of the self-contained tale (单篇) and the collection (集),

---

<sup>8</sup> The most important source for studying the *Chuanqi* is *Taiping guangji*, in which 14 tales are preserved under the category of “zazhuan”, miscellaneous biographies. For a brief introduction of the *Chuanqi*, see Sarah Yim, Ch’uan-ch’i, in William H. Nienhauser, Jr., ed., *The Indiana Companion to Traditional Chinese Literature*, pp. 356-360.

and yet the language, the depiction of the character, and the treatment of the themes of those works are generally foreshadowed by Tang tales. Then in the seventeenth century, Pu Songling and his contemporaries further developed the tradition with great passion and talent, and once again brought the glorious culmination of the *Chuanqi*.

As for the generic history, we find the term first appeared as the title of Pei Xing's (835-878) collection of tales, *Chuanqi*.<sup>9</sup> The Qing critic Hu Yinglin viewed *Chuanqi* as one of the six sub-categories of *Xiaoshuo* (小说), which includes the unorthodox, abnormal, miscellaneous, and less valuable writings of that time. The specific term *Tangren Chuanqi* (唐人传奇), which means Tang tales of the marvelous, first appeared in Zang Maoxun's (1550-1620) *Fubaotangji* (负苞堂集).<sup>10</sup> Scholars generally agree that it was Lu Xun who first used *Chuanqi* as a generic term to define the style and the characteristics of Tang stories. In *Brief History of Chinese Fiction*, Lu confirms Hu's opinion and calls Tang *Chuanqi* "conscious creation (Lu 46)." He further illustrates that its narratives are graceful and meandering, and the language and rhetoric are bright and beautiful, which are considered the key distinctions between the *Zhiguai* and the *Chuanqi*.

Viewing the *Chuanqi* as a new literary genre does not deny its affinity with the *Zhiguai*. Both genres share a common preoccupation with the strange, and some stories from the early *Zhiguai* are developed and elaborated in *Chuanqi* tales. The two traditions' forms frequently begin with a stylized sentence that provides names,

---

<sup>9</sup> See Y. W. Ma and Lau Joseph S. M. Lau, eds., *Traditional Chinese Stories: Themes and Variations* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1978; Pei Xing's *Chuanqi* itself shows a heavy influence of and a close relationship with the *zhiguai* tradition. According to Wang Meng'ou, among the tales in *Chuanqi*, fourteen tales focus on the Daoist transcendentals and immortals; four on the ghost and spirit world; four on the theme of monsters, and five on the topic of the extraordinary and unusual conduct of humans. Wang Meng'ou, *Tangren xiaoshuo yanjiu*, pp, 84-86.

<sup>10</sup> For more discussions, see Li Jianguo, *Tang Wudai zhiguai chuanqi xulu*, p. 9.

dates, and locations, while the *Chuanqi* stories frequently conclude with the narrator's observation. This stylistic characteristics show that compared to the *Zhiguai*, the *Chuanqi* tales draw more fully and consistently on historical biographies, which was intended to establish their authority and credibility and to justify their legitimacy. Since the Tang dynasty, collections of strange stories were often mixture of both *Chuanqi* and *Zhiguai* stories, and this situation continued to the end of the tradition.<sup>11</sup> Hu Yinglin notes that it is challenging to distinguish between them.<sup>12</sup> By the time of the Qing dynasty, not only were the stories of the two genres included in one collection, but also the narrative strategies of the two modes were employed in a single framework. It is the same with the primary Chinese sources of this study-the five collections of Qing strange stories, and for this reason, we prefer to use the phrase "strange tales" while talking about late imperial strange tale collections.

Recent scholarly studies on *Chuanqi* tales have explored larger contextual frameworks and social and cultural backgrounds. Huntington's study on the fox stories, for example, covers work of *Zhiguai* and *Chuanqi* from the collections of Pu Songling, He Bang'e, and Ji Yun. Her examination of the theoretical statements on foxes by He and Ji illustrates the authors' different understandings of the fox--the very embodiment of "the strange," and thus highlights Qing literati's intellectual debate over the individual, gender, and class identity. Chiang approaches Qing strange tales by viewing them as integral parts of a larger hermeneutic framework, and views the activity of collecting and transmitting the strange stories as a process of self-representation. The discussion of the Strange

---

<sup>11</sup> For examples see Niu Sengru's (779-841) *Xuanguai lu* and Duan Chengshi's (800-863) *Youyang zazu*.

<sup>12</sup> Hu commented that it is hard to draw a clear line between the *zhiguai* and the *chuanqi*; sometimes the two writing styles can be found in one book, and sometimes the two styles are used in recording one event. Hu Yinglin, "Jiuli xulun," in *Shaoshi shanfang congshu*, p. 374.

tales presented in this dissertation is focused on the literary created in *Zhiguai* and *Chuanqi* stories, particularly in Pu Songling's (1640-1715) *Strange Tales from a Chinese Studio* (聊斋志异), a collection of hundreds of tales.

## 2. The Gothic in Western History

“Gothic” as a generic term entered the Euro-American literary vocabulary in the eighteenth century, yet its meanings as a word referring to a particular architectural style, literary genre, and a critical term retain an ambiguous and even contradictory quality. In history, the term Gothic can be traced back to the Goths, the Germanic tribes that played a significant role in the fall of the Roman Empire in 410 A.D. With the exception of the preservation of a scant amount of the Gothic language, little else of their culture has survived in the form of art or literature. The works of a few early Roman historians express an admiration toward the Goths’ simplicity, purity, and toughness, which offers a sharp contrast to the luxury, corruption and enervation of the ruling class of Rome.<sup>13</sup> Nevertheless, the Goths are remembered as the invaders and destroyers of Roman civilization and identified as ignorant, primitive barbarians. The definition of Goths was indeed a product of identity construction that started in the fourteenth century and was continually extended and reinforced during the Renaissance. In the fourteenth century, interests in ancient language and literature revived among the early humanists, leading to the division of history into two epochs: Greek and Roman antiquity and the Middle

---

<sup>13</sup> The first extant history of the Goths is Jordanes’ *Getica* (551 A.D), and some earlier brief mentions of the Goths can be found in Tacitus’ *Germania* (98 A.D). For more discussions on the Goths, see Tacitus, *Dialogus, Agricola, Germania*, translated by Peterson, William, and Maurice Hutton (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University press, 1958); Heather, Peter. J., *The Goths* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007)

Ages or Gothic period. Instead of historical accuracy, the division was largely based on an emotional response to the past—the identification with antiquity and the negation of the destruction and fall of the Roman civilization. Using Petrarch (1304-1374) as an example, art historian Paul Frankl illustrates that “his admiration for ancient Rome is thoroughly emotional, poetic, and irrational, and so, too, his contempt for the barbarians is an emotional patriotism with respect to his ideal world that he localized in Rome” (Frankl 38). For Petrarch and his later follower who wished to identify the Romans as their forefathers and were eager to imitate antiquity, the dark ages after the destruction of Rome could be represented as an inverted mirror and reflected the antithesis of their ideal.

The term Gothic was rarely used in the early Renaissance, and although its meaning was much different from our present sense, it unmistakably conveyed a sense of contempt. The adjective “Gothic” appeared twice in Italy during the fifteenth century. On one occasion, it is mentioned when Alberti discuss sculpture in 1435. In this context, Gothic means “rustic,” boorish, coarse, and this meaning can be extended to the entire Middle Ages.<sup>14</sup> “Gothic” became synonymous with inferior, with respect to classical Roman. Thus, the term started its long process of expansion. By the time of the Renaissance, the term was applied to all things medieval, and the adjective “Gothic” is connected with ignorance, cruelty, the barbaric, or savage.<sup>15</sup>

While “Gothic” became a convenient label for medieval art, architecture, writing, and manner during the Renaissance, the irony was sharp for very little was

---

<sup>14</sup> Alberti stated that: “it would be absurd if the hands of a Helena or an Iphigenia were aged and Gothic” For the original text see Leone Battista Alberti, *Della pittura libritre*, in Hubert Janitschek, L. B., *Albertis kleine kunsthistorische Schriften* (Vienna, 1877), pp, 114-115. Here quoted from Frankl, *The Gothic*, p259.

<sup>15</sup> Paul Frankl reminds us that in early Renaissance we should not expect to find the term ‘gothic’ in our present sense. The adjective appears twice in Italy during the fifteenth century.



known about the Goths and the Dark Ages.<sup>16</sup> Consequently, although the Goths left no architecture, “Gothic” was identified as one architectural style, particularly evident in churches and cathedrals built in Europe between the twelfth and sixteenth centuries. Although obviously, admired by their makers, Renaissance and Neoclassical critics found them antithetical to those sound traditions of antiquity, and moreover this mistake was never challenged for more than two centuries (205-235).

In the eighteenth century, the word “Gothic” resumed its negative connotations. Fred Botting states that when “used derogatively about art, architecture, and writing that failed to conform to the standards of neoclassical taste, ‘Gothic’ signified the lack of reason, morality and beauty of feudal beliefs, customs and works (Botting 3).” On the other hand, the meaning and connotations of the word “Gothic” had shifted as a result of changing cultural values. Punter points out that “the ‘medieval’, the primitive, the wild became invested with positive value in and for itself and came to be seen as representing virtues and qualities that the ‘modern’ would need (Punter and Byron 8).” Writers began to associate “Gothic” with a positive quality of vigor and a sense of grandeur. The emergence of what was called “graveyard poetry” is one example of this artistic cultivation. “Graveyard poetry” in many ways prefigured the Gothic Fiction: it explored the limitation of human knowledge and the inevitability of human frailty, replaced reason with a valuation of feeling, connected the very nature of the mind with the capacity of experiencing terror, and sought “something greater” which was inevitably accompanied by terror--the sensation that was further explored in later Gothic writings (Punter and Byron 13).

---

<sup>16</sup> Petrarch was aware of such ignorance and wrote *De Ignorantia*.

### 3. The Original Gothic Romance and Modes, American Gothic

Like the seventeenth and eighteenth-century Chinese strange stories, American Gothic literature emerged from a formative period. Nineteenth-century America was preoccupied with internal political strife, an expanding frontier, and the development of the economy. During this period, not only the social and economical structures, but also the ideology and mentality of the new nation were gradually taking shape. While the majority of American spokesmen were eager to embrace an affirmative, optimistic, and unified definition of the new pragmatic and utilitarian nation, the most perceptive minds of the time confronted the dark side of the vision (Levin 21). Writers like Charles Brockden Brown (1771-1810), Edgar Allan Poe (1809-1849), Nathaniel Hawthorne (1840-1864), and Herman Melville (1819-1891) expressed an introspective, skeptical, and ironic attitude toward the American dream, and frequently questioned the religious heritage of New England, as well as Enlightenment philosophy's privileging of reason, order, and science as the means for gaining knowledge of nature and mankind. Religious, epistemological, and psychological perplexities are the main themes of the American Gothic, which are embodied in the depictions of the symbolic garden image-the landscape of the Fall.

Influenced by the British Gothic movement that flourished in the mid-eighteenth century, the American Gothic is also recognized as the dark counterforce to optimistic Romanticism.<sup>17</sup> People of the eighteenth-century

---

<sup>17</sup> For a discussion of Gothic and Romanticism, see G. R. Thompson, ed., *The Gothic Imagination: Essays in Dark Romanticism* (Pullman: Washington State University Press, 1974) and *Romantic Gothic Tales 1790-1840*. New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1979.

referred to their time as the modern age. As industry and science made rapid progress, a clear boundary between rationality and irrationality, the primitive and the civilized, science and superstition was drawn, and yet the forces of industrialization transformed the social structure and shifted cultural values. The American eighteenth century was also an age of political revolution and turmoil -- British political order was overthrown and laws of the old government were abolished. The rapid and dramatic political, economic, social and cultural changes together produced religious, philosophical, and intellectual anxieties, as well as different reactions, namely Romanticism, and dark Romanticism or Gothic. Romantics believed that through poetic intuition and imagination the separate self should be able to seek unity with Nature and discover the benign truth of the universe. In contrast, Gothic-dark Romanticism sees that having been cut off from God and expelled from Eden mankind was surrounded by darkness without knowing the existential condition and the ultimate truth of the universe. It was caught in a middle ground between the poles of faith and skepticism. Despite all the obstacles, the Gothic hero embarks upon a quest for the Absolute.

Characterized by moral alienation, Edgar Allan Poe's Gothic fictions, for example, devote a great deal of attention to the investigation of abnormal psychic states and the representation of a perverse existential condition. The abnormal mind -psychological delusion and the division of the psyche - is one of the main themes of Poe's fictions. G. R. Thompson points out that "the Gothic romance represents a fusion of various contraries. Man is the victim of something outside himself, but he is also the victim of something within himself."<sup>18</sup> As a victim from within, the deteriorated mind, and from without, the perverse universe, Poe's hero strives in

---

<sup>18</sup> For a discussion of Gothic and Romanticism, see G. R. Thompson, ed., *The Gothic Imagination: Essays in Dark Romanticism* (Pullman: Washington State University Press, 1974) and *Romantic Gothic Tales 1790-1840* (New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1979).

vain for the rationality and the knowledge of man's existential condition. In Robert Jacobs' view, Poe's work "concerns the distortion in the physical universe that attended man's fall from a state of innocence and earthly immortality (Jacobs 450)." Indeed, Poe's Gothic architecture and wasteland not only visualize the mental aberration, but also the perverse universe-the land of the Fall.

Like all great symbolic images, the meaning of Poe's gloomy Gothic landscape and dilapidating architecture remain open. Similarly, the persistent motifs-self-destruction of the hero and the death of the heroine--are open to positive interpretations. By analyzing the principles of Gothic horror which Poe uses in poems and narratives, and by correlating these principles with his literary criticism, this dissertation shows how Poe tries to reconstruct a lost paradise and reclaim the lost beauty and perfection through aesthetic transcendence.

However, one of the key differences between American and Chinese customs is the varied feelings they arouse. In general, *Zhiguai* stories offer a relaxing rather than terrifying reading experience, and the elaborate rhetorical style found in some representative stories induces a sense of pleasure. However, throughout the history of the genre, *Zhiguai* stories were often employed as a vehicle to promote various Buddhist concepts such as retribution, karma, reincarnation, ethical values, the moral pattern of the cosmic hierarchy, and political ideology.<sup>19</sup> Fear of physical pain, death, and torture after death remains the driving force and convenient tool in the didactic stories. Fear is often "associated with either a guilty conscience or an inability to commiserate with the ghostly or spiritual other," which is usually portrayed in strange tales as fundamentally human (Chiang 108). Sing-chen Lydia Chiang argues that rather than conventional religious, ethical, and ideological

---

<sup>19</sup> Robert Ford Campany points out that those are the important functions of the genre. See Robert Ford Campany, *Strange Writing*, p. 343.

messages, Qing strange stories reflect the psychological horror of the Qing literati. She points out that the demonic figures became a recurrent motif in Qing strange stories, symbolizing “hidden evils within the patriarchal order itself” and “the failed sociopolitical safeguard between the innocent individual and the hidden dangers of the world (104).” In my point of view, most of the eerie Chinese stories evoke fear and terror rather than horror--a point we shall see more clearly when comparing Chinese strange stories to American Gothic literature.

In contrast, American Gothic tales are writings of terror, horror, and mystery. In distinguishing the terms “terror” and “horror,” Ann Radcliffe, one of the pioneer Gothic writers, suggests in her essay “On the Supernatural in Poetry” the relationship of terror and horror to the Sublime. She asserts that terror “expands the soul” and “wakens the faculties to a high degree;” horror “contracts, freezes, and nearly annihilates them (Radcliffe 7).” Thompson explains that “terror suggests the frenzy of physical and mental fear of pain and death threatened from without. Horror suggests the sense from within of something incredibly evil or morally repellent (Thompson 7).” In his opinion, American Gothic tales “seek to create an atmosphere of dread by combining terror and horror with the element of inscrutable mystery (6).” Mystery here suggests “something productive of a nameless apprehension that may be called religious dread in the face of the wholly other (7).” Therefore, Gothic dread is of body, of mind, and of spirit, and evokes the sense of terror, horror, and mystery. By analyzing the different sensations induced by Chinese strange tales and American Gothic writings, which are conveyed and amplified by their depictions of the horror, this dissertation illustrates the distinguishing characteristics of the two traditions.

Since 1765, when Horace Walpole appended to the second edition of *The Castle of Otranto* the subtitle “A Gothic Story,” the critical term “Gothic” has been

used to describe certain kinds of subject matter, effects, and settings in fiction. Decaying, bleak, isolated castles, churches, graveyards, or atmospheric ruins are typical of Gothic landscapes in which Gothic figures-ghosts, monsters, living skeletons, demons, monks, nuns, isolated villains, and vampires-struggle in vain. Reading Gothic fiction gives readers a sense of panic and horror, a feeling sparked by vivid imagination and leading to the sublime. Gothic plots were associated with chivalry, violence, magical beings and malevolent aristocrats. Despite the surface didacticism, neo-classicist critics disapproved of Gothic fiction and considered it a shallow form adventure, horror and terror. Throughout the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, the Gothic has been seen by many critics as writing that is superficial, superstitious, and full of sensational cheap thrills.

Modern scholars consider the British Gothic Fictions written in the Romantic Age and bearing the distinctive characteristics mentioned above as the “original” Gothic, also called “classical Gothic.” Ann Radcliffe’s *A Sicilian Romance* (1790) and *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794), Matthew Gregory Lewis’s *The Monk* (1796), Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley’s *Frankenstein* (1818) and Charles Robert Maturin’s *Melmoth the Wonderer* (1820) are the key works among the original Gothic fiction.<sup>20</sup>

The historical Gothic is based on legend and superstition, with special reference to the Middle Ages. Works of historical Gothic exhibit a strong tendency to moralize in conventional terms; Clara Reeve’s (1729-1807) *The Old English Baron* (1773) provides a good example. In the works of explained Gothic, the ordinary day-to-day life is threatened by the insinuated existence of the occult realm. The increasing threat generated terror and horror until seemingly unnatural

---

<sup>20</sup> For a discussion of the individual important writers of the “original Gothic works,” see the chapter “The Original Gothic,” in David Punter, ed., *A Companion to the Gothic*, pp. 41-106.

phenomena are “explained.” In other words, the supernatural is the product of misperception in the works of such mode. Mrs. Radcliffe is the representative writer of explained Gothic, which explores in depth the psychology of fear. The supernatural Gothic, on the other hand, is predicated on the occult’s reality as a real domain of occurrences that permeates daily life. As demonstrated by M. G. Lewis’ *The Monk*, Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein*, and Maturin’s *Melmoth the Wanderer*, works of the supernatural mode deal with physical terror, psychological horror, and religious anxiety.

The threat of supernatural evil persists in the fourth form of Gothic romance, ambiguous Gothic (also known as high Gothic), but it is unclear whether the menace is a result of the nature of the universe, the nature of the mind, or a function of both. One of the distinguishing features of ambiguous Gothic romances is the unreliability and uncertainty of the narrator and interpreter. Central to the ambiguous mode is the heightened psychological, philosophical, and religious perplexity. According to Thompson, Gothic works of this mode project the ontological crisis of Romanticism, which believes that instead of reaching an ultimate understanding, one is constantly at the cutting edge of the vast physical, psychological, and metaphysical advancements that define the era. American Gothic works written by Charles Brockden Brown, Nathaniel Hawthorne, Edgar Allan Poe, and Herman Melville are fine examples of ambiguous Gothic.

In contrast to the historical Gothic, which conveys a didactic voice, the moral and religious messages of the high Gothic are ambiguous. Moreover, the rational and moral world which is often restored in the end of the explained Gothic, is replaced by a perverted universe in high Gothic, in which the character’s struggle to find an understanding of the existential condition and the meaning of the “real” world is doomed. The threat from the outside--the actual demons and ghosts--often

functions as the driving force of the supernatural Gothic. In high Gothic, it is more likely that the threat comes from within-the delirious mind and misperception--and yet the other possibilities remain open at the same time. Moreover, the relationship between natural and supernatural is uncertain. Thompson observes, “the treatment of the supernatural results in so intricate a pattern of ambiguity that a metaphysical and epistemological mystery not only comprehends the conscious and subconscious perceptions of the characters but also engulfs us as readers as well (31).”

These characteristics that distinguish ambiguous Gothic from the other three modes also define the difference between nineteenth century American Gothic and the works of their British predecessors. With a few exceptions, the existence of the occult realm and supernatural beings are uncertain in American Gothic writings. For instance, the murder of Brown’s young Wieland, Hawthorne’s mysterious “A” in the night sky, and Poe’s revival of *Ligeia* all imply the supernatural, and yet such implication is never verified. The reader is forced to contemplate upon the explanations of deception, madness, illusion, or an uncertain combination. Thus American Gothic literature erases the boundary of supernatural and reality, subverts the world order (which played an important role in British Gothic) and reveals the psychological, philosophical and religious perplexity of the Romantic Age.



## B. Edgar Allan Poe and His Gothic Fiction

Baudelaire once said that Edgar Allan Poe was a “fallen angel who remembered heaven” (Asselineau 5). The angel not only remembered the heaven but also wanted to reconstruct the heaven on earth. Edgar Allan Poe is probably the most controversial American writer of the nineteenth century. Nathaniel Parker Willis adopts the ancient myth to describe the genius poet: he was a man with “two antagonistic spirits imprisoned in one body . . . a man inhabited by both a devil and an angel” (Willis 2). On the other hand, in America, he was remembered as a habitual drunkard notorious for his poverty, unstable personality, cynical attitude toward his compatriots, and even madness; on the other hand, he was held in great esteem in Europe, especially by the French literati who considered him a genius. The European and modern artists love him because of his talents. Poe is said to be the forerunner of Symbolism and Surrealism because his stories go deeply into the human mind and break down the barriers between the consciousness and unconsciousness. His stories and poems are puzzles that readers must solve; his life, however, is an unsolved mystery. Such an enigmatic genius is a subject of much dispute, and this includes his life and his works. His life was filled with refusal, denial, frustration and depression, but today Poe is honored. For example, at the gate of West Point stands a statue of the great artist. His depictions of mental conflicts, alienation, and the sense of horror have left great influence upon modern arts. Many biographers regard him as ahead of his time.

Edgar Allan Poe was born to a financially unstable family on January 19, 1809 in Boston. Both his parents were actors. Thus, Poe’s delicate sensitivity to beautiful things might have inherited from his parents. His father, David Poe Jr., was an Irish-American, who came to America with his grandfather David Poe Sr. General

David Poe came to America to join the American War of Independence and thus became a celebrated war hero in Baltimore. Poe's mother, Elizabeth Arnold Poe, a beautiful actress with a strong will, came from England with her mother, who was an actress, too. In order to earn a living, Eliza made her debut on stage at the young age of nine. Since then, theatrical performances occupied the major part of her miserable life. Eliza was not only a talented actress but also a skillful singer with a sweet voice. She achieved great success in her professional performances; however, her marriage and health condition were not as fortunate. Eliza and David were married in 1806. This marriage brought misery to their son, Edgar. At that time, acting was considered a disreputable and base profession. The salary was mean. Owing to Protestant prejudices and considerations for public safety, theatrical performances were not accepted by authorities at that time, and so earning a life was by no means an easy task for theatrical performers. Due to these pecuniary difficulties, the family was doomed to domestic tragedy.

For unknown reasons, David Poe disappeared, leaving his wife and two sons in 1810. Some people said that he ran away from monetary problems, and some said that he was "indisposed and drunk" before his sudden disappearance (Kenneth 7). After he left, Eliza Poe brought up her two sons alone and struggled to make a living for them. Being ill and poverty stricken, she floundered through the work of raising her little boys by performing day after day. At the end of 1810, Eliza gave birth to a baby girl, Rosalie, and people doubted whether she was Mr. Poe's child. With the coming of the third child, Eliza's burden became even heavier, and consequently her health deteriorated. At the age of 24, she eventually passed away from tuberculosis, and her young children surrounded her bedside. This was Poe's first experience with death, and the little boy was frightened. He couldn't get rid of his dying mother's image and the fear of death, which are reflected in most of his

works. The dirty and bloody scene of his mother's death haunted little Edgar. An obsessive anxiety then loomed over his confused mind. Like little seeds, which burgeon decades later in his works of art, the horrible impressions reappeared when he wrote poems and stories.

In 1815 the Allan family moved to England and Scotland to develop their tobacco firm. Once the family settled in London, Poe was firstly sent to an English grammar school, and later to the Manor House School, which is recalled in Poe's "William Wilson." Probably his stay in the boarding school suggested John Allan's antipathy against the foster son, but it's indisputable that "Mr. Allan paid an extra fee for Edgar to have his own bed, a luxury in English schools of the day" (13). Poe was intellectually enlightened during the period. The five-year-long education in England afforded Poe a great opportunity to immerse himself in old European culture. Besides, in Manor House he also received different physical and intellectual trainings. For the first time, Poe was introduced to and probably inspired by European culture. During the short years in England, Poe was an outstanding young lad. The "quick and clever" American boy not only showed the talent for learning grammar but also performed excellently in sports (14). These happy years were merely a brief time in Poe's life, as he was spoiled by his foster parents with "extravagant amount of pocket money" and was praised as a gifted little boy (15). In 1820, because of financial obstacles and Mrs. Allan's ailment, John Allan again brought his family back to America.

The Allan family arrived in Richmond in 1820 and Poe, now twelve years old, entered another local school. The headmaster of the school, Joseph H. Clarke, was the first person who confirmed Poe's literary talent and pointed out that Edgar "was a born poet" (Klein 15). Edgar Allan Poe was distinguished from other students in his prominent gift for writing poems. His peculiar personality was shaped gradually

by his early education. Little by little, the adolescent Poe became a mysterious figure among his peers. He was quiet, aloof, proud, susceptible, highly self-conceited, yet ashamed of his low origins. He sometimes lied about his family and background as well as his personal experiences. The young lad was melancholy and didn't fit in with his peers. Julian Symons indicates that Poe's life "was just as romantic as his fictions" and he is "a tragic hero" (Julian 4). Poe's stigmatizing birth followed him like a shadow and influenced his writing career as well. It was said that David Poe was neurotic and so was Edgar. The family history of mental illness brought him attacks from other critics. But undoubtedly he had absorbed the qualities of artists from his actor parents, not only the physical charm but also a sensitive heart. All these qualities made Poe an attractive young man. The sensitive heart provided him the acuteness that pertains to a Romantic. He showed solitude and melancholy, which were unusual for ordinary young people but those qualities prepared him to be a poet. As a teen, Poe started to write minor poems in order to court girls in the neighborhood.

Although his peers considered him to be a great poet and even asked him to write a poem for the class, Poe didn't seem to have many close friends. He was not popular with other students because of his aloofness. Among his few true friends was Robert Craig Stanard, through whom Poe became acquainted himself with Mrs. Stanard. Robert introduced his mother to the fourteen-year-old poet and afterwards they developed a close friendship which was uncommon between a youth and a married woman. It is said that Poe often walked in the forest and had talks with the young mother. The friendship across the boundary of age was important to Poe, and the influence of this friendship was shown in Poe's philosophy of art and works later. A few years after their first meeting, the young Mrs. Stanard also died of consumption, which was yet another shock for Poe.

The same cruel fate also deprived him of his beloved foster mother in 1829. His keen and sensitive heart encountered death for the third time. But this time, Poe was mature enough to think about the issue of death seriously. The sad experience of death thus became the center of his writings. He combined his overwhelming sorrow and imagination like the English Romantics and enjoyed a slightly delightful thrill in facing death. Poe usually visited Stanard's tomb at night, lingered in the cemetery and immersed himself in gloominess and dreariness. He took the Graveyard poets' stance, contemplating the meaning of death and wishing for the resurrection of his beloved woman, Stanard. Poe's sensitivity to death is hard to imagine. Young as he was, he pondered the theme of death. He was so familiar with death when he was still a young child that the impression of death affected his thoughts and writing a few years later. Poe seems to have enjoyed the feeling of "morbid melancholy (Asselineau 21)". This is one of the impressive similarities between Poe and his heroes. Like his heroes, Poe lamented the loss of a beautiful woman, and as Asselineau says, "He became the spiritual brother of his doomed heroes (13)". Poe witnessed the death of his dear mothers in his early life and this helpless grief was engraved on his particularly fragile heart. It was almost impossible for him to recover from these sad experiences. They were the nightmares that he kept in mind all his lifetime, consciously or unconsciously. The fear and uncertainty from childhood and adolescence is reflected upon in his philosophic and fictional writings. When critics talk about Poe's stories and poems, they think of the nightmarish experiences of "death" as an important theme. These nightmares are projected in almost every one of Poe's works. The narrators in most of Poe's stories are his doubles, who jump out from his unconsciousness and disclose his innermost anxiety, fear and desire. Both Poe and his narrators are

tantalized by “the mortal ‘thirst to know’”<sup>21</sup> the world of immortality (Eakin 150). After finishing school in Richmond, Poe entered the University of Virginia in Charlottesville when he was about seventeen years old.

Poe’s college life ended prematurely for want of money. He was forced to turn to his foster father for financial support due to his debts. Being a serious and hard-working Christian, John Allan regarded Edgar’s gambling and laziness as unredeemable. He refused to provide any money and that made Poe’s situation worse. Poe was finally forced to drop out of school. After constant quarrels, Poe left John Allan’s house in 1827. The fierce foster father refused him any further support. Consequently, the only choice left for Poe was to join the army to meet his temporary need for food and housing. The regular army life gave him extra time to write. He recollected and revised his early poems which he had already published. *Tamerlane and Other Poems* were published by Calvin F. S. Tomas in this year. The topic of death appeared for the first time in the poems written from 1821 to 1822.

Poe’s life never seemed to settle down, but those different experiences vivified and broadened the topics of his short stories. For instance, *William Wilson* was thought to recall his life in England; whereas, the short period on the island provided him with the setting for his detective story *The Gold Bug* and other sea stories. In the army, Poe met one commanding officer who was acquainted with both General David Poe and John Allan. He offered to help Poe enter West Point. With his help and Mr. Allan’s permission, Poe was discharged from the duty in the harbor and enrolled in West Point. However, his stay in the military academy wasn’t long. He was again “kicked out of” school because of absences from parades and class roll calls, which he used to protest against John Allan’s little

---

<sup>21</sup> Paul John Eakin’s article on Poe: *Poe’s Sense of an Ending* discusses how Poe illustrates the idea.

pocket money. He left West Point just as he had left the University of Virginia. The training in science and logic in early years were reflected in his works of art. So, as Symons suggests, there are always two Poes behind his narratives: the logical one and the imaginative one. In his handling of art, Poe was a passionate Romantic artist and a meticulous craftsman. Poe's stories were structured logically and his poetry rhyming scheme precise. Those features lent him a style different from those of his contemporaries. And also, because he juxtaposed reason and imagination, he discovered an indistinct realm beneath a person's consciousness. His discovery greatly affects modern philosophy and art.

Frances Allan was the third important woman who was separated by Death from Poe's life. Her death caused both spiritual agony and material difficulties to Poe. No sooner did Poe enter West Point than John planned to marry a young woman. His second marriage showed not only his desire for a real heir but also his negligence towards his foster son. John Allan and Poe quarreled over Allan's second wedding, and Poe left home in extreme anger. After wandering several days, he turned to the Poe family in Baltimore for emotional as well as financial support. His brother Henry was not only a poet but had also been a sailor before. When Poe met him again in Baltimore, Henry was terribly sick. Poe kept him company for a few months before his death. Sitting by the sickbed, he listened as Henry described exotic traveling stories, many of which inspired Edgar. Thus, later when Poe wrote his stories, "he adopted the Russian travels as his own, and some of his narratives of imaginary travel may have owed something to stories told by Henry Poe" (Symons 44). This experience had influence on several of Poe's short stories. In those stories obscure feelings and a mysterious atmosphere prevail.

The Poe family suffered illness and poverty together in a little shabby house, but Poe chose to stay and endured the hardship with them. This shows how

attached he was to the family and also reveals his unsatisfied wish to have had a warm family in his childhood. He was now loved, understood and forgiven. Some biographers suggest that probably Poe's motivation for looking for his distant relatives and settling down with them was his desire for an image of motherhood. Thus, however tough his life was, Poe never escaped his responsibility of supporting his "new family." This new financial responsibility pushed Poe to look for a job as a magazine editorial assistant. After the mid-1820, thanks to the increase in literacy and the development of printing, the American publishing industry mushroomed. In this era, the sprouting magazines required writers to fill their pages<sup>22</sup> and short stories were the best genre for this need. Poe knew the public tastes, and according to this trend of short stories, he published his theory of composition in which the necessity of brevity was emphasized. Knowing how to appeal to the public reading mass, Poe became a popular freelancer for the bourgeois publishing industry. If we check the increase in subscriptions of the magazines which he helped edit, we will see how popular Poe's writing at that time was, at least among the general readers.

Since it was never easy for Poe to support a family, he had neither time nor money to make his dream come true. What is worse, his young wife, Virginia, died of consumption in 1837 after suffering malnutrition and disease for years. Poe grieved to see his young wife "Sissy," another important woman in his life, die, but her death was a spiritual release for him. After having been spiritually tormented by Virginia's sufferings for many years, he eventually "felt relieved in a way from 'the horrible never-ending oscillation between hope and despair'"(Asselineau 13). But in fact, witnessing the deaths of his loved women left his traumas unresolved. The

---

<sup>22</sup> "Poe had several reasons for cultivating brief fiction. First of all, there was a market for the short story. The era was one of burgeoning magazines that required copy to fill their pages." (Vincent Buranelli, *Edgar Allan Poe*. Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1977, p 65.)



fear of death, the uncertainty of existence terminated anytime as well as the confusion over the meaning of life and death were seeds burgeoning deep in his mind. Buranelli mentioned the influence of his early experiences of death: “The seeds grew in his infancy and then sprouted into monstrous growth as they were watered by repeated misfortunate” (Buranelli 35). The repeated misfortunes were the deaths of Jane Stanard, Frances Allan, Virginia Clemm, not to mention his own poor health. The horrible feelings resulted from the menacing death appear in various forms in his writings. He deplored his helpless life and the inevitable ending, and at the same time he possessed a desire to access the knowledge of both the unknown and inexpressible to the human mind.

Only by writing down his sorrow and anxiety can the grief of his soul be relieved. He needed an exit to let out his innermost fears and sense of powerlessness in face of death. Daniel Hoffman notices the poet’s unexpressed suffering, remarking that “the artist’s unassuageable need is to project upon the rest of mankind the terror and the losses, the sorrows and the insatiate longings of his own soul” (Hoffman 93). What Poe was not able to achieve within limited time and space his heroes do for him. Through the power of words, his soul could fly to the dreamland. The vague dreamland, according to Stoehr, is “the point of blending between wakefulness and sleep” (Stoehr 323). Stoehr’s observation also echoes Hoffman’s claim that Edgar Poe needed to express the “unspeakable horror (317)” to lessen his anxiety. Thus, Poe’s protagonists and narrators are “dream voyagers (Eakin 152)” wandering about the indistinct boundaries between consciousness and unconsciousness, the real and the spiritual, life and death. They tend to take voyages to unknown places, which are not only strange to the author himself but alien to the readers as well. This unknown world spells the world of Death or the world in which we might explore the secrets of Death. Those protagonists, however,

encounter failure and frustration in exploring the unknown realm as did Edgar Poe. The world described in his stories remains chaotic and unexplained. Poe successfully drags readers into the abyss of horror.

Here, we can find characteristic Gothic horror fictions by Edgar Allan Poe. Poe is one of the greatest writers in American literary history who is known as an expert in Gothic fictions concerning the horror and supernatural. The Gothic fictions of Poe described in this writing focus on the horror and mystery works, such as *Ligeia*, *Berenice*, *The Fall of Usher*, and *The Black Cat*. It analyzes the Gothic characters, themes and other elements in them. Based on this, the author analyzes the connotation and presentation of the Gothic world in the writings from two levels of connotation and narrative rhetoric. On the one hand, it summarizes its theme setting, character type, and life meaning from the ideological connotation, and explores the exploration of human living space and human nature implied in Poe's Gothic science fictions. On the other hand, from a narrative point of view, it analyzes how Poe carefully interspersed the Gothic factor into the structural framework, plot mode, analytical reasoning, etc. How emotion and rationality are used to aid the overall effect, to reveal the details of its Gothic fictions charm.

## C. Pu Songling and His *Strange Tales from Chinese Studio*

Pu Songling wrote *Strange Tales from a Chinese Studio* during the Qing dynasty (1616-1911). It's a romance fantasy book which included almost 500 Strange tales in the *Zhiguai* and *Chuanqi* genres. These tales acted as an implicit critique of societal issues. Its earliest publishing date is listed as 1740, indicating that it dates to the Qing period.

Pu was born in Zichuan (淄川) around 1640 to a lowly merchant family and passed away in 1715. At the age of 18, he passed the Imperial Examination and was awarded the Xiucai (秀才) degree. He didn't receive the Gongsheng (贡生) degree until he was 71 years old. He worked as a private tutor for the majority of his life, gathering the tales that were subsequently printed in *Strange Tales from a Chinese Studio* in 1740.

When he was young, he was talented and ambitious. He was obsessed with imperial examinations, hoping to become a state official. He passed the local examinations smoothly, but failed the imperial examination at the country level again and again. When he was 31 years old, for the sake of livelihood, he became an apparitor in Jiangsu Province, but after seeing the hypocrisy and dark side of officialdom, he decided to hand in his resignation in the same year. Afterwards, he acted as a teacher in the remainder of his life and died in melancholy when he was 75 years old.

All his life, Pu Songling made efforts to pass imperial examinations and broke away from poverty. However, the mechanical imperial examinations blocked him. At his time, the only way for a literatus to get rid of poverty and discrimination was to get an official position, but the cruel reality made his aspiration a failed dream. In addition to this, the social circumstance of his age was one of transformation. In

the year 1616, Qing Dynasty replaced Ming Dynasty. However, this transformation did not change the social structure; Qing Dynasty was also a feudal society. According to the social rules, the lower class could not protect their rights and enjoy the priority like upper class did. Correspondingly, Pu Songling, as a member of the lower class, frequently came into contact with the dark side of society and human beings. He could not rebel against the oppression in his age. The only thing he could do was telling strange tales to local people, which worked as an individual way for Pu Songling to be the emperor of his imaginary world. In this world, he expressed his idea explicitly and directly. This habit contributed a lot to his *Strange Tales from a Chinese Studio*.

The mention of *Strange Tales from a Chinese Studio* can immediately arouse readers' feeling of curiosity, vague ominousness and slight horror. It is a Chinese classic composed of about 500 pieces of strange tales. The book synthesizes the genres and modes of writing of *Zhiguai*, a literary genre that flourished in Wei and Jin Dynasties and mainly records or writes about weird and supernatural things, and *Chuanqi*, a literary genre that flourished in Tang Dynasties and is famous for borrowing the writing form from the Historical Records, an important classic genre in China, to record or write about uncanny people and things. The plots of the stories are weird, and the characters are ingeniously designed and vividly depicted, especially the beautiful and sensual ghost women. There are also other characters who are in the form of plants and animals. The whole book is full of the atmosphere of horror, dubiety and strangeness. The unfettered imagination reflects the characteristics and circumstances of the transitional time, which is from Ming Dynasty to Qing Dynasty.

The stories of *Strange Tales from a Chinese Studio* can be divided into four kinds. The first kind of stories criticize the hypocrisy and cruelty of society, satirize

corrupted officials, expose the greediness and evil of landlords and condemn the political system of the feudal society. For example, stories like *The Living Dead*, *The Laughing Girl*, *The Cricket*, *Xi Fangping* and *Shang Sanguan and Xiang Gao* are the representatives of this type. The second group of stories are those that present the author's anger at and criticism of the imperial examination system. For instance, stories like *Si Wenlang*, *The Inspectorate of Misdeeds* and *A Fool for Books* reflect the merciless oppression of the imperial examination system for literati and condemn the corruption of the imperial examination system. The third kind of stories praise the faithful and pure love between human beings as well as their unyielding spirits when they pursue freedom and happiness, such as the stories of *The Painted Skin*, *Bird* and *Xi Hou*. Human-fox love, human-ghost love and human-spirit love form the fourth kind of stories in *Strange Tales from a Chinese Studio*. For example, stories like *The Magic Sword and the Magic Bag*, *Fox Control*, *The Fox of Fenzhou* and *Fox as Prophet* are the representatives. Compared with the description of love between human beings, this type of stories present a more romantic atmosphere in the book, and a bunch of beautiful, kind and pure-minded women images are formed. The fifth group of stories deal with the theme of humanity. These stories usually borrow ideas from Confucianism, Buddhism and Taoism, such as the stories of *Painted Skin*, *The Painted Wall* and *The Taoist Priest of Mount Lao*.

*Strange Tales from a Chinese Studio* is undoubtedly the most read, researched, produced, and filmed Chinese ghost story due to its exceptional creativity, complex character interactions, dramatic plots, and profound philosophical ideas (Luo 2). This work in classical Chinese only was very popular when it was first published in 1766, but also attracted a number of readers and scholars afterwards. The later literati were profoundly affected by the structure and written form of *Strange Tales*

*from a Chinese Studio.*

## D. Recent Comparative Study between Allan Poe and Pu Songling

Edgar Allan Poe is a famous American writer and wrote more than 60 stories during the years 1832 to 1849. Until the 20th century, Poe aroused significant interest and attention of the modernist school. Many critical schools began to study Poe and his works from different aspects. He is standing on a kind of mystery. Scholars abroad mainly summarized Poe's works in two sides which are the social and historical analysis and the textual analysis. The study of Poe began with the first poem collection in Western countries. More than one hundred years, scholars have developed the study gradually and they are just trying to expand from the cultural perspective and research of Poe. They study Poe and his works from history, economics, racial, politics and so on. More and more scholars are interested in his thoughts, writing style and works.

Poe had a significant impact on later culture. After Poe, almost every significant American author demonstrates his influence, particularly when writing in the Gothic style or using macabre comedy. In the Americas, authors who write in French, Italian, Spanish, and Portuguese recognize and show their debt to Allan Poe in terms of style and vision. Poe is one of the most well-known authors from the United States, ranking alongside William Faulkner and possibly T. S. Eliot in terms of his international recognition. Poe's works also had a profound influence on Chinese literary world, especially the time of the New Culture Movement. His *The Gold Bug* was translated by Zhou Zuoren<sup>23</sup> and was put in place to China in 1905. From then on, more and more works were introduced to Chinese literature.

---

<sup>23</sup> Zhou Zuoren (1885-1967) was a Chinese writer, primarily known as an essayist and a translator. He was the younger brother of Lu Xun (Zhou Shuren), the second of three brothers.

*Strange Tales from a Chinese Studio* is recognized as a well-known book in every family for over three hundred years in China. Pu Songling's tales are also called *Liaozhai Zhiyi*. The study of *Strange Tales from a Chinese Studio* is famous in China, but it is insufficient on abroad. In 1842, the spread of *Strange Tales from a Chinese Studio* began in Western countries. The translation of *Strange Tales from a Chinese Studio* is collected in *Extraordinary Legends from Liaozhai* and published in Chinese Repository.

In the initial stage, it presented a fragmental characteristic and just a few of stories are interpreted. Until now, there is no integrated interpretation of *Strange Tales from a Chinese Studio* in a foreign language.

The most influential English versions of *Strange Tales from Chinese Studio* are the following three. The first one is Herbert Giles's translation, named *Strange Stories from a Chinese Studio*, which was published in London in 1880. 164 stories were collected in this version. Although there are some mistranslations in Herbert Giles's book, the sentences are elegant and the annotations of Chinese culture are abundant and precise. It is still the most popular translation in Western countries. The second version was translated by Yang Xianyi and his wife Gladys Yang, named *Selected Tales from Liao-Chai* was published by Foreign Languages Press in 1983. Although there are only 17 stories collected, the translation is quite accurate and faithful to the original. The third one was translated by Denis C. Mair and Victor H. Mair, named *Strange Tales from a Chinese Studio* published by Foreign Language Press in 1989. The strategy of foreignizing translation was adopted, which made the translation more graceful and beautiful both in structure and style. Other translations also contribute a lot to the spreading of *Strange Tales from a Chinese Studio* in foreign countries. The latest translation by John Minford is called *Strange Tales from a Chinese Studio*, and it was published by Penguin



Press. 104 stories are collected in this version. Although translators have been making efforts to introduce the book to Western readers, the studies of Pu Songling and his *Strange Tales from a Chinese Studio* abroad are immature. Only in recent years, with more frequent communication between Chinese and Western cultures, some scholars abroad began to pay attention to this book.

There have been three influential English versions of *Strange Stories from a Chinese Studio*: Herbert Giles's interpretation which was published in 1880. It contained 164 stories. Although there have been some misinterpretations in this book, the sentences are elegant. The second one was interpreted by Yang Xianyi and his wife and it was published in 1983. The interpretation is accurate and faithful to the original edition. The last one was published in 1989. The latest interpretation was published by Penguin Press and it collected 104 stories. These interpretations contribute to the propagating of *Strange Stories from a Chinese Studio* in foreign countries. These interpreters have made an effort to propagandize *Strange Stories from a Chinese Studio* to Western countries, but the studies are substantially immature. With the development of communication between Western and Chinese cultures, a lot of scholars began to focus on the study of *Strange Stories from a Chinese Studio*.

Edgar Allan Poe, as the summit of western Gothic literature, had great influence on the literary development after him; Pu Songling, as a master of ancient Chinese mysterious stories, produced a worldwide influence as well. This dissertation conducts a comparative research between the two literary types, bringing them under the spotlight of comparative study, which has contributed a great deal to both English and Chinese literary appreciation. The writing is the first trial on studying the two genres with the comparative literature.

In China, a comparative study, *The English Gothic Novels and the Chinese Supernatural Tales in the Six Dynasties* written by Li Weifang in 1999, is a comparative research of the two literary varieties (Li 5). The author tries to unveil their dissimilarities and similarities, finding out the cultural significance. Ms. He Mu-ying in Sichuan Normal University published an article *A Comparative Study of Pu's Strange Tales and Poe's Gothic Novels* in the Journal of Sichuan Normal University in 1999 (He 5). This article makes a brief introduction to the history of the two types examined and authors' motives for creation. It demonstrates that the two authors have similarity of revealing tough and cruel reality at that specific time, showing the yearning and pursuit for good life of the authors. In artistic feature, Poe's works are filled with queerness and horror. He gives more psychological portrait that lead to fairly vague character images, while Pu's focuses on supernatural elements and character portrayal which render concreteness of the characters concerned. Prof. Lu Sheng in Shandong Weifang College conducted a comparative study on the same topic in the year 2005 (Lu 1). After making a research of the two literary types by Pu and Poe, the author summarizes that Poe prefers to employ first person narration with a few discussion before constructing the plot of the story, while Pu likes to employ the third person narration.

In 2008, Ding Ming and Wang Aiming wrote the paper of *A Comparative Study of Allan Poe's Gothic Novels and Pu Song-ling's Supernatural Tales* (Ding and Wang 2). The writing analyzes that the two literature masters showed deep interest in the same ghost theme coincidentally.

In 2012, Luo Chuntao published the article of *Parallel Research on Evil Dead and Ligeia*. The relatively lengthy classical Chinese novel *Evil Dead* (also known as *Living Dead*) in Pu Songling's *Strange Tales from a Chinese Studio* and Edgar Allan Poe's Gothic fiction, *Ligeia*, are researched and finds that even the two

works are in a different cultural background, and distant era, but they are very comparable in terms of the source of motif, or the ambience and genre. Moreover, the two works are very in love with the theme of death, secretive terrifying atmosphere, in which social value of art is worth careful study (Luo 2).

In 2016, Wang Renfu published the article *On the Narrative Art of Fiction by Edgar Allan Poe and by Pu Songling* (Wang 2). Wang explores the two writers' shaping of the artistic effect of horror novels, and reveals the superb narrative art features of them.

In the Western country, For example, Hui Luo's doctoral dissertation *The Ghost of Liaozhai: Pu Songling's Ghostlore and Its History of Reception* published in 2009 and Lei Jin's *Pu Songling, Edgar Allan Poe, and the Garden of Good and Evil in Chinese and American Literature* published in 2009 are two representatives.

Through the previous review of the comparative studies of Poe's Gothic Fictions and Pu Songling's *Strange Tales from Chinese Studio*, it is clearly seen that sufficient researches have been done. Especially in the West, the comparative studies have not been paid enough attention to. This dissertation intends to analyze the similarities and differences between the two works from the perspective of comparative literature analogy study, hoping to call more critical attention to two master's works. Due to different living environment, life style, historical tradition and national faith, each ethnic group builds up various distinctive national cultures. The difference in national culture goes without saying. However, different ethnic groups also have some common qualities. With probing into more and more underdeveloped ethnic groups, many researchers find that some ethnic groups have stunning similarities, even in minor details. Literature, as a component part of national culture, also has this feature, that is, different national literatures have similarities. A large number of national literary works have been translated into

other national languages, and spread rapidly all over the world. These universal classics fully prove these common understanding-different national literatures have similarities.

### III. Comparative Study from the Perspective of Culture and Literature

This chapter is the first point on our journey into comparison. By describing the social cultures of Edgar Allan Poe's Gothic fictions and Pu Songling's *Strange Tales from a Chinese Studio*, we aim to reveal the different historical and cultural traditions in which they came into being, so as to better understand and grasp them presented in the later chapters. It also shows some common aesthetic features in creative thinking brought about by the similar historical situations in the process of its formation. In short, both two are the product of social unrest and the challenge to mainstream ideology. Both writers were largely affected by the religious beliefs of their times. The Gothic fictions mainly accept the influence of Christianity, while the Strange tales accept the influence of Buddhism and Taoism. Similar historical circumstances and life experiences have led Edgar Allan Poe and Pu Songling to become writers of different ethnic groups in China and America. They use ghost fantasy to express the infinite anxiety and disappointment in their hearts, and show people's emotions that are difficult to achieve in reality and desire vectors.

The review of early Chinese literary works, Western biblical traditions, and Greco-Roman classics reveals the cultural contrasts. We would observe that while Pu paid substantial attention to *Zhiguai* tales and feudal ideology, Poe's work tended to draw from the Biblical tradition. In addition to his visual horror, Poe also examines the unconscious, epistemological, and psychological perplexities. He also adds a vision of beauty and the supernal to his vision of visionary terror. The concept of the Chinese word for feeling, sentiment, love, desire, and passion is explored by Pu. In addition, he challenges contemporary intellectual topics,

exhibits his writing talent, and creates and parodies a self-identity. Pu Songling blurs the lines between normal and odd, reality and the ideal, and death and life when creating literary works.

## **A. The Influence of the Culture and Literature on Poe's Works**

### **1. Influence from Social Situation**

Poe's emphasis on readers' reaction in his creation, though different from the traditional Gothic fictions, is in coincidence with aesthetic response. One of the basic topics of receiving aesthetic effect in research is "the literary work's function in the correlations between texture and real world" (Jin 51). As a matter of fact, early in the ancient Greek, Socrates had already connected beauty and effect. He believed beauty must be useful and the utility is the criterion to assess the beauty. The British aesthetician Hume holds the idea that beauty is the effect the object shined upon heart. Poe's Gothic fictions which band together by the Gothic elements in traditional English literature and the methods of psychoanalysis in some degree reflect the morbid elements in early society of America. Puritanism was prevailing then; the puritans believed in Calvinism and regard every word in the Bible as God's decree. They advocate the theory of original sin, emphasis the corrupt of human character and believe human's fate is determined before one's born. They believe one can only be rescued by God's favor. But people in the early stage of American society are longing for independence and freedom, they are eager to change their fate by their personal action. Superadded the openly and secretly strife between the rapid progress of capitalism in the New World and the slavery system in the southern area, all these caused an unbalanced psychosocial.

Poe's Gothic fictions have a practical significance which reflects psychological alienation states: loneliness, fear, anxiety, worry and despair. They desire to be put themselves in a safety zone where they cannot be really harmed by

the destructive imagination and in the same time they can enjoy the aesthetic pleasure caused by horror, thrilling and darkness.

Not only horrific, beauty also goes through Poe's works. Horror is originated from beauty while things will often be more beautiful and sublime because of horror. The massive fascination that Poe's works have is comes from the combination of horror and aesthetics. Critics each air their own views about Poe and his works until now. No matter what position Poe has in the eyes of critics there is no denying that Poe's high reputation in the world. It can be said without exaggeration that Edgar Allan Poe is using his creation practice to provide world literature with priceless treasures and his literature genius have a lasting influence on the literary world.

## **2. Influence from European and American Literature**

Poe is equally remarkable for his genius and his achievements. He is conversant in French, Spanish, Italian, and German, and is well-versed in most disciplines of science and art. Ian Walker comments:

“his acquirements in Astronomy, Natural philosophy, Natural History and Chemistry are said to have been both extensive and accurate, and there are few branches of human knowledge to which he has not, at least, such familiarity as to enable him in his writings, to draw upon them for the purposes of illustration, with aptness and effect”(Walker 34).

Nevertheless, a very strong case can be made for the view that Poe accumulates profound knowledge that lays the foundations for his literary creation. He borrows books from friends like Kennedy, who owns extensive collections. Jeffery Meyers holds a view, “he does most of the reading to make up for



deficiencies in his formal education as well as to gather materials for the magazine, in public libraries (Meyers 75)”

Poe’s horror fiction is often a reflection of Plato’s view. Plato, the ancient Greek philosopher, is the founder of objective idealism. In Plato’s opinion, the concept is the origin of things. In other words, he believes concrete things are unstable and easy to change but the concept is eternal. Arthur H. Quinn says, Poe derives in part from Plato the notion that the diverse is endowed with myth, and tries to restore it to the primordial unity which the cosmos once possesses (Quinn 231). Plato’s words, “one, everlastingly, and single” draws Poe’s inspiration for his writing (Chang 151). So Poe writes *Morella*, which explores the essential oneness of mother and daughter and portrays the theme of malign reincarnation. The narrator does not love his erudite, mystical wife, Morella, whose name in Italian means blackish and suggests the dark mystery of her identity. The essential question in the story derives from her philosophical reading is whether or not personal identity is lost and death. But she seems to have discovered this secret, so she predicts: “I’m dying, yet shall I live (Poe 17)”. Although she dies in childbirth, her daughter survives and grows up to resemble her dead mother. The narrator compares the young Morella to a worm that would not die. When the young Morella dies, her father carries her to the tomb and laughs with a long and bitter laugh. In fact, the narrator’s wife has fulfilled her prophecy by preserving her identity and prolonging her own life through the life of her daughter.

The Renaissance dramas are one of the most important sources of Gothic fiction. At that time, in other European countries, the ancient Greek tragedies had been well received by readers. But in England the ancient Roman tragedies that were full of violence, revenge and murder were very popular. Seneca, the great ancient Roman tragedian, had nine tragedies translated and published in early

Elizabethan period. Some scholars point out Englishmen are apt to accept Seneca, which is related to their tradition. The tradition is that Englishmen are willing to end their resentment by revenge. In Christian doctrine, God does not permit revenge, but it is until the 17th century this behavior had existed. In those days, some tragedies with sensory stimulus and dramatic effect catered to the audiences. On the whole, under the influence of Seneca, in England the first influenced dramatists created many dramas of revenge with conspiracy, violence, killing, and even ghost haunting. The most famous drama is Thomas Kyd's Spanish tragedy. With the development of dramas of revenge, the revenge of dramas had an impact on English literature, especially Gothic fictions. Edward Wagenknecht has pointed out "Poe has a reasonable knowledge of seventeenth-century dramas" (Wagenknecht 119). In *The Cask of Amontillado*, the narrator, Montresor, wreaks vengeance upon an apparent enemy, Fortunato; he takes him down to his wine-cellar in the pretence of tasting a vintage, takes advantage of his drunkenness and immures him alive. *The Cask of Amontillado* is the living heart within the dead body, with the vault of bones. Montresor has done Fortunato the honor of giving him pride of place in the wine-vault. Yet the completeness of his victory is doubtful: as he inserted the last stone, his heart grew sick on account of the dampness of the catacombs. The whole story centers on revenge that makes the readers experience the conflict between Montresor and Fortunato.

In articulating a series of terrifying images that would have a significant impact on subsequent literary history, Coleridge contributes to the development of Gothic literature (Punter 99). For Poe, Coleridge is very important writer who sets Poe a better example and more profoundly influences both his theory and practice than any other writer (122). Poe spends much energy in debating and dissenting from Coleridge's famous distinction between fancy and imagination, but he accepts

Coleridge's view, which bitterly opposes controlling imagination rationally (Spiller 59). Poe promotes this view actively, in Poe the readers can not anticipate what is written in the next chapter. For instance, Berenice is healthy lady when she is first presented, but they quickly fall ill. The narrator does not fall in love with Berenice until she is sick, at which point there comes the obsessive obsession on her teeth. All the matters seem like inappropriate, but just these fantastic plots attract reader's attention.

Poe is the cult of Byronism, the romantic cultivation of the heroic and tragic self which underlies much of his writing and carries over into Poe's stories (Punter 197). But Byronic self-conception is mediated by Lytton. In addition to writing a complete story about the so-called supernatural, Lytton uses modern pseudo-scientific justifications - often used to amplify the mystery or to defend himself. In *the Haunted and the Haunters*, Lytton's description of the apparitions impresses the readers:

“My impression was that of an immense and overwhelming Power apposed to my volition; that sense of utter inadequacy to cope with a force beyond man's, which one may feel physically in a storm at sea, in a conflagration, or when confronting some terrible wild beast, or rather, perhaps, the shark of the ocean, I felt morally. Opposed to my will was another will, as far superior to its strength as storm, fire, and shark in material force to the force of man”(Lytton 31).

In Poe's Gothic fiction, he also expends his efforts on the supernatural. *The Fall of the House of Usher* has a protagonist who experiences anxiety, a haunted home inhabited by haunting siblings, and a storyteller. The novel revolves around the supernatural due to the perplexing disease of a dying feeble person, distorted thoughts and sensory perceptions that distress Usher and the narrator. They live

through burial and the terrible return of the buried, the deaths of both Usher brothers, and the fall of the house.

### 3. Influences from Religion

The charge that Edgar Allan Poe is an unbeliever or a man incapable of religious feeling, has not been confined to like Augustus Hopkins Strong, whose discussion rests upon false premises, partly because of his uncritical acceptance of Griswold, and partly because he obviously has little feeling for any religious belief except his own brand of protestant orthodoxy. Mrs. Whitman assesses Poe as the culmination of all nineteenth century skepticism and unbelief, and she says, “wanting in that supreme central force or faculty of the mind whose function is a God-conscious and God-adoring faith, Poe sought earnestly and conscientiously for such a solution to an intellect hurled from its balance by the abnormal and analytical and imaginative faculties” (Whitman 124).

Edward Wagenknecht says, there are very few references to Christ or the church on Poe. The Allans are supposed to have had Poe baptized on December 11, 1811 though Whitty searched in vain for the church record (Wagenknecht 206). When he was young he went to church with the Albans frequently. By studying some commentaries, the readers know he attends church with Mrs. Susan Weiss says that he is “a frequent attendant at church and a great lover of church music” (Weiss 709) It is thus obvious that Poe has a complex relationship with Christ or the church. Even though he tries to ignore the case, he cannot escape its influence.

Of Poe’s knowledge of the Bible there can be no doubt. In *Metzengerstein*, Poe quotes Luther, in Latin, at the beginning of this horror fiction. Poe also names some ancient Christian names in his stories. *Ms. Found in a Bottle*, as told by Mr.

Solomon Seadrift, a name that undercuts the wisdom of biblical Solomon. Berenice, the heroine of *Berenice*, has the same name with a woman in the *Acts of the Bible* who leads a dissipated life. If we say Poe names the hero of his story *Solomon* because of its popularization which is influenced by *the Bible*, then the choice of Berenice is no exception. As everyone knows few women name Berenice.

In Poe's works, there are some fictions, in which people can find *the Bible's* reflection. For instance, the Bible has stories about usurping the throne, engaging in family feuds, incest, and other topics. *The Fall of the House of Usher* probably measures as one of Poe's greatest achievements in short stories, which is interesting in more ways than any other ones. The collapse of the house is symbolic of the ultimate annihilation of the being that is Usher. As a matter of fact, the plot of the whole story is centered on the abnormal love of this brother and his sister, which is similar to the Bible's some stories.

Poe's Christian knowledge is not confined to the Bible or to Biblical themes. He writes many warm, sympathetic reviews of Christian books; he can even embrace such a work as *the Christian Florist*: "It is very well adapted for a Christmas present, to those especially whose minds are imbued at the same time with a love of flowers-and of him who is a God of flowers, as well as of mightier things" (Wagenknecht 208).

As the narrator, despite his disclaimers, gradually exposes that he is in fact rather vicious and psychotic, while the cats appear to become fairly human, animal and human attributes are flipped in *The Black Cat*. Although there is no humor in this alcoholic's narrative, alcohol alters the narrator's personality. He tortures and hangs his first cat as evidence of his brutality, and a fire destroys his house, leaving him to wonder what the cat relief on one wall that survived the fire means. His attempt to make sense of this situation just drives him more into madness. The

conspicuous white patch on the animal, which is reminiscent of the deceased Pluto, starts to resemble a gallows to the narrator as a fresh cat enters the picture. The narrator now explains that his wicked instincts have taken control of him. Within a short period of time, he develops a deep dislike for this second cat, just as he did for its predecessor. He meant to kill it with an axe, but by pure accident, he kills his wife. Given that the cat has disappeared, he thinks that he is now free of his tormentor and locks up the body in the cellar. The spirit of perverseness, as the narrator has called it, propelled him to the top of the wall, where a horrible scream could be heard, just as the police arrived to investigate and were ready to leave after finding nothing suspicious. The corpse is exposed as the wall is breached, and the cat is perched atop its head, indicating that the narrator almost gave the victim a living burial. He transitions from having a gentle, calm attitude to being more violently hostile to other people. This short story just reflects retribution for sin in religion. The man kills his first cat and the second cat avenges the first cat's death. The second cat murders the man's wife by the man's hands and makes the family broken up.

Resurrecting from death is an eternal religious subject. Poe is not against this common sense and creates some stories which are about coming back to life. Jeffrey Meyers holds a view that Poe believes that *Ligeia*, a fiction of a powerful and beautiful woman who returns from the dead, is the best story he had ever written (Meyers 103). Ligeia first appears as the goddess of harmony in *Al Aaraaf* and speaks with a musical language. Shrouded in mystery and exceptional beauty, she has raven hair and fabulous eyes. She is prey to tumultuous passion and has mastered "all the wide areas of moral, physical, and mathematical science (Poe 28)". Unfortunately, she is stricken with a fatal illness. After Ligeia's inevitable death, the narrator moves from his decaying city to a gloomy abbey. There he runs

into the fair-haired and blue-eyed lady Rowena, who is very much alike with Ligeia in all ways. Preferring the dead to the living wife, the narrator develops a prenatal hatred for Rowena. And then she falls ill, becomes emaciated and eventually died. The death of the loathsome Rowena revives his memories of the beloved Ligeia. At midnight, he hears Rowena's sob from her deathbed, and he realizes Rowena is still alive. Finally, Rowena, who stands up and reveals the raven tresses and dark luminous orbs of the lady Ligeia, has possessed the body of her rival in love. Jeffrey Meyers comments "Poe describes this transformation with unusual subtlety and by combining the suggestive details of a spectral presence with the unreality of an opium dream, persuades the reader to suspend disbelief" (Meyers 105). It can be said that Poe is subject to the strong influences of religion. In his literary creations, religion stimulates Poe's inspiration and provides perennial continuous material for his stories.

In *the Pit and the Pendulum*, the writer also criticizes southern Christian church, which dominated southern part of America. *The Pit and the Pendulum* mainly narrates the condemned prisoner suffering severely from religious court. "I was sick - sick unto death with that long agony, and when they at length unbound me, and I was permitted to sit, I felt that my senses were leaving me. The sentence - the dread sentence of death - was the last of distinct accentuation that reached my ears" (Poe 210). Only two sentences reflect the brutal rule of religious court.

## B. The Influence of the Culture and Literature on Pu's Works

### 1. Influence from Social Situation

Fundamentally, social life is both the sole source of literary creativity and the target of its reflection in literature. No matter what a writer writes in his works, it is rooted in social life. A writer always lives in a certain social environment and a certain cultural tradition. What kind of life he chooses as the specific object of creation is bound to be regulated and restricted by social life. In the process of concrete creation, all the creative activities of the creative subject, including fiction, imagination, emotional projection, concept transfer, etc., cannot leave the concrete object for purely arbitrary fabrications and emotional venting.

*Strange Tales from a Chinese Studio* written by Pu Songling is also inseparable from social life. Pu Songling insinuates his social life at that time through the real world and the illusory world. The real world refers to the human world; the illusory world refers to the fairy world, the underworld and the demon world.

First one is the reflection on the education. The imperial examination has always been an important way for the imperial court to select talents, and it is also an important way for literati to embark on political careers. With the development of history, the imperial examination system was monopolized by a few dishonest officials during the Ming and Qing Dynasties, particularly during the Qing Dynasty. They practice favoritism. This has resulted in some talented literati being denied fame. The story of *Friendship beyond the Grave* is based on Pu Songling's personal tragedy. It describes the scholar Ye who were outstanding in the imperial examination era but suffered miserable situations, and the pain of the scholars who



were harmed by the imperial examination system in the imperial examination era. It criticized the unfairness of the imperial examination system.

In addition, there are stories related to education, as well as stories such as *An Other Worldly Examination*, *Past Lives*, *Jia Fengzhi*, *Wang Zi'an* and other stories. From all aspects of the imperial examination, *Strange Tales from a Chinese Studio* exposes the corrupt and backward imperial examination system that has caused harm to people through ghost stories, and depicts a dark examination room full of drawbacks. Greedy examiners oppressed the literati, and the rigid eight-legged essays restricted the literati from exerting their talents. This led to the repeated failure of talented literati in the exam.

Second one is the reflection on the love. Love is an eternal topic of people throughout the ages. The images of ghosts and gods in *Strange Tales from a Chinese Studio* show all kinds of sad, lamentable, and weeping loves. In *The Painted Skin*, in order to save Wang, Wang's wife endured great humiliation and swallowed the mucus and phlegm spit out by a beggar. Unexpectedly, the mucus and phlegm she swallowed could save Wang. *The Painted Skin* depicts the image of a wife who is loyal and loving to her husband, expressing her pure love for her husband. In order to save her lascivious husband who has betrayed her, the wife is still willing to do whatever she can, even humiliating herself. In fact, it is difficult to find a virtuous and faithful wife. Few people can do what Wang's wife has done. It is not so simple to love someone with pure chastity and dedication.

In addition, related to love, there are also stories such as *Lian Cheng*, *A Bao*, *Ruiyun*, *The Laughing Girl* and *Qing Feng*. Through a variety of stories, *Strange Tales from a Chinese Studio* shows how many young men and women struggled with the unreasonable feudal marriage system and feudal ethics, and how to fight

for their own freedom and happiness. For the “love” they have, they oppose the secular concepts and feudal ethics that bind them.

Third one is the reflection on the politics. The government should love the people and give them a peaceful life, but in the feudal period, many bureaucrats corrupted and oppressed innocent people for their personal interests. This created a chaotic situation. In the story of *Xi Fangping*, Xi pleads for his father’s grievance, and goes to the underworld to sue at all levels, but the governor have been bribed by Yang. Xi can’t vindicate his father but is tortured. *Xi Fangping* depicts the corrupt government system at that time, where so many corrupt officials and cruel officials abused innocent and poor civilians for money, and it was difficult for civilians to get justice and power. In addition, there are stories related to politics, such as *Mei Nu*, *Raksha Sea City*, *Gongsun Jiuniang* and so on.

From a political perspective, *Strange Tales from a Chinese Studio* expresses people’s dissatisfaction with the government at that time through ghost stories. Officials brutally mutilated the common people, but the common people had no ability or power to take revenge. The hatred of these people has been appealed through fantasy in *Strange Tales from a Chinese Studio*. Stories such as *Xi Fangping* and *Mei Nu* depict how the abused people desperately fight for justice, praise the spirit of the oppressed people’s resistance and struggle, and demonstrate the strong belief that justice will win.

Fourth one is the reflection on the economy. In ancient times, men dominated the outside and women dominated the interior. Men earn money to support their families, while women do chores and raise children at home. However, in *Strange Tales from a Chinese Studio*, there is a strong woman with a very strong economic sense. *Xiao Er* wrote the extremely beautiful woman Zhao Xiaoer. She is dexterous and has more business skills than men. But she opened a Liuli factory, and the

lamps produced by her were novel and incomparable to other factories. In a few years, she became the richest person. Xiao Er is very strict with the management of the workers, and none of the workers have free time. Diligent workers are rewarded, while lazy workers are punished by kneeling.

*Xiao Er* shows women's independence and the improvement of their status in economic development. Xiao Er is a female operator, and she is good at managing workers. Xiao Er understands the market; she knows how to meet the requirements of customers and how to master the market. Women do not just stay at home and do housework, but rely on others to live, but they can be independent and control their own destiny.

In addition, related to economy, there are also stories such as *Huang Ying*, and *Xi Liu*. From the economic point of view, Pu Songling demonstrated the economic independence and status improvement of women. At that time, women had no social viability and status, and could only rely on their husbands to live. But in some stories in *Strange Tales from a Chinese Studio*, women are able to be independent by themselves. They are no longer the burden of the family, but the wise operators who can support the family.

The fifth one is an examination of social ethics. Morality is the rule and the standard by which individuals interact and conduct themselves. Morality exerts control over social behavior through individual self-control or predetermined public opinion. *Strange Tales from a Chinese Studio* tells people how to be human through the image of gods, ghosts and fairies, and gives us a lot of life inspiration. In *The Magic Sword and the Magic Bag*, it is mentioned that a beautiful woman Nie Xiaoqian took the initiative to send her to the door in the middle of the night, and said that she wanted to make out with the upright scholar Ning Caichen. Ning categorically refused. The beauty brought another ingot of gold, but Ning threw the

gold into the yard. Not interested in beauty and gold, so Ning can avoid disaster. Actually Nie Xiaoqian is very realistic and universal. From ancient times to the present, it is difficult for most men to pass through two levels, which are the money level and the beauty level. But Ning Caichen in *The Magic Sword and the Magic Bag* has set an example for the society. He is neither seduced by beauty nor attracted by money. From *The Magic Sword and the Magic Bag*, Pu Songling expressed his hope for people, hoping that in the feudal era of moral corruption, people can have a pure and honest heart like Ning Caichen.

In addition, there are stories related to education, as well as stories such as *Living Dead*, *The Laughing Girl* and other stories. *Strange Tales from a Chinese Studio* is full of moral admonitions, educating and admonishing people: educating people to be kind-hearted, honest, willing to help others, bear hardships and stand hard work, and can correct their mistakes. It summed up the experience and lessons of social life, and also enthusiastically praised the virtues and sentiments of ordinary people.

Most of the stories in *Strange Tales from a Chinese Studio* are works that combine realism and romanticism, reflecting the vast real life through the images of celestial being, ghosts, foxes, and monsters. It exposed the darkness and corruption of feudal society and politics and attacked the evils of the ruling class. It praised the spirit of resistance and struggle of the oppressed people. It exposed the shortcomings and evils of the imperial examination system; praised the power of love that transcends life and death; praised women to oppose feudal oppression, break free from the shackles of feudal ethics, and strive for freedom of marriage. *Strange Tales from a Chinese Studio* can be widely spread to the present because the darkness of society and people's pursuit of beauty still exist. It not only has the function of reflecting the real life of the society, but also serves as a compass for

people's behavior, guiding people to strive for the most perfect realm of life, which is "truth, goodness and beauty".

## 2. Influence from Chinese Traditional Literature

Pu Songling lived during the conclusion of the Ming and the start of the Qing dynasties. Influenced by traditional feudal ideology, Pu read Chinese classics very widely, which impacted greatly on his works. *A New Account of Tales of the World* is a book, which reflects Liu Yiqing's view. He collects local occurrences and customs from the Han Dynasty to current Dynasty and polishes them in order to express his understanding of life. As a relative of the emperor, Liu Yiqing gains the emperor's favor and guards fortress. But he gradually finds the royal court, to which Liu Yiqing devotes, persecutes the faithful and innocent all the way. So he writes *A New Account of Tales of the World* to pour out his indignation. In fact, the *Strange Tales from a Chinese Studio* also expresses the writer's own view. Although Pu Songling and Liu Yiqing have different circumstances, they have similar willings to change present situation.

In the beginning of *A New Account of Tales of the World*, Liu writes some stories about loyalty and filial piety. Pu promotes filial duty on his short stories. Filial sons in *A New Account of Tales of the World*, such as Wangxiang, Wangrong and Heqiao touch readers deeply and win respect from readers. *Candidate for the Post of City God* in Pu's works has the similar deep connotation with *A New Account of Tales of the World*. Master Song is appointed as a city god in He'nan Province. His elderly mother is alone and uncared for. Song asks the deities to let him be with his mother until she lives out her appointed span of years. Finally he is granted a nine-year extension to take care of his mother. Zhang Cheng in the works is just like Wang xiang in *A New Account of Tales of the World*. Going through hazards and hardships Zhang Cheng reunites with his family and relatives and becomes wealthy.

In *Wine Friend*, a man like Liu Ling in *A New Account of Tales of the World* is addicted to alcohol. One day a fox steals this man's wine and lies drunk in his home. The man does not disturb this fox and treats it as his wine friend. And then this fox makes friend with him and helps him get rid of poverty and become wealthy. The fox repays a kindness with kindness. In *A New Account of Tales of the World*, there are some stories to praise man of loyalty and righteousness and in *Strange Tales from a Chinese Studio* these characters become more vivid.

In *A New Account of Tales of the World*, men are proud of themselves, but in *Strange Tales from a Chinese Studio* men are disappointed with themselves, which develops the thoughts of *A New Account of Tales of the World*. It is worthy of mentioning that these two books praise intellectuals who are wild-mannered men. In *A New Account of Tales of the World*, besides Ruan Ji, Seven Sages in Bamboo Grove are a multitude of men with wild-manner. Er Heng, a great writer, is bold enough to take off his own clothes to humiliate Cao Cao in public. The wild-mannered men in *A New Account of Tales of the World* are straightforward, which is suitable to Liu Yiqing's ideas of literary creation. Pu Songling also pays wild-mannered men in his works a high compliment. In *Fox-Girl Qingfeng*, scholar Geng who not only boasts, but also behaves extravagantly by saying he is the wayward scholar Geng sickness-free. In order to go after that beautiful fox, he barges into fox's room and he does not stop until he gains fox girl's love. Pu Songling appreciates wildness, but it is different from *A New Account of Tales of the World*, which is not total or uncritical acceptance. In *Strange Tales from a Chinese Studio*, there is no man who considers nude as beautiful things, which is an improvement of Pu Songling.

According to the writer's own words, the stories of the *Strange Tales from a Chinese Studio* are made up of the narration of passers-by and the collection of the

writer's friends. It seems as though these stories have nothing to do with *A New Account of Tales of the World*, however, readers could find some stories that have the shadow of *A New Account of Tales of the World*. *Strange Tales from a Chinese Studio* also portrays many prodigals who run amuck everywhere and bully common people. Under the nurture of foxes and goblins, they turn into law-abiding people and return home after acquiring wealth and power. Another example, in *Butterfly*, Luo Zhifu loafs around day after day doing nothing meaningful and has a deep sense of shame and as a result he cannot come back home. Until he meets Butterfly, Luo Zhifu is reborn. On the process of starting the protagonist's life afresh, Pu Songling draws support from foxes, ghosts and goblins, which surpasses Liu's works.

About hot-tempered wives, the wife of Wang Yipu in *A New Account of Tales of the World* is fierce and tough. Whoever tries to persuade her, the wife of Wang Yipu curses unceasingly and attacks brutally. In *Strange Tales from a Chinese Studio*, Pu Songling writes too many hot-tempered wives to be enumerated. Jiang Cheng can seize her husband by the ear in public and Ma Jiepu regards her father-in-law and brother-in-law as enemies. But these hot-tempered wives draw their husbands from vicinity to righteousness by their fierceness. Ma Jiepu's wife who has always been fierce and has no intention of mending her ways is very much in the minority. Besides carrying forward some features of hot-tempered wives in *A New Account of Tales of the World*, the hot-tempered wives in Pu's works make their husbands give up evil and return to virtue, which is close to life.

In *Strange Tale from a Chinese Studio*, about eighty percent of stories touch upon women. Some scholars think these love stories are the reflections on conventional marriage and women's social status in the feudal society. Actually, besides reflecting the unreasonable marriages, some stories sing of the perfect love,



which are enlightened by *the Book of Songs*(诗经) - the earliest collection of poems in China. In *the Book of Songs*, the writer classifies women into three types: the first type is happy women in love; the second one is lovesick women; the third is abandoned women. All of them devote their bodies and souls to their lovers. But happy women or abandoned women cannot escape from their fates, which are controlled by men. In Pu's tales, men have dominant positions, but women are not men's petty playthings. Some women who change their men's lives and decide their own destinies, exhibit their strong ability. Women become the symbol of wisdom, strength and beauty again. It is quite legitimate to say that *Strange Tales from a Chinese Studio* reverses women's position in *The Book of Songs*. To some extent, the works present respecting women and worshiping women, which surpasses *the Book of Songs*.

In *Strange Tales from a Chinese Studio*, there are four hundred and ninety one extant stories, of which one hundred and ninety four clearly write "the Chronicler of the Tales comments." In addition, some stories do not clearly write "the Chronicler of the Tales comments", but their words obviously have the meaning of the Chronicler of the Tales, which makes up half the content of the works. "The Chronicler of the Tales comments" outlines Pu's specific writing features. Although "the Chronicler of the Tales comments" is not the component part of these stories, yet it is rather indispensable.

Basically, "the Chronicler of the Tales comments" follows the example of Si Maqian's "the Grand Historian comments", but they have noticeable differences (Ma 268). "The Grand Historian comments" is the words of historian, which judges between right and wrong. Its form is orderly and harmonious, like essay. "The Chronicler of the Tales comments" is the words of novelist. Some commenting are impassionable and encouraging, and others are freezing irony and burning satire,

which makes comments have literary flavor and artistic charm. The superficial likeness between “the Chronicler of the Tales comments” and “Old Historian comments” are widely different in their connotation. The story the Assassins in Records of the Historian employs “the Grand Historian comments” to equitably assess this historical accident. The Grand Historian comments:

“In the popular story about Jingke, the statements about grain falling from heaven and horses growing horns are simply wild talk. Another tradition, which maintains that Jingke succeeded in wounding the king of Qin, is equally untrue. Gongsun Jigong and the scholar Dong, who were friends at one time with the king of Qin’s physician Xia Wuju, knew what happened and I have reported what they told me. Of the five men from Caomo to Jingke, some succeeded in their mission while other failed; but all over equally determined and loyal to their cause. Not for nothing have their names been known to later generations (Si 467).”

The Grant Historian comments historical events with a historical eye; the writer does not add his own view on the story, which makes the story carry conviction. The writer makes a judgment of this accident and sings of the hero’s deeds. Although Pu also uses “the Chronicler of the Tales comments”, he does not directly judge the story’s right or wrong like Si Maqian. In *Yellow Bloom*, the Chronicler of the Tales comments:

“Like Fu Yi, whose epitaph was a man of green mountains and white clouds, Tao ended up dying of drink. Everyone pities him, but who is to say it was not an exciting life for him? Plant this variety in your courtyard. It’s as good as seeing a close friend or being with a beautiful woman. You simply have to go looking for it (Pu 411).”

Pu employs these sagacious words to enlighten people having good intentions towards others. “The Chronicler of the Tales comments” directly shows the writer’s

thought. In combating political corruption, exposing imperial civil examination and singing love and friendship, “the Chronicler of the Tales comments” explains the writer’s point of view.

### 3. Influences from Religion

*The Strange Tales from a Chinese Studio* talks about the stories of foxes and ghosts, which is consistent with the literature of religion. It’s obvious that *Strange Tales from a Chinese Studio* has been influenced by Buddhist thoughts such as retributive justice and transmigration which can be found everywhere in Pu’s works. Through these Buddhist ideas, Pu expresses the main idea in his works to punish viciousness and advise virtuousness, to influence people and guide custom. Meanwhile, Taoism, as the Chinese indigenous religion, has far-reaching influence on native writers. There are some stories reflecting Taoism in Pu’s works. In addition, compared to Poe, Pu’s works show a distinctive feature which embodies that Pu is also influenced by Confucianism besides Buddhism and Taoism.

In order to further publicize Confucianist ethics and morality better, Pu Songling assists the religion by gods. In *Strange Tales from a Chinese Studio*, gods show Buddhist view, such as retributive justice and transmigration. Religion is the ethical and moral norm of the Confucian school. Pu believed in Buddhism, mainly because the gods play an important role in upholding the moral principles of the Confucian school. Pu’s religious belief is coherent with morality; both of Confucianism and Buddhism are based on the moral reformation of traditional culture. The religion makes best of its advantage in people’s psychology since the religion relies on gods and ghosts. Pu Songling employs the literature of Buddhism and Taoism to point out the correct path for common people. In *Strange Tales from*

*a Chinese Studio*, some stories are written by the framework for the view of Buddhism and Taoism.

Retributive justice is a main doctrine of Buddhism. In Pu's works, there are some stories talking about Retributive justice. *Jiang cheng* (江城) in *Strange Tales from a Chinese Studio* tells a love story of scholar Gao and Jiangcheng. They are innocent playmates. After they grow up, they meet in a narrow alley and fall in love with each other. After marriage, they treat each other with sincere respect. And then Jiangcheng begins to swear at and beat her husband who is afraid of her. As a matter of fact, Jiangcheng, who was a mouse that was bred by a monk in her previous life, was killed by scholar Gao unintentionally. So the scholar Gao suffers retribution in his life. The purpose of this story is to exhort people to do good deeds. In this story, there is another Buddhist idea-transmigration. In Jiangcheng's previous life, she was a mouse. After her death, she turns to be a girl and takes revenge on scholar Gao.

Pu also writes some stories related to coming back to life. In *The Painted Skin*, scholar Wang is killed by a female ghost who tears a gash into his chest and rips out his heart. Wang's wife eats a begger's phlegm in order to save her husband. Finally, phlegm turns to be a heart and scholar Wang comes back to life. *The Cricket* tells Chengming's son who kills a cricket and brings a serious trouble. The son jumps into a well and turns into a cricket. Three years later, he comes back to life and his family enjoys the benefits of the cricket's favor.

In addition, in Pu's works, we can find the influence of Taoism. In *The Painted Skin*, the Taoist, one of the main characters in this story, kills a female ghost. When scholar Wang finds out the female ghost, he searches the Taoist and begs to be saved. The Taoist offers the scholar a fly-whisk, instructing him to hang it above the door to his bedroom. The fly-whisk that is used by the Taoist can

prevent ghosts and monsters. But the ghost tears it to pieces and kills scholar Wang. When the second brother of Wang tells the Taoist, He stands goes to the latter house and stands in the middle of the courtyard holding a wooden sword. And then the Taoist kills the ghost and brings out his bottle gourd, uncorks it and sucks the smoke that is changed by the ghost's corpse. The whole story has a clear imprint of Taoism. The Fly-whisk, wooden sword and bottle gourd are Taoist tools that can exorcize ghosts.

Pu Songling lived in countryside for a long time, where people believed in many folk customs and adored several spirited beings. He was especially influenced by the thoughts of Buddhism and Taoism, but Confucianism no doubt plays a key role. As a Confucian scholar, Pu Songling tries to safeguard the traditional ethics and morality of the Confucian school. Almost all the critics in the Qing Dynasty who had done preface and postscript for *Strange Tales from a Chinese Studio*, which looked on this book as one about Confucianism. For example, Feng Zhenluan, Dan Minglun and Zhao Qihao, all praise *Strange Tales from a Chinese Studio* for its contribution to Confucianism.

Filial piety is the core of Confucianism traditional view. If a man practices filial piety towards his parents, he can devote himself heart and soul to his emperor. The father-son relation is a miniature of the monarch-minister relations. For the above-mentioned reasons, feudal dynasties attached great importance to filial piety. Pu Songling also believed filial piety, and he holds a view gods and ghost can protect filial son. In *Scholar Zhong*, when scholar Zhong was attending triennial civil service examination at the provincial level, he met a Taoist priest who predicted scholar Zhong could pass the imperial examinations at the provincial level. However, when he came back home he could not see his mother. The Taoist priest gave him a pill of prolonging life in order that his mother could live until he

returned. Zhong was worried about his mother, and he hoped to come back as soon as possible to take care of his mother. On his way to home, his donkey did not obey the will of him; finally, Zhong took the examination. After the examination, Zhong returned home and his mother told him King of Hell helped her prolong life and pointed out his misfortunes and happiness that was a story about Buddhism and Taoism blessing Confucianism scholar.

Loving and respecting elder brother is an important content in Confucianism, which emphasizes fraternal affection and family harmony. In *Xiangqun* (湘裙), Yanbo loved the younger and Yanzhong respected the older. Yanbo and his wife had no children and died very early. Yanzhong was grieved and he wished he could have two boys and give one boy to his old brother. Unfortunately after giving birth to a baby, his wife died. One day, Yanzhong returned drunk and entered the underworld with his dead friend. Meeting his brother and sister in law, Yanzhong knew Yanbo had married a concubine and had a boy in the nether world. Soon after he returned to the land of the living with his cousin, Yanzhong treated his cousin kindly and imparted knowledge to him in order to bring up his old brother's successors. However, Yanzhong was lured by girl-ghost and died. Yanbo angrily denounced the girl-ghost and saved his younger brother by all means. With Buddhist coming back to life, Yanzhong was saved. In this story, the writer advocates fraternal affection, which can break down the barriers between the world and the nether world

Confucianism advocates benevolence that is the nature of human beings. In *Wang Liulang*, Wang Liulang was a water-ghost. If he wanted to return the world, he needed to find a drowned person to replace him. When he saw a woman holding a baby in her arms, he could not help showing sympathy for the mother and the son.

So he gave up this chance to come back to the world. His benevolence moved Heaven who appointed Wang Liulang as a local god of the land.

In *Tian Qilang* (田七郎), the writer expresses Tian Qilang's friendly feelings to a rich man Wu Chengxiu. Tian Qilang firmly believed requiting a favor with a favor. The rich repaid a debt of gratitude with money, and the poor repaid a debt of gratitude with friendly affection. Owing to this moral code, Tian Qilang cost his life to avenge Wu Chengxiu's murder.

In *Renxiu* (任秀), Renxiu takes revenge on villains through ghosts. Renxiu's father was a vendor who made friends with Shen Zhuting in business. Falling ill suddenly, on his deathbed, Renxiu's father gave Shen Zhuting two hundred ounces of silver: one hundred for his wife and the other hundred for Shen Zhuting. After Renxiu's father died, Shen Zhuting bought a coffin for five liang silver and seized the rest. When Renxiu got the information about the death of his father, he carried the coffin to home and buried the remains. Renxiu was so clever, but he had a passion for gambling. On the way to Beijing with his uncle, Renxiu heard the sound of gambling near his ship and went to gamble. As a result he won three guests who exchanged two hundred liang silver into copper coins from the ship owner. At dawn, when the guests were gone, the ship owner found that two hundred liang silver was spirit money. The ship owner was just Shen Zhuting. Here, the writer punishes the villain and tells people that he who makes friends should make friends with honest people.

On the whole, Pu Songling regards the view of Buddhism and Taoism as ancillary method of Confucianism. Buddhism and Taoism assisting Confucianism is a main feature in *Strange Tales from a Chinese Studio*. Cai Xiangzong has commented that through psychological deterrent force, the writer tries to raise people's moral consciousness in order to punish the evil and praise the good (Cai

59). This Buddhism and Taoism assisting Confucianism are coherent with the literary trend of traditional morality in the early years of Qing Dynasty.



## C. The Influence of Poe and Pu on Later Literature

Poe is a master in the genre of grotesque fiction. Poe has become one of the most important nineteenth-century aesthetic heroes in Europe as a result of the influence of his weirdness and melancholy paired with his innovative writing. He stands for something of real significance. This significance includes: as an alien in his days, with his wretched life of failure, poverty, illness and dissipation, Poe becomes the accepted stereotype for the fate of the novel's sensibility in the world of growing materialism.

Poe's grotesquery is perhaps best understood by seeing him as a contradiction. He is a vanguard in the pursuit of originality in his literary compositions, yet in the meantime, he is secular enough to allow himself to be subjected to the requirement of his society for the sake of survival. He is an aesthetic intoxicated by the sense of beauty and he reads literary works with rigorously critical eyes. He creates tales of strong irrational features, yet it is his rational norms of composition that helps keep his reader within his death, his trembling lips uttered: "Lord help my poor soul (Silverman 435)". It can be said that the awareness of these contradictions in his personality definitely helps readers better appreciate the grotesquery in his short stories. Poe is everywhere. The Poe Studies Association held the worldwide Poe Conference in 2002, when speakers discussed works on Poe's ties to the World Wrestling Federation, hard-boiled detective literature, Dario Argento's movies, and Bob Dylan (Peeples 126). A nice place to start is *Poe and Our Times*, a 1986 collection of articles focused mostly on Poe's effect but also covering reputation and contemporary studies. Niemeyer's chapter on "*Poe and popular Culture*" in the *Cambridge Companion to Edgar Allan Poe* offers a useful overview and some understanding of the author's enduring appeal as a cultural reference. Kevin Hayes'

*One Man Modernist* examines Poe’s impact on modernist visual art. Despite being a little antiquated, Ronald Smith’s *Poe in the Media* is nonetheless an amazing descriptive bibliography. In their book *Poe’s Children*, Tony Magistrale and Sidney Poger examine some of Poe’s literary heirs, ranging from Arthur Conan Doyle to Stephen King. Scott Peeples says:

“An extremely useful volume edited by Lois Vines, *Poe Abroad*, traces Poe’s posthumous international influence. Benjamin F. Fisher has compiled three annotated bibliographies of *Poe and Detection* as well as several lists of fugitive Poe references. And Burton Pollin, in his catalogue *Images of Poe’s Works*, in his essay on art, music, opera, and dance for *A Companion to Poe studies*, as well as in numerous articles and checklists on those subjects, has added much to our understanding of the extent of Poe’s presence in popular culture as well his continuing influence (127)”.

Karen Weeks says, “honestly, football and Poe have nothing to do with each other only highlights the extent to which this ninetieth-century American author has remained not only present, but much appreciated in the minds of the general public throughout the world (Weeks 205)”. It is worth mentioning that some movies about Poe’s life appear on screens. Poe stays in the public eye thanks to the movies, the numerous illustrated editions and adaptations of his writings. Additionally, given that they actually deal with literature, the Allan Poe Awards given out yearly by the Mystery Writers of America can be considered as a more appropriate usage of the author’s name. From food to daily necessities, from stamps to popular songs, Poe’s name can be found all over the world.

In summary, Poe’s writings shoot off in so many different ways that everything leads to him, which is why he continues to attract a broad variety of readers and be reinvented by popular culture. Mark Neimyer claims that Poe is a

marketer's dream solely as a symbol since his name and even his visage simultaneously connote both the excitement of a campfire ghost story and the erudition of great literature (Neimye 206).

Also no one can replace Pu Songling's position in Chinese literary history. Pu Songling is a multifaceted, sophisticated, and incredibly creative author with a sizable fanbase and an undisputed reputation for writing bizarre stories of mystery and fear. His impact may be seen in popular culture as well as in literature. In fact Pu's influence on Chinese art has been extraordinarily wide. He possesses great originality and imagination. His optimistic view of love and fascination with death appeals to some writers.

*Strange Tales from a Chinese Studio* is a monumental work in the history of short fictions, which makes contribution to the development of novel. In China, the tales about foxes, ghosts and fairies are extensive and long-standing, and most of them have fixed pattern. For example, fox is a kind of cunning animal and goblin is hideous. This inherent conception contracts tales of mystery and the supernatural have a tendency to generalities. Pu renews the inherent idea and thus impart rich personalities to those characters in the stories according to the different content. In his works, foxes and goblins have not only inherent features, but also vivid specific personalities. So these works of foxes and goblins become the most attractive parts in *Strange Tales from a Chinese Studio*. Besides, the writer uses a lot of "the Chronicler of the Tales Comments" to voice his mind, which makes the stories more vivid and pervasive. Pu widens the scope of themes and his stories reflect the underlying social problems in a way that is unique in history of tales mystery and the supernatural.

Pu derives the advantage of complicated plots from short stories of the Tang Dynasty and novels in the vernacular. Meanwhile, he pays great attention to

characterization, which makes *Strange Tales from a Chinese Studio* show the transition from a novel that attaches importance to plots to another that gives importance to characters. Through “the Chronicler of the Tales comments,” the writer expresses great concern with characters. In *The Laughing Girl*, the Chronicler of the Tales comments:

“Judging from her persistent mindless laughter, she seemed wholly lacking in sensibility, and what could be more deviously cunning than her wicked prank beneath the wall? But her sorrowful yearning for her ghostly mother and her switch from laughter to tears lead one to think that laughter was merely a mask for the real Yingning (Pu Songling 75)”.

In *Precious*, the Chronicler of the Tales comments: “Foolishness or fixation in a man’s character makes for dedication. Thus one who is fixated on books will surely write proficiently and one who is fixated on a craft will have consummate skill...what was so foolish about Master Sun?” (Pu Songling 127) All the above show Pu is deeply concerned about Ying Ning’s simple and unaffected character and Master Sun’s inarticulate and honest feature, but not complicated plot. Now *The Research on Pu Songling* has been started for more than 20 years. Many more academic essays continue to be written on Pu and his works. Moreover, some Pu symposiums are sponsored by the Pu Studies Association. In addition, *The Cricket in Strange Tales from a Chinese Studio* has been selected as language and literature teaching material.

Now on some websites, people can find some chat rooms named Liaozhai (聊齋), which shows that Pu and his works are still popular among common people nowadays. Furthermore, some directors adapt some works in *Strange Tales from a Chinese Studio* for the screen; especially *Nie Xiaoqian* and *The Painted Skin* have been dramatized as TV serials.

Pu's influence on Chinese literature is deep and pervasive. Other writers have freely adapted new topics, imagery, and genres from his terror fictions to their own cultural situations and literary styles. *Strange Tales from a Chinese Studio* has either its unique artistic color and excellent expression or its vulgarity and limitation in the respect of the imperial examination system and the utility of money. Only in pursuit of love and happiness can the author freed from himself and write pretty well. In many of excellent essays of *Strange Tales from a Chinese studio*, the relationships between men and foxes and ghosts are symbolized the poetic and lyrical aesthetic relation. The non-human characters in the stories are distilled from human society, and thus provide ample philosophic connotations to some degree.

Poe and Pu have achieved great success in terror fiction and make their attribution to the development of literature. They and their works have had great impact on later writers. While the creativity and inventiveness in their stories also had a significant effect on the most serious thinkers and authors, their works have always catered to popular taste. Because they touched on universal themes that all humans can relate to, like dreams, love, loss, sadness, mourning, alienation, dread, revenge, murder, insanity, sickness, and death, their works have endured the test of time and remained popular to this day.

## IV. Comparative Study from the Perspective of Mimetic and Expressive Aesthetics

The comparability of Pu Songling's Strange tales and Edgar Allan Poe's Gothic fictions lies in their significant literary connections formed in their witness to great social change and unfortunate life experiences, which results in their similarly unconventional literary appreciation of the factors of grotesqueness and horror. Nevertheless, how they respectively manifest the unconventionality in their aesthetics remains undisclosed. The comparative studies of Pu and Poe are few and devoid of profundity in the aspect of aesthetics. In reviewing the existing discussions of Chinese aesthetics and Western aesthetics in which Pu and Poe situate their aesthetic views, one can find that most of them have categorized the former as the expressive type, while the latter, mimetic. The fixed categorization is easy to be overturned through the comparison of the aesthetic value of Pu and Poe. In one aspect, the parallel exploration of the aesthetics of Pu and Poe reveals that the two fiction writers process their literary works in the light of both mimetic aesthetics and expressive aesthetics, which runs counter to the stereotyped classification that suggests the fixation of the two writers' aesthetics into a single type. In their mimetic aesthetics, Pu is devoted to portraying the social reality, while Poe is interested in the abstracted idea of Beauty. The expressive aesthetics of Pu and Poe indicates that Pu holds a firm belief in the concept of "authenticity" and directly expresses his real emotion, that is, the discontent with the reality, while Poe in his literary works implicitly mourns the dead women in his life and tries to build an emotional connection with his readers with such a topic. In another aspect, the analysis of the non-conventional aesthetics of the two writers suggests that they

have respectively challenged the initially accepted signification of expressive theories and mimetic theories, and for that, they have also broken off the fixed definition of the two aesthetic modes in history. Pu constructs a fictional world to express his indignation and thus differs from the conventional standard-being calm and reserved for a cultivated Chinese scholar in temperament. With a similarly revolutionary spirit as Pu, Poe is unsatisfied with the inspiration of the Muse in mimetic practices. Instead, he stresses the consciousness and autonomy of writers in literary composition. On the basis of the above analysis, the conclusion is made that the aesthetic parallel between Pu and Poe thus firstly serves as a supplement to the insufficient studies on the two fiction writers, secondly reflects the influence of social background and personal experiences on the aesthetics of the two writers, and finally helps to prove wrong the classification that the Chinese aesthetics is expressive, while the Western aesthetics, mimetic.

## A. Mimetic Aesthetics of Poe and Pu

The word “Mimesis” from Ancient Greek may signify many different things, such as imitation, representation, mimicry, or even just the act of resembling. Admittedly, one of the most significant artistic theories ancient Greek philosophers put forward is that the mimetic idea, or imitation, governs the creation of art. Plato starts the remarks of imitation and relegates poets to merely imitators, comparing the act of moving a mirror about with the imitation of poets, quick to “make the sun and anything that is in the sky and the earth and yourself and the other animals and furniture and plants and everything we have been talking about” (Plato 44). Democritus focuses on the imitation of nature. He considers that “in many aspects, we imitate animals like students. We learn weaving and sewing from spiders, building house from swallows, and singing from swans and orioles” (54). Aristotle speaks of mimesis as an act that grows out of certain human instincts and is performed to follow the patterns of human behavior. Such insistence on vivid portrayal of nature or humans has been a self-evident standpoint till the 18th century when the French philosopher Charles Batteux suggests to deduce a rule of artistic principle that all artistic creation and appreciation might follow in imitating acts. Batteux thus takes a further step in theorizing mimesis by suggesting the assembling of all perfections to be imitated.

Compared with the widely talked mimetic theories in the Western aesthetic systems, the conception of imitation is nearly ignored in the Chinese aesthetic studies. This will then first give an introduction of mimesis and its evolution in Chinese history before the remarks on Pu’s manifestation of mimetic aesthetics in his renowned work *Strange Tales from a Chinese Studio*. Although the Western mimesis in its long time of development mainly means the representation of the



outside world, Pu's mimetic view follows the contention of Batteux to present the universality of Beauty in order to resist the scientific truth.

## 1. Mimesis in Chinese Aesthetics

Formed in an aesthetic system not less complicated than that of the West, the Chinese notion of imitation has been popularly discussed in Pre-Qin Period (from the Paleolithic Age to B.C. 221), and Peng names it as “cultural imitation”, suggesting that art models on “Tiandao” (天道) and “Rendao” (人道). Such recognition of imitating abstract laws experienced a great breakthrough in the later Ming Dynasty and Qing Dynasty, during which the property of realness in novel is brought to the fore in the aesthetic discussion. Pu living in the early period of Qing Dynasty develops his perception of mimetic not only through the inheritance of “Tao” (道), but also the inclination to the aesthetic trend of his time. While truthfully narrating the unsatisfactory social reality, Pu does not forget to question the long-lasting influence of “cultural imitation”.

A generally accepted view is that mimetic theory originates from the ancient Greece and has dominated the systematic theories of Western art criticism and aesthetics for more than two thousand years, while the notion of “imitation/mimesis” in China is not popularized or even not well developed.<sup>24</sup> This view, however, is proved wrong, since the Chinese perception of imitation distinct from that of the West has already formed in Pre-Qin Period and experienced a great change down to the Ming Dynasty and Qing Dynasty when the literary genre “novel” prevails. One of the mostly mentioned Chinese counterpart of the Western “mimesis” is the concept of “Guanwu Quxiang” (观物取象), which suggests to use

---

<sup>24</sup> Peng has found that quite a few of the existing works of literary criticism indicate that the mimetic theory originates from the ancient Greek while ignoring its existence and development in Chinese literary history.

“Guaxiang” (卦象) to represent real images in Yijing (易经). As it is written in the book:

“...in the ancient time when Fuxi<sup>25</sup> rules the world, he looks up to observe the celestial phenomenon and looks down to investigate the rule of nature. He tries to exam how the strip patterns on the body of birds and animals suit natural environment with his experiences and observance. As all are prepared, he starts to create “Bagua”(八卦) to convey the message of gods and speculate the status of all things on earth”.<sup>26</sup>

What Fuxi imitates is not the real images of the existing beings in Nature, but the rule that govern the existence of them through self-created horoscope symbols. For that reason, He and Hu in their comparison of the Western “mimesis” and the notion of “Guanwu Quxiang” argue on the subjectivity of Chinese imitators for their innovative changes on real images, while the lack of it in the Western lifelike depiction (He and Hu 135). He and Hu have disclosed one of the greatest differences between the imitation theories of Chinese aesthetics and that of the West, but their recommendation of “Guanwu Quxiang” as the representative of Chinese “mimesis” is rather a limited idea, because the Chinese notion of imitation is far more expansive than catching images with symbols.

To better generalize Chinese imitation theory, Peng employs the term “cultural imitation” to interpret the mimetic concept in Pre-Qin Period, a time that has witnessed the emergence of various schools of thoughts and significantly influenced the development of Chinese artistic theories. The “cultural imitation” first indicates the following of the laws of nature with a firm belief in “Tianren

---

<sup>25</sup> Fuxi (伏羲) is one of the culture heroes in Chinese legend and mythology. He is credited with creating humanity and the invention of haunting, fishing and cooking.

<sup>26</sup> The original Chinese is “古者包牺氏之王天下也，仰则观象于天，俯则观法于地，观鸟兽之文与地之宜，近取诸身，远取诸物，于是始作八，以通神明之德，以类万物之情。”

Heyi”(天人合一)<sup>27</sup>. The notion of harmony between nature and human is firstly put forward by the philosopher Dong Zhongshu (B.C. 179-104) of the Han Dynasty, but far before Dong, the issue has been already discussed by Lao-tzu and Chuang-tzu in Pre-Qin Period. Lao-tzu presents a chain system of Chinese mimesis, saying, “man follows the law of the earth; the earth, that of the heaven; the heaven, that of the Tao; the Tao, that of nature”<sup>28</sup>, while Chuang-tzu suggests the personal integrity to be nurtured in imitation, “the sage patterns himself on nature, prizes the truth, and does not allow himself to be cramped by the vulgar”<sup>29</sup>. To follow the law of nature does not mean the mere imitation of specific natural creatures or phenomenon, but the compliance with the order and rules that govern the existing beings in nature. It is recorded that humans primarily dance in mimicking the movements of animals and sing in simulating the sounds in nature. They organize those movements and sounds in a proper way so as to master the law of harmony between heaven and earth. Such consonance men try to keep with the outside world is also adopted inside the human world, which leads to the interpretation of the second indication of “cultural imitation”, namely, to follow the law of human. With the understanding of the heavenly bestowed harmony, humans create series of rules and ethical orders in tune with nature’s operations to regulate their own behaviors properly. Chuang-tzu says, the minister subordinates to the emperor; son, to his father; the younger son, to the eldest one; the young, to the old; woman, to man; wife, to husband. Such order of priority and inferiority follows the rule of nature, and that is why sages obey it... Those who know Tao (or the natural law) will first

---

<sup>27</sup> The original Chinese is “天人合一”.

<sup>28</sup> The original Chinese is “人法地，地法天，天法道，道法自然”.

<sup>29</sup> The original Chinese is “君子法天贵真，不拘于俗”.

comprehend the rules of nature before morality, and morality before “Renyi”(benevolence and righteousness)<sup>30</sup>, and “Renyi” before responsibility...<sup>31</sup>.

The ranking of men in Chuang-tzu’s statement might be an interruption of the publicly accepted ethics today, but he has finally pointed out the importance of sages who will be taken as an example of ordinary people not only because rank of people in mind, but more meaningfully, they know how nature they keep the works orderly and by following it initiate rules to regulate and cultivate people. Such sages as Emperor (B.C.1152-1056) of Zhou Dynasty (B.C. 1046-256) and Confucius (B.C. 551-479) are extolled through the ages for their divine virtue and contribution to the hierarchical Chinese morality system.

The “cultural imitation” has significantly effected on the preceding artistic theories. In the later Southern Dynasty (A.D. 420-589), the teaching of “Original Tao” “Modeling on Sages”, and “Honouring Classics”<sup>32</sup> in a work of literary criticism *Wenxin Diaolong* (文心雕龙) produced by Liu Xie (A.D. 465-532) reflects the influence of the law of nature and human. In addition to that, the natural law has also permeated the criticism of calligraphy and painting in Wei and Jin Period, as Cai Yong (A.D. 133-192) states, “the act of writing is firstly inspired by nature”<sup>33</sup>, and Wang Wei (A.D. 415-443) says that the aim of painting is to “depict the universe...and grasp the spirit of natural landscape”<sup>34</sup>. That is why Ye comments on the aesthetics of Wei, Jin, Southern and Northern Dynasty, “the focus of art appreciation (during this time) has transformed from human to nature, because the

<sup>30</sup> The original Chinese is “仁义”.

<sup>31</sup> The original Chinese is “君先而臣从，父先而子从，兄先而弟从，长先而少从，男先而女从，夫先而妇从。夫尊卑先后，天地之行也，故圣人取象焉...是故古之明大道者，先明天而道德次之，道德已明而仁义次之”.

<sup>32</sup> The original Chinese is “源道”，“征圣” and “宗经”.

<sup>33</sup> The original Chinese is “夫书肇于自然”.

<sup>34</sup> The original Chinese is “以一管之笔，拟太虚之体...画寸眸之明”.

latter is more connotative of Tao, and thus more advantageous of demonstrating the vitality of the universe (Ye 188)”.

More than one thousand years later, such a profound worship of the law of nature, however, faces a great challenge from the prevalence of the literary genre “novel” in Ming Dynasty and Qing Dynasty. What “novel” writing encourages is the vivid depiction of images and verisimilar narration of events, different from the previous belief in the philosophical Tao. The transition of aesthetics to a down-to-earth trend is not a coincidence. Ming Dynasty is regarded as the time in which the early signs of capitalism emerge and the citizen group expands. The aesthetics of this time is directed to humanism and realism that concern about the artistic interest of citizens. Beside the historical background, Ye then offers three reasons of the popularity of novels in the aspect of literary creation: firstly, the gradually increasing vernacular short stories in contrast to the classical Chinese writings lay the foundation of the production of novels. Secondly, a trend of freeing mind led by such literati as Li Zhi broadens the vision of literature producers and emboldens them to explore the value of “novel” and establish the related literary criticism. Finally, the emergence of the punctuation and annotation of novels gives impetus to the development of novels. It is, therefore, exactly with the propelling force of economic and social changes as well as the aesthetic consciousness of literary critics that the writing of “novel” starts to grow in prosperity.

Much has been tapped into the factor of realness in novels in the time of Ming and Qing. The concept of realness here is no longer about comprehending the laws of nature and capturing the spirit of landscapes, but centred on the vivid portrayal and lifelike depiction of novel characters and their actions. The Ming aesthetician Ye Zhou (?-1624) in his comment on the novel *Shuihu Zhuan* (水浒传) notes that what is narrated in the book is fictional, but the narration is replete with actual

progress of social events and true feelings that may be observed in real life (370). What Ye proposes coincides with Aristotle's analysis of the "probable impossibilities" of poetry that assumes the likeness of the happening of fanciful events, but Ye considers that the aim of fiction writing is to interest and affect readers instead of bringing catharsis to their mind as Aristotle does. The later literarycritics Jin Shengtan (1608-1661) inherits and furthers Ye's thought by making a theoretical distinction between novel and history, noting that *Shiji* (史记) is written based on historical events, while *Shuihu Zhuan* is produced with artistic creation. The former is a laborious work of the talented Si Maqian to literarily string together the events that have already happened, but the latter is freely created with the artistic style of the writer".<sup>35</sup> Jin has pointed out the non-equivalence between artistic images and real figures, and highlighted that the end of exaggeration, imagination, fictionalization and refinement in writing is to shape the artistic images. Jin does not believe those artistic means will weaken the realness of "novel", because in a whole, "novel" progresses and characterizes its roles in the logic that leads the real life (375).

## 2. Pu's Portrayal of Social Reality

There are many different types of novels from the Ming and Qing eras. But a great proportion of them refers to the organization of the Imperial Examination and implies the subtle attitude to it, be it of the novel writers or the novel characters. It is at the time of later Ming and early Qing that the long abuse of "Keju" (科举) system is extremely aggravated. The content of the examination, though reformed

---

<sup>35</sup> The original Chinese is "《史记》是以文运事，《水浒》是因文生事，以文运事，是先有事生成如此如此，却要算计出一篇文字来，虽是史公高才，也毕竟是吃苦事；因文生事却不然，只是顺着笔性去，削高补低都由我”。

several times, has for thousands of years been limited to the Confucian doctrines and classics argumentation, even with the requirement of mechanical memorization and quotation of Confucian sayings since Ming Dynasty. The form of the examination is also faced with the fixation on “the Eight-legged Essay” (八股文) which forcibly regulates essays written in eight logically ordered parts, no more and no less, and no other literary styles are accepted. Even more strictly, unfortunate examinees like the talented poet Gong Zizhen<sup>36</sup> (1792-1841) who performs well in essay writing but does not write in regular script have to see their rank degraded (Jin 199).

The rigidity of the examination system results in the narrow-mindedness of scholars, who devote their life to the rote learning of Confucian classics, ignoring the important social practice of Confucian thoughts. The intention of such an enormous investment in the examination is in general to seek a lucrative place in the government and break away from the impoverished fate. In his novel collection *Rulin Waishi* (儒林外史), The Qing Dynasty author Wu Tingzi (1701-1744) perfectly captures the exclusive world of the literati and offers an almost unmatched background on Ming Dynasty culture. The loosely connected stories in the book describe and often satirize scholars who hold up the exemplary Confucian behaviors nearly in craze. One of the most widely known figures Wu ironically pictures is the pedant Fan Jin, who barely gets the Juren<sup>37</sup> degree in his fifties but dramatically goes mad on hearing the news. The attitude of scholars to “Keju” is, however, far more complicated than the simple refutation of it. The problematic attitude of scholars is that although their pungent voice of dissatisfaction with the

---

<sup>36</sup> Gong Zizhen was a Chinese poet and intellectual active in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. His works influenced the modernization movements of the late Qing Dynasty.

<sup>37</sup> Juren (举人) is one who passes the Imperial Examination at the provincial level. The degree of Juren is higher than Xiucai by one level.

“Keju” system grows increasingly stronger, they never totally give up attending the examination. In reality there are hundreds of thousands of figures like Fan Jin defining their life value as the sole achievement in the examination. They ascribe their unfortunate fate in seeking an official career to such defects in the examination system as donations for official titles, fraudulent practices, incompetent examiners and the vulgarization of scholars instead of the examination itself (Wang 43).

Being a scholar in poverty himself, Pu Songling receives the degree of Xiucan<sup>38</sup> in the examination at the age of nineteen, but he is awarded the Gongsheng<sup>39</sup> degree not until he was seventy-one for his achievement in literature rather than passing the examination. In the long lapse of time is the continuous failure and unchangingly depressing conditions of life. The arduous experience of being a frustrated scholar has been incisively reflected by Pu in *Strange Tales from a Chinese Studio*. In writing Strange tales, Pu consciously accepts the aesthetics of his time that prefers the depiction of lifelike characters and their stories in a reasonable way, as critics Ye Zhou and Jin Shengtan have proposed. Although *Strange Tales from a Chinese Studio* pictures a fantastic world where humans, immortals, ghosts, spirits of foxes and flowers are in coexistence and entangled relationships, the narrated events and observed emotions of characters conform to the logic of real life. Known as exactly the major concerns of the time, two of the most frequented topics of Pu’s writing are the “Keju” system and the romance between human and unnatural females, the latter of which, though obviously imaginary and unreal, is a fanciful reflection of the restricted love between couples in real life, and will be processed later.

---

<sup>38</sup> Xiucan (秀才) is the degree one gets when he passes the Imperial Examination at the county level.

<sup>39</sup> Gongsheng (贡生) is one who has achieved Xiucan degree and been recommended to study in the Imperial College.



The social reality in *Srtange Tales from a Chinese Studio* is that young scholars strive to procure a position in the government through taking the imperial examination. In a hierarchical society, it is the only way for the central male characters of low status to get ahead and bring the glory to his family name. In Pu's book, the examination looms every now and then casting its shadows on the lives of scholars. It is narrated that scholars make every effort to prepare the Imperial Examination to an extent that they even seclude themselves from the outside world. In *The Fox Spirit Fengxian*, Liu Chishui locks himself at home only reading books all around the clock. In *Lady Zhen*, Liu Zhongkan also indulges his passion in reading classics all the year around without any intention to go outside and build relationship with other people. Being even more zealous than the previous two scholars, Lang Yuzhu in *The Bookworm Lang* is so devoted to reading books that he ignores to make greetings when guests come to visit him, only leaving them sitting there embarrassed. The motivation of Lang is his fanciful belief that books will naturally bring him food and wealth. Unfortunately, such great effort and expectation they put on the book reading for the examination does not finally win them a satisfactory change of their current situation in poverty.

The dull preparation of the exam, or more unfortunately, the failure of passing it wears down the vitality of scholars and gnaws at their self-respect. In a typical case the scholar Wang Zi'an places so high hopes on the examination that he intoxicates himself before the result of it is announced, but makes an exhibition of himself in the tricks of fox spirits. Another examinee Ye stands a greater adversity. He brims with talent in poetry writing and even the new county magistrate Ding marvels at his brilliance. Though with great confidence of passing the Imperial Examination, Ye is struck by the news of his failure. In an extreme despair, Ye dies but later rises ghost, aiming to educate the son of the county magistrate to win a

place in as a the examination with his own writing so as to prove that he fails not because of his incompetence. Ye's ambitious doing as a ghost gives full vent to his grievances of seeing the justice undone. Same as Ye, the ghost scholar Song in *The Ghost Secretary of Education Bureau* also anchors his hope of succeeding in the examination on his human friend Wang Pingzi but fails, crying in disappointment even greater than Wang the real examinee.

What brings the failure of gifted scholars then? In a number of tales, Pu “exposes the institutional flaws in the examination system. At times success is attributed to influential contracts or simple bribery. More often, however, the irresponsibility and incompetence of the examiners are identified as the most serious defects in the system (Barr 87)”. Pu is especially protestant against the corruption of the examiners, saying, “The Imperial Examination is corrupted and its justice is undone. A scholar cannot be recommended to the high officials unless he offers bribery. It enrages me so greatly that I even attempt to retire from the world” (Pu 123). Beside the corruption and incompetent examiners in “Keju” system, Pu also criticizes the Eight-legged Essay as the only approved literary form in the examination. He has posted the contrasted images of the human and some unnatural beings. The former is obsessed with the stereotyped writing but devoid brilliance, while the latter is endowed with extraordinary talents as well as of literary insightful understanding classic thoughts. It is exactly the latter's uncommon interpretation of classics that highly is approved (Wang 58).

Another social reality Pu portrays is the repressed love between couples. It is noted that compared with the West, the mainstream of Chinese culture is particularly rigorous in ethics in its preliminary stage. Wang observed that unlike the enormous publicity of the love affairs of gods in the ancient Greek-Roman mythology, the deity figures in the prehistorical Chinese mythologies are rarely

mentioned with romantic love. The typical figure is the legendary hero Dayu<sup>40</sup>, renowned for his strong sense of responsibility in controlling the flood water, even for three times passing by his house but refusing to enter and have a look of his family, because only the strictly preserved responsibility and moral integrity accord with the image of a hero. With a wife and children therein, the house Dayu keeps off is not simply a place of livelihood, but the symbol of extraordinarily comfortable life that signifies a tendency to degeneration if one stays there. Apparently, the signification of the “house” is inconsistent with the abstinent trait expected of the hero. Even the antagonists in mythology, Gonggong and Chiyu for instance, are not heard of blameful for their private life. The restraint of the immortals’ desire is later strengthened and transferred to human emperors in the Han Dynasty, when the Confucianism takes over the dominating place in the boost of the philosopher and politician Dong Zhongshu, who dethrones all schools of thought and only respects the Confucianism. It is recorded in *Lunyu* (论语) that Confucius highly praises the senior official Zichan<sup>41</sup> (B.C.?-522) of the State of Zheng, saying that he “upholds moral integrity in four ways: setting strict demands on himself, respecting the emperor, benefiting the subjects with favourable economic policies and managing people properly” (Yang 42). Mencius as the successor of Confucius also stresses that “the best way of nurturing one’s soul is to restrain his desires” (Jin 333). Dong’s application of Confucian thoughts in dealing with human desires is to require emperors to place limits on their extravagant needs and lust. He persuades the contemporary monarch Emperor Wu (B.C. 156-87) that “the noblest emperor must first rectify his own heart before managing his court and then ruling his citizens” (Ban 45).

---

<sup>40</sup> Dayu, or Yu the Great, was a legendary ruler in ancient China and famed for his contribution to flood control and establishing the Xia Dynasty (B.C. 2070-1600).

<sup>41</sup> Zichan is also one of the outstanding students of Confucius.

The theoretical taboo against the indulgence in the sensual pleasures grows to the utmost extent in the Song Dynasty (960-1279). It is promoted laboriously by the philosopher and politician Zhu Xi (1130-1200), who proposes the influential doctrine of “upholding the natural law and annihilating human desires” (Zhu 207). The intention of Zhu is to mainly advise the contemporary Emperor Xiao (1127-1194) to purify his mind and regulate his excessive desires in such a national situation where the enemy is coveting the territory of Song and the citizens are living in destitution, but the doctrine maintains its prevalence for centuries to cultivate upright Chinese gentlemen. Zhu has suggested “the elimination of the off-track traits and material desires of gentlemen so that their good nature is regained and the moral law observed” (692). The law is an inner state that could be only reached when one returns to a natural self devoid of the fetters of social complexity. Zhu also distinguishes the connotations between that of the natural law and human desires, noting that “food is of the natural law, while delicacies, human desire, and similarly, the marriage of a couple is of the natural law, while concubinage, human desire” (224). In other word, it is the immoderate desires for fame, wealth and sex that are to be annihilated. The well-meaning doctrine is unfortunately misinterpreted later for centuries as a restraint of the freedom and desires of males and females through strict moral laws, particularly those in love relationships. The sexual instinct of young couples is, therefore, severely in the repression of abstinence, and the result of it is a series of rules, arranged marriage for instance, to oppress the real emotion of couples.

Firstly, the courtships in *Strange Tales from a Chinese Studio*, whether men or women, or the other way around, are not always a smooth course. Some of them are usually long and arduous replete with ups and downs. Men often see their health wasting away in unrequited love, unless their beloved women accepts their

affection. Wang Zifu in *The Laughing Girl* and Ning Caichen in *The Magic Sword and the Magic Bag* are the typical infatuated male characters, one of whom falls ill seriously without finding out who the beautiful girl he once encounters is, and the other, suffering from the kill by the demon. Even the consensual love between the scholar Wang and Ning does not break away from the fate of being stumbled by the conventional arranged marriage. Secondly and more significantly, even for men compelled to find a way out in the vain effort to attain a glorious and sexually fulfilled life, the indication of the “way” - an imagined woman - is not favourable. The typical scene in *Strange Tales from a Chinese Studio* is staged detailedly in this way: in a destitute study or a dwelling place in the wild countryside, a scholar burns the midnight oil reading books when a beautiful woman, usually a ghost or a fox spirit, comes unannounced. She either sings a song or giggles gently, flirting with the young man in all tricks. Such is a fantasy that recurs in *Strange Tales from a Chinese Studio* but in no way has failed the interest of its readers. In creating a dream land for the politically frustrated scholars, Pu nevertheless does not forget to warn them of the dangers of entering it. Indulging in the sexual relationship with women is at the risk of being exposed to the interrogation of morals still overwhelmingly existent in reality. In *The Magic Sword and the Magic Bag*, Ning’s mother was too shocked to do anything but stare when Nie Xiaoqian flitted into the room. Nie is the unexpected female visitor of the Ning’s Family. The mother said, “I am indeed delighted, that should be so attached to Ning. I cannot possibly have him marrying a ghost! ... After a considerable interval of time, Ning’s wife died. Ning’s mother knew that she had no evil intent, but her concern was that such a wife might never be able to bear her son a proper child and continue the family line.” (*The Magic Sword and the Magic Bag* p8-10) The moral warning in this tale

is given by the mother of Ning who finds out the love affair between his son and a spirit girl.

The unnatural women in *Strange Tales from a Chinese Studio* seem to be freed from the restriction of moral laws, but they are treated as the scapegoats of men who break the law. Poor scholars feel abandoned by the society, but beautiful women come to embrace them. They might fail the examination, but they gain a high-spirit in a romance. Frankly speaking, most of the men in Pu's descriptions are so lecherous that they would die for having a relationship with the beautiful ghosts or fox spirits even if they know those unnatural beings could be dangerous. To get the best of both worlds, that is, to enjoy sex as well as escaping from the shame of trespassing moral laws, the dissolute "gentlemen" transfer the blame to women, particularly "unhuman" women with enchanting magic. Females in *Strange Tales from a Chinese Studio* are differentiated from the normal beings with their peculiar features, including seductive beauty, mysterious magic and independent living.<sup>42</sup> The reason seems self-contradictory why fox spirits are mostly chosen as the embodiment of women. Fox spirits on one hand are believed as the most secular and human-like unnatural beings, while on the other hand, such beings are not thought equal with human, the "lord of all creatures". That is why foxes are considered as "the most ideal creatures to express the long sexual desires of Chinese men (Wang 132)" but at the risk of being repressed naturally "belittled and enslaved in fictions (Yu 60)". Women in *Strange Tales from a Chinese Studio* are thus put into a dilemma that they are both human-like to be involved in mortal life and non-human to be denied the true amicability from human. This dilemma of "unhuman" women forms in their love relationships with a mortal man, in which

---

<sup>42</sup> This is peculiar because women were usually not allowed to live independently in ancient China. Their life since their birth was bounded to three men, i.e their father, husband and son.

they are in common sense erotic and amorous to satisfy men's sexual desire, while also being accused of their enchanting charm without human virtues. The mysterious presence and initial flirtation of women thus in one way satisfy the fantasy of "gentlemen", and in another, "save them from the blame of moral laws so that their good name is maintained" (Zhou 57).

### 3. "Poetry for Poetry": Poe's Representation of Beauty

The generally recognized form of mimesis is related to the key words of "imitation", "representation", "repetition" and so forth, but those being imitated have been controversially debated since the proposal of the concept by the forerunners Plato and Aristotle. As Abrams indicates, "those objects in the universe that art imitates, or should imitate, were variously conceived as either actual or in some sense ideal", and even there was a tendency to substitute Aristotle's "action" as the principal object of imitation for human character, or thought, or inanimate things (Abrams 11). That is to say, the definition of the imitated is far beyond the scope of the visible and describable things, but extends to the accumulation of abstract ideas. Take the mimetic theory of Plato as an example; Plato illustrates the layering imitation among the supreme "Form", the reality and art with the well-known example of "table", stating the reality is the imitation of the "Form" and art, of the reality. Although he relegates the imitation in art to the lowest status, he does initially make a distinction between the abstract and actual imitated objects. Aristotle later furthers the abstraction of the imitated, saying the poet describe "a kind of thing that might happen...Poetry is something more philosophic...since its statements are of the nature rather of universals" (Aristotle 81). Mckeon reconstructs the intention of Aristotle, explaining that "in imitation the artist separates some form from the matter with which it is joined with nature" (Mckeon

162). The mimetic aesthetics of Poe mentioned in the Introduction part is exactly not “of crude everyday reality” like that of Pu, but the representation of the conceptual “Beauty”. In an increasingly materialized society, Poe’s purposeful rejection of the true-to-life depiction is a reflection of his dissatisfaction with the real world.

If to say the imitation in art at issue is firstly an analogy of the function of mirror which signalizes the demand of artistic realism, it then evolves to the required component of the “ideal” art that represents properly the improvement and perfection of things. Abrams points out the two main classes of the specific nature of the “ideal”: the one maintains that “the models and forms for artistic imitation are selected or abstracted from the objects of sense-perception”, and the other derives from the “Form” of Plato, “maintaining an independent existence in its own ideal space, and available only to the eye of the mind” (Abrams 36). The mimetic aesthetics of Poe is clearly in consonance with the trend of the ideal art with abstracted imitation, because it is exactly upon the two classes of ideal art that Poe develops his mimetic aesthetics. Correspondingly, that conforming to the first class is Poe’s appreciation of the death of a beautiful woman, and that inspired by the second class is Poe’s insistence on “poetry for poetry” to represent the sheer Beauty itself. Although in the rough classification of Abrams, the concept of “poetry for poetry” is in the aesthetic category of the “objective theory”, suggesting the independent existence of poetry, Abrams does not fix the categorization because he exemplifies the aesthetics of Aristotle in two ways, one of which is under the heading of mimetic theories, while the other, the isolation of the concept “Tragedy” as an object in itself but still related to the notion of imitation. A bold implication of Abrams is that the “objective theory” is akin to the abstract form of the “mimetic



theory”<sup>43</sup>. Accordingly, Poe’s preference of exhibiting mere Beauty still follows the mimetic school.

According to the first class of the ideal art, Poe selects and abstracts the fairest forms of things, defining it as the core beauty of his works. What Poe selects is not the lively beauty but those dead and cold. The most resounding saying of Poe is that “the death of a beautiful woman is, unquestionably, the most poetic topic in the world (Poe 201)” in his essay *The Philosophy of Composition*. It is a recurrent depiction in Poe’s tales that the either diseased or dead bodies of women suffering from the infliction of decaying still possess a maidenly appearance. Lady Madeline in *The Fall of the House of Usher* has “a faint blush upon the bosom and the face, and that suspiciously lingering smile upon the lip” (*The Fall of the House of Usher* 5) when entombed. Rarely has been seen a female character in Poe’s description brimming with lively spirit. Lady Madeline is symptomatic of “a settled apathy, a gradual wasting away of the person, and frequent although transient affections of a partially cataleptical character” (*The Fall of the House of Usher* 3). Another woman Ligeia has “pale fingers” that “became of the transparent waxen hue of the grave” (*Ligeia* 5) and her arms are “aloft with a spasmodic movement” (*Ligeia* 7). Poe’s women are characteristic of the wasting and weakening body as the result of loss of vitality. Such a symptom is easily to be associated with the disease that came to be known as consumption or tuberculosis in the nineteenth century. The disease was idealized in the 19th American for its causation of the “beautiful fragility of female patient (Stephanou 41)”, but does not aim to beautify the diseased women with such conventional image of fragility, but taking the perishing state of women as

---

<sup>43</sup> Abrams isolates the “objective theories” from the “mimetic theories” because his classification is based on the relations among the four factors (the natural world, the artistic work, the artist and the appreciator/reader), considering the non-utilitarian aesthetics of the “objective theories” in contrast to the intention of the “practical Theories” to appeal appreciators/readers, but “objective theories” is still in form akin to the “mimetic theories”.

beauty through the direct presentation of the uncannily melancholy atmosphere it brings. The reason is “Beauty of whatever kind in its supreme development is invariably excites sensitive soul to tears (Poe 198)”, that is to say, Poe attributes highest manifestation of Beauty to depressive tones, among which “melancholy” is the most legitimate one.

Conforming to the second class of the ideal art, Poe stresses the independent existence of his aesthetic “ideal”, stating that “Beauty is the sole legitimate province of the poem (197)” in *The Philosophy of Composition*. Such a highlighting of “Beauty” itself rather than its social or political themes as the only priority in the artistic realm, or simply to say, “art for art's sake”, indicates Poe’s firm espousal of the aestheticism, as he points out in his another essay *The Poetic Principle*, that “the poem written solely for the poem’s sake (272)”. In his dealing with death-related stories, Poe is more attentive to the whole effect of demonstrating Beauty to the greatest extent, instead of claiming the moral judgment of the characters’, especially males’ abnormal or even psychopathic behaviors and thoughts in the narration. Male characters are constantly in a state of being sensitive and neurotic, gradually generating in mind either a hostile opposition to or an abnormal affection for women. Some of them practice the hostility to an extreme that they fall into an impulse to commit murders. Roderick Usher in a mental crisis buries his twin sister alive in *The Fall of the House of Usher* and the irascible husband in *The Black Cat* kills his wife and buries her in a wall. The more grotesque is the morbidity of men’s affection for women. In *Berenice*, Egeus’s fascination with the teeth of his cousin Berenice impels him to extract them after her death, and the painter in *The Oval Portrait*, being obsessed with the painting of his wife, totally ignores her declining health. The detailed depiction of violence, however, is not anticipated to be judged and punished to

make a morally satisfactory close, because the point is not the ethics in the aggressive conducts, but the direct presentation of the conducts *per se* and the literary effect of it.

In Poe's view, "Beauty is excitement or pleasurable elevation of the soul (198)", accordingly, the preferred effect Poe adopts to demonstrate the Beauty is the grotesque and depressive atmosphere available to arouse the terror in mind and "strongly strikes a chord with readers (674)". Poe writes in *Tales of the Grotesque and Arabesque* that "I insist that it (the theme) is not the Germanic terror<sup>44</sup>, but the psychological terror" (621), stressing his intention to excites the most impressive emotion, namely terror, so as to achieve the "effect". Poe has commented in "A Review of Robert M. Bird's *Sheppard Lee*", that "the attention of the author, who does not depend upon explaining away his incredibility, is directed to giving them the character and the luminousness of truth, and thus are brought about, unwittingly, some of the most vivid creations of human intellect (261)". To better manifest the psychological fear, Poe chooses the means of describing the uncanny surroundings in which characters situate themselves. One typical design of Poe is at the beginning of *The Fall of the House of Usher*. The setting of it is "a dull, dark, and soundless day in the autumn of the year, when the clouds hung oppressively low in the heavens" and the narrator feels his spirit pervaded with "insufferable gloom" (*The Fall of the House of Usher* p1). The aura of uneasiness and freakishness here foreshadows the unsettling mind of male characters under the impact of a series of horrifying happenings. Roderick is later found "a bounded slave" of the terror effect in his claim that "I have, indeed, no abhorrence of danger, except in its

---

<sup>44</sup> American scholars in 19th century were accustomed to labeling all abstract and strange things as that of Germanic features because of the esoteric terms and theories usually originated from German.

absolute effect - in terror” (*The Fall of the House of Usher* p6), and until his death at the end of the tale, he has in no way escaped the sombreness of that effect.

#### 4. Poe’s Objection to the Scientific Truth

As analyzed above, the mimetic aesthetics of Poe in form is not the true-to-life depiction of the real world, but the representation of the conceptual Beauty. The purpose of Poe’s unique imitation theory, however, is demonstrated in the content of his fictions, in which almost everything referring to the reality is in the course of destruction, such as death of women collapse of castles so forth. Among the psychological disorder of men, the topics of destructive property, bereavement of women is the mostly discussed and controversially debated especially by feminists who questions Poe’s design of this topic and his insistence on adopting it in most of his tales. It is, therefore, better to first clarify the misinterpretation of feminists on Poe’s attitude to women before explaining Poe’s intention of constructing such a sort of topics.

Although Poe stresses that the most poetic thing in the world is the death of a beautiful woman and bases his fiction writing on this thematic proposal. Such enshrinement of women’s death and cadaverous beauty, nevertheless, does not convince feminists who suspect the reasonability of endangering women. Bassein’s feminist view is that “his (Poe’s) skills as a poet and fiction writer, his theories regarding art, beauty, and pain, and the enthusiasm of his audience have all helped perpetuate a view of woman that identifies her with the most passive state occurring, that of the dead, and thus creates negative conditioning for generation after generation of vulnerable readers” (Bassein 44). Stephannou, however, defends for Poe, contending that the decaying body of women has actually materialized the image of female patients and prevented them from being wrongly interpreted as

“the fragile beauty under the dominant discourses of American Transcendentalism and medical discourse in the 19th century” (50). The adverse criticism of Jung is more implicit. Jung does not concern about the controversial supposition that Poe is an anti-feminist, but the fabrication of Poe’s tales. He believes that “most of Poe’s tales are written around an ultimate indeterminacy which blurs and breaks down all familiar boundaries” and the real center of his texts is mainly on the “endless deferral of meaning” (Jung 58), instead of what Bassein indignantly interprets as the deferral of women.

Easily noticed in Poe’s tales are not only the death of females, but also the insanity of males and the collapse of mansions, all seemingly in a state of destruction. As Poe destroys the material world and drives the rational males to the verge of unreason, he has intended to resist a conclusive meaning and the rigid scientific truth. In his poem *To Science*, Poe accuses science of its “peering eyes” and “dull realities” (Poe 91) which bring the imaginative constructions of poetry down to earth and denies their value to human’s soul and humanity. Such a “refusal to mean might itself be seen historically... in a culture so obstinately insistent on the everyday... the progressive and the common-sensical (Lloyd 74)”. In other words, it is a culture so obsessed with the reasonable but dull reality that Poe attempts to overturn. From Jung’s Lacanian reading of Poe, the overturned are those substantial and definable in a symbolic existence, and what is to be left is the invisible Real, “broadly defined as the domain that includes everything which cannot be mediated by language, that is, by the Symbolic (Jung 61)”. What Poe intends to repudiate is the Unreal beings that have ever signified and devalued the Real because “for Poe the world’s signifiers are so extremely opposed against a signified higher reality that only their destruction can symbolize that higher world (Wolosky 73)”, or like what Jung again interprets, Poe’s dead women are the Lacanian “haunting” Real

who “return in the form of a ghost-like figure or a hallucinatory phenomenon, fiercely disrupting the male subject’s Symbolically-structured reality (Jung 62)”. In the tales of Poe, the doomed are men as they signify and symbolize women in a pitiless way, but later are totally shocked by the revengeful return of their victims who refuse to be repressed and determine to declare their freedom from the domination of masculine signification.

Zhu have ascribed the rivalry between the real world and Poe’s ideal to the imbalance of mind resulted from the contestation between the call of freedom and the restraint of Puritanism, and the infighting between the Northern capitalism and the Southern slavery (Zhu 95). Their historical contextualization partly coincides with the speculation of Wolosky that “Poe’s imagery of dream must surely be in tension with the increasingly material American Dream, just as his kingdoms stand in macabre reflection against the American utopian impulse (Wolosky 81)”. Not surprisingly, as Bell-Villada exemplifies, almost all artists related to “art for art’s sake” is originally poets, but their aspiration to pure art and sheer Beauty is difficult to be secured in a materialized society with tremendous industrialization which requires and even forces poets to “write in high efficiency” (Bell 55). Poe is also not an exception, as he has to find a way to survive in periodical office and justify his profession with such literary criticism as the superior value of short stories and poems to long epics - even denying the existence of long poems (Poe 266). That is also why Poe, instead of presenting the increasingly materialized world, ironically chooses to “unpresent” it by destroying it. The male characters as the seekers for scientifically. accurate truth in Poe’s fictions justify the superiority of science, rationality and the material world to the invisible Real, but all do not escape the mental breakdown in the end. It is a warning that the intention to fully accept the scientific truth results in a disintegrated self, perversion in feelings and

actions, and similarly, the attempt to materialize everything foreshadows the hazards of losing humanity.

## B. Expressive Aesthetics of Pu and Poe

The most frequently quoted saying about expressive aesthetics is that of William Wordsworth, who announces in his preface to the *Lyrical Ballads* of 1800 that “Poetry is the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings (Wordsworth and Coleridge 175)”. The metaphor that likens the production of poetry, or generally art, to the “overflow” of water signifies that the internal feelings too powerful to be contained is thus made external. Such a metaphor coincides with the etymological meaning of the term “expression”, that is, “ex-pressus”, evolving from “ex-premere”, namely, “to press out”. The origin of the term reemphasises that the inner world is pressed out by a force, as Mill applies the term and notes that poetry is the expression or uttering forth of feeling, stating that “all deep and sustained feeling has tended to express itself in rhythmical language (Mill 341)”. The factor of feeling or emotion has always been a stress in the ancient rhetorical theory for its significance in the art of persuasion. Aristotle emphasizes that one method of persuasion is to arouse the listeners’ emotions. Cicero considers conciliating, informing, and moving the audience as the three aims of the orator, but on the condition that the orator himself must first achieve a state of excitement. For the aim of persuasion, Horace consents to Cicero, also claiming that “if you would have me weep, you must first of all feel grief yourself” (Horace 131). The focus of those rhetoricians on pleasing the audience with the speakers’ appealing emotion is transferred to the intense passion of the author himself by Longinus. Though his treatise is only concerned with the “sublime”, he has highlighted the “firm grasp of ideas” and “vigorous and inspired emotion (Longinus 153)” as the innate source of the author, which later becomes familiar themes and methods in romantic criticism. Admittedly, Poe himself does not explicitly show interest in the inner world of



authors in his aesthetic criticism, but he does leave the traces of his own emotions, especially his lifelong mourning for women and insistence on literary originality in his tales and poems.

That is mostly quoted as the proof of the Chinese expressive aesthetics and also serves as a counterpart of Wordsworth's saying is the sentence "poetry expresses one's aspiration (Wordsworth and Coleridge 779)", firstly mentioned in *Zuozhuan* (左传), in which the term "poetry" does not mean the literature in metrical form, but the poetry collection *Shijing* (诗经). It is later in *Shangshu* (尚书) that the sentence is repeated and followed by the three lines "songs are for chanting the poetry, sounds"<sup>45</sup> "sounds for matching the songs and musical instruments for regulating the. What is clarified in *Shangshu* is the change of the term "poetry" in its meaning, from a book title to a generally accepted literary genre. The initial statement on expressive aesthetics experiences a more radical change in the Six Dynasties (222-589), when Lu Ji (261-303) writes in *Wenfu* (文赋), "poetry expresses one's feelings with exquisite language (Lu 99)". Lu has made a breakthrough on the Chinese expressive theory by stressing poets' "feelings", an act penetrating into the inner world much deeper than the conventional "aspiration". The "feeling", however, is not self-generated as that in the West, but affected by the outside world. It is thus the "Wugan Shuo"<sup>46</sup> (the theory of material-stimulated sentiment) that explains the origin of poetic emotions. The concept of material-stimulated sentiment is firstly mentioned with music, as it cites in *Liji* (礼记) that "music generates from the heart in the affection of the outside objects"<sup>47</sup>. Lu Ji later applies the concept in poetic theory, noting that "a poet signs for the passing time in the changing seasons and fall in deep thoughts when he knows the

<sup>45</sup> The original Chinese is "歌永言，声依永，律和声".

<sup>46</sup> The original Chinese is "物感说".

<sup>47</sup> The original Chinese is "凡音之起，由人心生也。人心之动，物使之然也".

ups and downs in the universe. He will then feel sorrowful for the leafless plants in autumn and delighted by the vimineous willow trees in spring” (Lu 20). It is, therefore, not difficult to observe that, similar to the aforementioned Chinese mimetic aesthetics that follows the natural law, the Chinese expressive aesthetics also conforms to the unity of nature and human, laying stress on the interrelation between the inner emotion of human and the outside world. Seemingly detached from the conventional theories stressing on the influential nature, Pu, however, bases his expressive aesthetics on the “Tongxin Shuo” (童心说) of Li Zhi (1527-1602), a theory that suggests the true emotional response to the social happenings as the rare and precious innocence of children.

## **1. The Source of Pu’s Expressive Aesthetics: “Tongxin Shuo”**

The expressive theory of Pu is established barely with the abidance to the conventional aesthetics of expression that suggests the connection between human feelings and the outer world, but the domain of the outer world has been transferred from nature to the human society. To be more specific, that interacts with the emotional self of Pu is the unsatisfactory social status which adversely influences the fate of him. The defective Imperial Examination as a part of the political system causes an impediment to Pu and other depressed scholars who anchor their hope on passing the examination. In addition to that, the Confucian ethic code for properly regulating human behaviors has seriously fallen into an extreme that the code is misinterpreted to restrict the free will of people, for which almost no chance is offered to the revealing of true emotion. That is why Li Zhi in Ming Dynasty risks to challenge the mental imprisonment of Confucianism, denying to “regard the

doctrines of Confucius as the truth” (Li 7). Li much resembles an avant-courier, encouraging to vent the real sentiments with the natural innocence of an infant instead of cautiously submitting to the repression of the Confucian ideology. As a faithful follower of Li, Pu highlights the significance of true emotion and brings “Zhen” (the authenticity) to the core of his expressive aesthetics. In writing *Strange Tales from a Chinese Tales*, Pu models on Li and does not hesitate to express his dissatisfaction with the defected political and social systems.

Li Zhi deserves to be called a warrior in challenging the blind allegiance of Confucianism that has powerfully dominated the mind of Chinese for thousands of years, and exactly because of that, Li is sentenced to jail for “spreading wrong thoughts and leading people astray (Ye 336)”, and he commits a suicide there. The just cause for which Li lays down his life is the value of individuals with independent thinking, he says, considered rare but important in the governance of Confucian ideology, as “every person is endowed with talents for eventual use. It is not supposed to be satisfied with the mere existence of Confucius. If one could be counted as a man only by following Confucius, what are the men born before him” (Li 15)? Li is insightful to point out the significance of personal existence and its potential contribution to the civilization of a country. The purpose of Li with such a bold response to the orthodox idea is to free the mind of people from the authority of standardized thinking. Only with the independent thinking can one be true to himself and reveal his real feelings about the imperfections of a repressive society. It is exactly the generation of real feelings that lays the foundation of the establishment of the “Tongxin Shuo”.

“Tongxin Shuo” is literally defined as the theory of preserving “tongxin”, namely, childlike innocence, but it does not signify the naivety, or the unenlightened mind of newborn, as Li explains, “the childlike innocence is

definitely not the unnatural naivety, but the true self in mind” (92). That is to say, “tongxin” is not an inborn property but that formed in the true emotional reaction to the happenings of the outside world. Li does not only theorize the aesthetic view of “Tongxin Shuo”, but stresses the application of it in literary creation to reflect how individuals emotionally respond to the social reality. To make a connection between individual emotion and literature, Li offers a renowned speech, “one who is expert in writing actually in the first place does not intend to write. (What motivates him to put pen to paper) is the indescribable strange feelings that he dares not to express, and the inner thoughts he is incapable to utter. So much is accumulated in his heart that it is difficult to take it under control. Once seeing the familiar scenes that may evoke his inner self, he will fall into infinite thoughts in drinking and recount his experiences with resentment that might be widely known for thousands of years” (91).

Pu inherits Li’s proposal of writing with true feelings, that is, the loneliness and depression in his case mainly obtained from his impoverished life experiences. It serves as the major factor of his inscription of a fictional world in which Pu is allowed to criticize the disappointing reality and give vent to his indignation. There are two major tasks to which Pu Songling has devoted his whole lifetime: one is to win an official rank through the imperial examination, and the other is writing *Strange Tales from a Chinese Tales*. From a practical view point, the former counts much more than the latter because it brings two things of prime importance to a Chinese scholar: fame and position. The complicated fact is that Pu, in the frustration of failing exams for several times, never sees the turning point of his life but unexpectedly gains a lasting name in history for his fantasy book. It may be incomprehensible that Pu in such an extremely impoverished situation still

continued his writing of fantasies. One of his most intimate friends Sun Hui<sup>48</sup>, who has passed the examination and been designated as the magistrate of Baoying County<sup>49</sup>, appreciates Pu's talent as well as sympathizing his misfortune. He writes a letter to persuade Pu, saying "you are a talented man. If only you could restrain yourself from being distracted and concentrate on your scholarship, surely you will be of the first rate. Would you take my humble advice (Lu 81)?" Apparently, Sun implies that writing stories of ghosts and fox spirits has "distracted" the attention of Pu from examination preparation and political pursuit. In their collaborated work *A Critical Biography of Pu Songling*, Yuan and Xu repudiate Sun's misjudgment of the value of *Strange Tales from a Chinese Tales*, and claim that his advice for Pu is "indeed humble (Yuan and Xu 81)". Yuan and Xu may have said the truth in hindsight, but it is not just to devalue the well-meant suggestion of Sun in a practical and historical sense. It is understandable for Sun, an experienced man nearly a decade older than Pu, to remind Pu that his most urgent errand is to seek an official career so that his talent can be honored and his family in poverty be supported. Despite the crucial reality and the persuasion of friends, Pu's insistence on the construction of a fantastic world is thus more confusing.

The fact is that those who dissuade Pu from writing *Strange Tales from a Chinese Tales* do not realize the two mentioned aspects which are significant in Pu's life are rather related than contrary. It is the frustration of repeated failures in the Imperial Examination that serves as the motivation of working on *Strange Tales from a Chinese Tales*, which, in a conclusive remark of Yuan and Xu, is "a daydream of Pu Songling to compensate his sense of loss in the reality and maintain a balanced psychological state (186)". Pu in the preface to *Strange Tales*

---

<sup>48</sup> Sun Hui passed the national level of the imperial examination in the year of 1666 and was designated as the magistrate of Baoying County in 1669. He offered Pu a position as a secretary in his office.

<sup>49</sup> Baoyin County is in Jiangsu Province of China.

*from a Chinese Tales* has also introduced his intention of writing this book, “my poor life is unstable as if the wind could blow it away... With only the dim light and the icy-cold desk in sight in the middle of the night, I’m alone in the study drinking and attempting to write a sequel book to *Youming Lu* (幽明录)<sup>50</sup> so as to attach my lonely indignation to it... Those who understand me are only the ghosts in the nether world” (Pu 30).

The distressing reality has driven Pu to seek comfort in a fictional world, in which the corrupted examiners, the wretched scholars and the mysterious females are in full display and each gets his or her due. Such sounds familiar with the experience of the scholars inside his text. In his stories mostly in the third person point of view, Pu adopts the limited perspective of male characters to in one way penetrate the physical life and psychological state of males and in the other, indicate the unknownness of women. Pu actually wishes to be the “he” who almost loses the faith in scholarship and politics but gets exhilarated in his encounter with beautiful women during the long night of reading, especially when Pu is a private tutor by profession and sits alone in his room reading and ruminating his gloomy future, laughters of his host and songs of concubines in the neighboring house reach him.

## 2. Pu’s Aesthetics of the “Authenticity”

Besides the theory of connecting intense emotion with literary creation, Pu also gains inspiration from the concept of “Tongxin” and brings “Zhen” (the authenticity) to the fore as his understanding of the true self. Pu speaks highly of

---

<sup>50</sup> *Youming Lu* is a collection of strange stories written by Liu Yiqing (A. D. 403-444) and his followers in Southern Dynasty (A. D. 420-479).

Qu Yuan (B.C.340-278) and Li He (A.D.791-817) for their investment of true emotions in their works, noting that “Qu is impressed with the mountain ghost draped with herbs and writes *Lisao* (离骚), while Li is obsessed with humming verses at will. Both freely express their feelings in their own way without concerning about what is the best” (Pu 26). Pu also admires the authenticity in the writings of his friend Gao Heng (1612-1697). In one of his poems that mourn Gao, he memorizes that “his (Gao’s) articles not necessary to be revised still make a smooth reading, because what he inscribes is replete with authentic feelings” (Pu 378). Pu does not only view the “authenticity” as a requirement to the authors, but adopts it to the characterization of figures in *Strange Tales From a Chinese Studio*. Yu has categorized the authentic figures in *Strange Tales From a Chinese Studio* into three types (Yu 55): the first is those young girls innocently adorable as children, Yingning in *The Laughing Girl* for instance, being honest and cheerful with no thought of malice; the second is those who hold no interest in benefits and social status, but only act in tune with their own feelings, to devotedly love like Nie Xiaoqian and Ning Caichen, to loyally befriend like Yan Chixia and even to insistently revenge like Xi Fangping; the third is those eccentric but reputed persons. They are usually infatuated with a certain object that other people devalue, such as the stones of Xing Yunfei and the pigeons of Zhang Youliang. That apparently noted in all the three types of characters is their sincerity in revealing their inner world even if they might face the stressful regulation of the institutionalized society or the misunderstanding of others.

The “Tongxin Shuo” of Li encourages the vent of true feelings. On the one hand, Pu follows Li in considering that his unsuccessful life resulted from the bound of the Imperial Examination, but on the other hand, he gives a more complex thought to the “authenticity”, a theory though inspired by Li, not fixed to

the abreaction of emotional tensions. He has an intention to extend the effective sphere of the “authenticity” to one’s personality rather than the mere emotional part. In other words, Pu is concerned with not only the authenticity in one’s emotional reaction to the unsatisfactory social reality, but also the truthfulness in being oneself. What Pu suggests is the principle of “Shouzhuo” (守拙), indicated by Yu as “the illustration of the ‘authenticity’” (53) in judging a person. Pu is not the one who initializes the discussion of “Zhao” (拙). It is firstly proposed by Lao-tzu in his saying that “Daqiao Ruozhuo”<sup>51</sup> (exquisite skill looks simple and clumsy). What Lao-tzu attempts to explain with that saying is the distinction between the working of nature and human skills. The former is untrimmed but exquisite, while the latter is finely embellished but not natural. That is why the simple and clumsy state of things is still considered exquisite, because “once it is processed with excessive artificiality, the balanced connection between nature and human will be broken (Zhu 246)”. Chuang-tzu also discusses “Zhao” but more intensively, even denying the notion of exquisiteness to be included in the signification of “Zhao”, because he attaches more importance to the operation of nature itself, saying that “nature can turn the world upside down as well as rebuilding it, but it does not work with clever tricks (Chuang-tzu 227)”. The “clever tricks” which Chuang-tzu disapproves imply the unnatural skills of human who attempts to tremendously remaking the original state of things. More specifically, it is the knowledge human has gained for boldly changing the world and the relentless desire which alters the true self of man that signify the defects of human skills.

The concept of “Zhao” is taken as one of the theories that have grounded the expressive aesthetics of Pu, in that it not only indicates the ideal state of person Pu endeavors to reach, but implies the aversion of Pu from the unnatural phenomena

---

<sup>51</sup> The original Chinese is “大巧若拙” .



in society, such as corrupted examiners, greedy governors, hypocritical scholars and so forth. In the understanding of Pu, “one who can cunningly deal with worldly affairs is equipped with exquisite skills, while those who cannot, are considered ‘Zhuo’, namely, simple and clumsy. Is it not true that a person with exquisite skills is unreliable, while those with the property of ‘Zhuo’, sincere” (Pu 66)? Pu highly appreciates the aesthetic notion of “Zhuo”, even identifying himself as a clumsy man with the temperament of “Zhuo”, as he writes, “though not born with talent, I am contented with my clumsiness” (Pu 434). In addition to that, Pu also endows his literary work *Strange Tales from a Chinese Studio* with the topic of “Zhuo” in two ways. One of which is to show preference to the three authentic figures that have been discussed earlier for their nearly stubbornly maintenance of a true self and refusal to scheme any intrigue to gain benefits, and the other is to reveal the hideous images of those who have deviated from their natural existence to work exclusively for personal interest. Especially detested among the hideous images are the corrupt examiners who are utmostly ironised in the tale *The Manager of Dead Scholars*. Pu narrates that the two pillars on both sides of the gate of the manager’s office are carved respectively with the words “stick to loyalty and filial piety” and “persist in honesty and honor.”<sup>52</sup> But the manager demands a cut of flesh of the dead scholars as a bribe so as to exempt them from the excruciation. What the infernal manager does forms a sharp contrast to the requirement of the two creeds on the pillars, and his hypocrisy and atrocity thus have distanced himself from the temperament of “Zhuo”.

---

<sup>52</sup> The original Chinese is “孝弟忠信，礼义廉耻”.

### 3. Poe's Mourning for Women

In *The Philosophy of Composition*, Poe disagrees on the point that the composition of poems is under the manipulation of the intuitively strong emotion, stating that “most writers - poets in especial - prefer having it understood that they compose by a species of fine frenzy - an ecstatic intuition...I am aware, on the other hand, that the case is by no means common (Poe 195)”. What Poe suggests, however, is the conscious and precise construction of literary works, designing to “render it manifest that no one point in [the] composition is referrible either to accident or intuition - that the work proceeded, step by step, to its completion with precision and rigid consequence of a mathematical problem” (Poe 195). For that, such comments on Poe arise that his insistence on the craft of poetry leads to the mechanical writing without passion, as Whitman opines, “Poe’s verses belong among the electric lights of imaginative literature, brilliant and dazzling, but with no heat”, and they carry “the rhyming art to excess” (<https://www.bartleby.com/229/1205.html>). What must be noticed, however, is Poe requires the precision and logic while excluding process of composition. It does not mean that Poe excessive passion only rejected the manifestation of emotion in the content of his writings, since he has indicated “a poem is such, only inasmuch as it intensively excites, by everlasting, the soul” (Poe 196). To have an in-depth comprehension of the discrepancy between the form and the content in Poe’s expressive aesthetics, it is necessary to refer to the distinction of the poetic criticism between the two romanticists Wordsworth and Coleridge. Wordsworth’s cardinal standard of poetic value is “nature”, and nature in his usage, “consists primarily in an elemental simplicity of thought and feeling and a spontaneous and ‘unartificial’ mode of expressing feeling in words” (Abrams 105). The diction of

poetry, as Wordsworth insists, should be the natural language that is “the instinctive and spontaneous overflow of feeling into words, and is therefore opposed to the deliberate adaptation of means to...characterize ‘art’” (Abrams 111). Wordsworth’s attempt is to correct the earlier trend of formalizing and freezing the art of poetry by justifying the opposite element, that is, “nature”. Coleridge does not object the validity of the “nature” Wordsworth defines, but he doubts the sustainability of the opposition between “nature” and “art”. He believes that “the great poems are natural only in a sense which involves those very qualities of purpose, proportioning of parts to whole and of means to end, and the election of specifically poetic conventions, which are the defining characteristics of an art” (Abrams 116). That is to say, Coleridge considers the making of poems as a deliberate art in need of artistic means to reach a certain effect - though not necessarily the “effect” Poe suggests - rather than the spontaneous overflow of feeling. It is not surprising that Poe’s theory coincides with that of Coleridge, since the former inherits much of the latter’s poetic criticism with tremendous admiration, as he speaks, “of Coleridge I cannot but speak with reverence. His towering intellect! His gigantic power” (Poe 75)! In his writings, Poe does not hide his obsession with the sorrowful mentality that resulted from the women’s death, and with such an unusual topic, Poe claims his uncommonness and insistence on originality, even in the risk of offending his contemporaries of the same trade.

Poe had a great deal of unfortunate events during his life. He seemed to be surrounded by death all the time, which may have led to his interest in Gothic literature and other psychological thrillers. *The Black Cat*, *Berenice*, *Ligeia*, and *The Fall of the House of Usher* are among the works of fiction that are frequently regarded as tragic woman stories. Those women themselves thus are respectively Narrator’s wife, Berenice, Ligeia and Madeline Usher. The melancholy in the

above fictions is not designed to express the feelings of Poe himself, but to demonstrate the thematic “Beauty”. It seems that the recurring display of “melancholy” in the Gothic fictions of Poe is only treated as a craft of writing, but what should not be ignored is the source of that emotion. The most depressing subject, according to Poe, is death, especially the death of a beautiful lady, and “the lips best suited for such topics lamenting are those of a bereaved lover (Poe 201)” who are their mistress. Such a topic that differentiates Poe from the usual romanticists with lyrical tones is not a groundless choice. It originates from the personal experiences of Poe, who consciously projects his mourning over the successional loss of women in his life into the role of a lamenting lover. Poe creates some of the most distinctive female characters who are either dead or going to die. Poe seems caught in the fear that women die so easily that they will leave him alone. Through his life, Poe is mainly entangled in the relationships with four women, including Eliza (1787-1811), his dead mother, Virginia(1822-1847), his young wife, Frances(1811-1850), a popular woman in the literary circle of the 1840s’ New York and Sarah (1803-1878), a poet he nearly marries. As if he was cursed, Poe is rejected by them or loses them. Poe is continuously navigating the gray area between life and death and working to keep those ladies alive through the recurring motifs of dead women coming back to life.

Poe at the age of twenty-seven marries his cousin Virginia, a thirteen years girl then and spends a rare time of marital felicity till Virginia’s diagnosis of tuberculosis six years later. It is also during the time of seeing his young wife struggling with death that Poe’s works start getting more emotional than mere terrifying. He writes *Ligeia* and *The Fall of the House of Usher* that disclose the sorrow of widowed men and also bring out the most emotional part of Poe himself. In addition to that, Poe takes alcohol and compulsive writing as the only outlets for

his suffering from listening to Virginia's cough in illness, or silence when she falls into a coma. He writes in a productive and creative way, and the works composed during that time later came to be applauded as the most quintessential of Poe, including the *The Tell-tale Heart*, *The Mystery of Marie Roget*, *The Black Cat* and *The Pit and the Pendulum*.

Though Virginia has not dead yet, she is perpetually reanimating from the brink of death, which evokes the fear of Poe that he will lose Virginia one day and mourn for her in desperation just like the "eyes" in *The Black Cat* or "teeth" in *Berenice* lamenting for women. Such is the cruelest change of fate that dislocates Poe's adult life. Poe started binge drinking heavily after her death. There are several reports of Poe becoming intoxicated while at work and that just one drink would make him hysterical (Yewdale 688). He used literature and unhealthy distractions like drugs and women to avoid reality and his own frustration with life. There is little question that elements of Poe's life seeped into his works, whatever the causes for his character and personality. Poe's writings contain a number of characters that experienced psychiatric issues or had shady mental states. *The Black Cat*, *Berenice*, *Ligeia*, *The Tell-Tale Heart*, and *The Fall of the House of Usher* are a few stories that specifically depict various aspects of Poe's mental health and existence.

Through his life, Poe is seeking unconditional love, acceptance and recognition from women, but they always cannot do as he wishes. Virginia, the pure maiden he adores, Frances, the untouchable icon he admires, and Sarah Helen, the mother figure he hopes to save him. Each of them embodies at least one aspect of the inspiring influences on Poe's life and the women who represents all the archetypal aspects is Poe's mother, Eliza Poe, who provides the first impression of a female figure in Poe's mind. Unfortunate as Virginia, Eliza also catches the fatal

disease of tuberculosis and dies when Poe was only three. Later wherever Poe goes in his adult life, the first thing he does is to visit the local library searching for any reviews that mention his mother as a renowned actress. His mother serves as the most powerful inspiration for him to construct stories with death and ghostly revival. Because his mother died so early that Poe seemingly never really understood and accepted that she had passed away. He builds identical images of women in fictions to fill the void his mother has left, and brings her back to life again and again by reanimating the elements of her. Poe's terrible experience with dying women inspired his writings, which may explain why many of his works include recurring themes of morbidity and tragic deaths. His short stories *Ligeia*, *Berenice*, and *Eleonora*, which are about dead women, are a few instances of this.

#### 4. Poe's Insistence on Originality: "To Be Read"

The aforesaid is the illustration of the thematic mourning for the loss of women from which this section is to deduct the logic of Poe's expressive aesthetics that insists on that sort of themes. Since in the argument of Poe, the writings of "the sensational, the extravagant, or the fantastic... help to... exhibit artistic originality and genius (Tally 89)", the choice of dead women and their horrifying return as the recurrent scenes in his writing thus accentuates the originality of Poe as a unique romanticist. As it is early discussed, Poe rejects the involvement of excessive passion in the composition of poems. Originality as a valued means of literary creation is accordingly not the result of powerful emotions, as Poe stresses, "[t]here is greater mistake than the supposition that a true originality is a mere matter impulse or inspiration. To originate, is carefully, patiently, and understandingly to combine" (Poe 397). As the quality of being new and creative, the originality is

adopted to both the form and content of Poe's works. In form, Poe unprecedentedly displays the process of mathematical deduction in the creation of *The Raven*, and even attempts to make a fusion of such artistic means as short stories, poetry, music and drama. In content, besides the depiction of dead women, Poe combines the violent plots and horrible atmosphere of Gothic fictions with detective stories (Zhu 183), or initiates the penetration into the psychology of characters that the previous Gothic fiction writers have ignored (Lovecraft 164). It is also for such a highlighting of originality that Poe finds a kindred spirit in Nathaniel Hawthorne because he observes that "Mr. Hawthorne's distinctive trait is invention, creation, imagination, originality-a trait which, in the literature of fiction, is positively worth all the rest" (Poe 199). One example Poe gives is Hawthorne's story *The Hollow of the Three Hills*<sup>53</sup>, in which the sound instead of visible images is innovatively adopted to assist the development of plots.

Evidently, the "originality" itself as a craft of writing is not directly associated with emotion, but the proposition of it does imply the ambitious sentiment of Poe, who defies the unoriginal literature in the 19<sup>th</sup> century America, when "Washington Irving is lauded as the American Goldsmith, or James Fennimore Cooper as the American Scott (Tally 97)". Poe styles himself a defender of literary principle, gratifying to harshly criticize respected writers in order to assert his own authority in literary criticism. He makes himself an outlandish man in America, writing to shock his contemporaries and resisting his writing to be assimilated into the broad interpretative paradigm that not only looks up the classic criticism in Europe, especially Britain as the standard, but also leads to the proneness to boasting and plagiarism, which for Poe is "low-very, no profundity, no reading, metaphysics -

---

<sup>53</sup> The story narrates that a witch covers the eyes of a confessor and enables him to sense the past and the future.

nothing which the learned call spirituality, and which the unlearned to choose to stigmatize as cant” (Poe 321). The result of Poe’s originality as well as “his sheer perverseness, his urge to locate and confront enemies, to offend and disgust, to mock and mystify”, as might have been expected, is that “[he] would remain (as on some level he doubtless desired) the obnoxious misfit of American letters, the bad boy of the antebellum literary world” (Kennedy 535). Though recognized late, the poignant remarks of Poe “undoubtedly function to overhaul and enlighten the literary creation in America (Zhu 181)”.

Another purpose of Poe’s insistence on originality appreciated is to grasp the interest of readers because he firmly holds that “to be you must be read (Poe 85)”. Admittedly, this purpose has something to do with the arisen cultural industrialization and the commercial benefit as well as reputation it might bring to Poe as a writer in reduced circumstances. It, however, is not void of the value to be worthy of aesthetic interpretation. Poe has realized the limitation of romanticism centering too much on the intuition and personal feelings of poets while ignoring to elevate them to the emotion that will be commonly accepted. Even one of the most typical romanticists Wordsworth admits, “I am sensible that my associations must have sometimes been particular instead of general (Smith 29)”. For that concern, Wordsworth decides to assert that “these passions and thoughts and feelings are the general passions and thoughts of men...The Poets thinks and feels in the spirit of human passions (36)”. Whether it is Poe’s intention of “to-be-read” or Wordsworth’s assertion of “human passions”, their proposals have made a distinction between the overflowing passion that one intuitively generates and the expressive performances with perceptual categorization. In other words, “the primal feelings are elevated to the conceptual category of aesthetics through artistic expression, which leads to the transference of personal feelings to the common



emotion that everyone understands (Xiao 100)”. Accordingly, an artist who wishes to affect his audience must prepare to generate in himself a type of emotion, instead of an individual feeling.

The continuous loss of women have assisted the generation of sorrow and fear in Poe’s mind that he will be left alone, but such feelings associated with personal experiences are not mature enough to convince readers that his tireless depiction of dead women is out of mourning rather than the hostility to women as feminists strongly suggests or even the necrophilia, a supposition which still gets the support of some readers and critics. What Poe does is to turn his emotional response to the bereavement of beloved women to the commonly accepted terror in witnessing the horrible death of women in a grotesque atmosphere with old castles, shabby cellars, dark days, neurotic men and so forth. The distortion or the deformation of images in such horrible tales is exempted because once “the heart [of readers] is stirred...the mind does not lament its mal-instruction (Poe 642)”, and also in the thrilling terror, as Poe points out when discussing the prose of Longfellow, “we find the beauty of bold courage and self-confidence, of love and maiden devotion reckless adventure, and finally of life-contemning grief (369)”. Although the Gothic psychological safety fictions of Poe greatly shocks readers, they provide a zone in which readers with a sense of “self-preservation (Zhu 111)” are spared from the real damage of the horrible things as well as enjoying the aesthetic pleasure the terror brings. Besides that, with the originality of the extravagant topic and the transformation of personal emotion to a publicly accepted type, Poe ensures the doubleness of readers’ pleasure because they “feels and intensely enjoys the seemingly novelty of the thought with the writer...Henceforward, there is bond of sympathy between them - a sympathy which irradiates every subsequent page of the book” (Poe 581). That is to say, readers are excited both by the originality

intended to impress the public and the sensational terror Poe produces in the practice of originality in order to be emotionally bonded with readers, and thus Poe is commonly understood and accepted as a real performer of the expressive aesthetics.

## C. Non-conventional Aesthetics of Pu and Poe

Through the comparison of two classic works of different literary systems, above chapters illustrate that the aesthetics of Pu and Poe is not limited to one fixed type but prove to be both mimetic and expressive. The parallel study in a broad way disproves the preexisting misinterpretation that the Chinese aesthetics is mainly expressive, while that of the West, mimetic. If to say the previous two chapters give a synchronic analysis of the aesthetics of Pu and Poe, denying the fixation of their aesthetics to a single type. This chapter will further explain the invalidity of that fixation diachronically, demonstrating the unconventionality of Pu and Poe respectively in expressive aesthetics and mimetic aesthetics. In other words, even interpreted in the light of conventionally fixed mode of aesthetics, Pu and Poe do not allow their theories to stagnantly comply with the original signification of the two aesthetic categories. The earlier Chinese expressive theories emphasize a gentle and calm mental state that helps to nurture either the “Wuwei”<sup>54</sup> (无为) of Taoism or the benevolence of Confucianism, indicating the unity of poetic taste and poets’ personality. The end of those theories is to cultivate men with mental detachment and good manners. Pu, however, with a mood of strong resentfulness in writing to a large extent has differentiated himself from the ideal image suggested in the conventional system of expression. Similarly, Poe in his mimetic theories, though established largely in the enlightenment of Plato’s pioneer of the imitated “Form”, revolts against the relegation of poets to unknowledgeable imitators unconscious in literary creation. Instead, Poe claims that the Beauty as the proposed ideal form to be imitated is achieved with the

---

<sup>54</sup> “Wuwei”, (the inaction) does not mean the passivity of a person, but indicates the mere following of the Tao to avoid overdone acts like fierce fight, pursuit for fame and fortune etc..

conscious calculating faculties of the imitating writer who creates proper effects  
preset for demonstrating the Beauty.

## 1. Pu's Anger: The Rejection of Inner Peace in Expressive Aesthetics

It is implicated that an evident gap exists between the conventional Chinese expressive theories which highlight the influence of nature or Tao-Ye says that nature is connotative of Tao - on human emotions, and the expressive theory of Pu, who identifies the social happenings as the main factor of his outburst of emotion. Those who mostly stress on the operation of nature or Tao are Lao-tzu, Chuang-tzu and scholars in Wei, Jin, Southern and Northern Dynasties, all of whom require an uninterrupted mind in conformity with the teachings of Tao. Lao-tzu proposes the concept of “Dichu Xuanjian”<sup>55</sup>(clearing the distracting thoughts and following the Tao) that suggests the exclusion of personal desire and prejudice to achieve the tranquility of mind. On the basis of Lao-tzu’s proposition, Chuang-tzu pursues a more detached state of “Zuowang”<sup>56</sup> (sitting in oblivion) in which one even forgets himself, that is, both his body and mentality, so as to extricate himself from both physical desires and his concern about loss and gains. The later scholars Song Bing (A.D.375-443) and Liu Xie during Wei, Jin, Southern and Northern Dynasties apply the topic of tranquil mind to artistic creation. The onset of Song’s *Hua Shanshui Xu* (画山水序) is the statement that “the sagacious person unmistakably reflects the outside world and enjoys the natural landscape (or Tao) with a purified mind”<sup>57</sup>. The emphasis of Liu is on the tranquil mind in literary conception, as indicated in *The Literary Mind and the Carving of Dragons* that “a peaceful mind purged of distracting thoughts should be prepared to reach a state for literary

<sup>55</sup> The original Chinese is “涤除玄鉴”.

<sup>56</sup> The original Chinese is “坐忘”.

<sup>57</sup> The original Chinese is “圣人含道暎物，贤者澄怀味象”. Song Bing & Wang Wei, *Preface for Landscape Painting & On Painting*. Chen Chuanxi & Wu Zhuo (Editors). Beijing: People’s Fine Arts Publishing House, (2016):1.

creation”<sup>58</sup>. Unfortunately, Pu is not that sort of scholar with an unstirred mind, since he has been so involved in the secular world that he spends all his lifetime criticizing the real world and dreaming a better but fictional one. Even his preference to the “Zhuo” (honesty and simplicity) of Lao-tzu and Chuang-tzu is more like an idealized response to the adverse phenomenon in society, implying his determined uncooperative spirit with the vicious.

Evidently, Pu is emotionally disturbed mainly as the result of the disappointing social reality, with his literary works as well as expressive aesthetics opposed to the restrictive doctrines of Confucianism that can account for the social reality. Unlike the detached attitude of Taoists, the aesthetic centre of Confucianism is on the positive social function of artistic creation (Ye 42), suggesting the concepts of “Ren” (benevolence) and “He”<sup>59</sup> (harmony) being manifested in art. The notion of benevolence is at the core of Confucius’ teaching. It requires the personal willingness and self-cultivation to be qualified as a benevolent man, as Confucius says, “If I would like to be benevolent, I am nearly one”<sup>60</sup>, or “it is the decision of one himself instead of others to be benevolent”<sup>61</sup>. As “a gifted property of morality (Ye 43)”, the benevolence found in literature is required to be united with the aesthetic beauty of writings so as to function on the cultivation of men. Accordingly, a balance should be kept between the sense of morality and the literary talent in a gentleman, as Confucius highlights, “a person is rustic if his sense of morality surpasses his literary talent, while he is vain the other way around. Only both are in him balanced can he be called a gentleman”<sup>62</sup>. Being such a

<sup>58</sup> The original Chinese is “是以陶钧文思，贵在虚静；疏淪五藏，澡雪精神”. Liu, Xie, *The Literary Mind and the Carving of Dragons*. Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company, (2017):156.

<sup>59</sup> The original Chinese is “仁” and “和”.

<sup>60</sup> The original Chinese is “我欲仁，斯仁至矣”.

<sup>61</sup> The original Chinese is “为仁由己，而由人乎哉?”.

<sup>62</sup> The original Chinese is “质胜文则野，文胜质则史。文质彬彬，然后君子”.

gentleman refined in manner and literacy, he is then expected to regulate his emotions since Confucius has brought to fore the notion of “harmony” that implicates the appropriateness of emotion expressed in art in conformity with “Li”<sup>63</sup>(rites). That is also to say, the emotion in the aesthetic view of Confucius is supposed to be restricted in intensity, as he comments on the well-known poem “Guanju” (关雎). The merriness and distress in the poem are well under control. For that reason, Confucius criticizes the music in the State of Zheng, suggesting to “prohibit the music of Zheng and keep distance from villains because the former is obscenely affective while the latter, dangerous”<sup>64</sup>. An image of a gentle and reserved man is thus moulded and has been taken as the model of Confucian scholars in the next two thousand years. The fact is that Pu refuses to identify himself with the ideal image of a Confucian scholar. By claiming that his *Strange Tales from a Chinese Studio* is written in loneliness and indignation, Pu strives to break away from the conventional mental state that “goes beyond the usual emotions of either joy or sorrow (Zhu 3)” And a naturally generated discontent with the unfair system of the Imperial Examination and the restrictive society, Pu does not hesitate to make it known.

Before Pu, it is in the fierce attack of Li Zhi that the conventional image of an idea scholar is questioned. His theory of “Tongxin Shuo” as discussed previously is influential in leading the charge against the increasingly repressive Confucianism ideology, attempting to free the imprisoned mind from that repression. The theory also suggests the practice of “writing with intense resentment”, a phrase firstly mentioned by the esteemed historian Si Maqian (B.C.145-90) of Han Dynasty to serve as the motivation for a writer, especially a depressed one. Li speaks highly of

---

<sup>63</sup> The original Chinese is “礼”.

<sup>64</sup> The original Chinese is “放郑声，远佞人。郑声淫，佞人殆”.

Si's view on the role of resentful feeling in writing, appropriately saying that "writing without resentment is like shivering without cold or groaning without pain"<sup>65</sup>. Yuan Hongdao (1568-1610) as a contemporary of Li is one of those under Li's influence and puts forward "Xingling Shuo"<sup>66</sup>(the theory of temperament) that suggests both the real emotion and the literacy of individuals. In the preface to the poetry collection of his brother, Yuan highly approves the poems, saying "they follow no set forms and abound with real emotions and literacy that have been overflowing in the heart of the poet before his poetic writing"<sup>67</sup>. To put the "Xingling Shuo" into practice, Yuan indicates that "one must not write by imitating the poetic styles either of Han and Wei Period (B.C. 202-A.D. 265) or the glorious age of Tang Dynasty (713-766)"<sup>68</sup>. Instead, "as it is the best, he should be in the guidance of his unruly passions to react to his own gratification, anger, sadness, personal interest and desires" (Yuan 6). Yuan is clearly adverse to the reserved attitude of Confucian scholars to the inner world, but unfortunately, he has later deviated from Li's theme of aspirational resentfulness and evolved into the preaching of being passively detached from the reality so as to live in the moment.

Also as a disciple of Li, Pu inherits the revolutionary spirit of Li and remonstrates the teaching of Confucianism that has set the paradigms of thoughts and behaviors for scholars that have also been taken as the tool of the government to imprison the mind of the public. What Pu as well as his valorous predecessor opposes is not the concepts of benevolence and harmony in Confucian teaching

---

<sup>65</sup> The original Chinese is “不愤而作，譬如不寒而颤，不病而呻吟也”.

<sup>66</sup> The original Chinese is “性灵说”.

<sup>67</sup> The original Chinese is “独抒性灵，不拘格套，非从自己胸臆流出，不肯下笔”. Yuan, Hongdao, *Complete Works of Yuan Zhonglang*. Taipei: World Book Company, (2009):5.

<sup>68</sup> The glorious age of Tang Dynasty is defined differently in literature and history. In literature, it is during the time period between 713 and 766, while in history, that between 650 and 820. Here the definition in literature is adopted since the focus of Yuan Hongdao's discussion is on poetry.



since they serves to cultivate qualified gentlemen for the betterment of society, but the standardized state of reserved mind in practising those two creeds and the increasingly repressed mentality into which it develops in time. To vent his resentful feelings, Pu is adept at ironisation which runs counter to the serious preaching of conventional scholars. Those on whom Pu especially launches an offensive remark are corrupt officials who flatter the higher authorities while bullying the masses. In the year of 1703, a flood struck Shandong Province and was witnessed by the emperor Kangxi (1654-1722), who was then on the way of an inspection tour to the south. Kangxi gave the order to allocate funds and food to relieve the people in the stricken areas, but the incumbent provincial governor detained the allocation and made a false report to his superiors that the displaced people were all settled down. Pu was furious at witnessing the thousands of victims starving to death. He wrote poetry to mock the governor, depicting that “in May the governor reports the prosperity (of the flood-stricken area), as if he sees not the dead bodies all over the city” (Pu 464). The sharp contrast between the official report and the reality not only discloses the lies of the governor, but reflects Pu’s contempt of him. To strengthen the disdain for the governor, Pu wrote that “thanks to the report of the governor on the ‘harvest year’, the emperor’s worry about the east area disappears” (466). Tactfully, Pu does not say a word of negative review, but implicitly lashes out at the governor through the compliment on his false report to “ease” the burden of the emperor. Four years later, the emperor toured to the south to inspect the construction of river channels, and passed Shandong Province again. In order to make an impression, the local governor extorted excessive taxes and levies to serve the emperor and his entourages in a luxurious way. Pu sarcastically comments on such vicious doings in *The Tale of Becoming an Immortal* in *Strange Tales from a Chinese Studio* that almost half of the governors

are bandits, only without weapons in hand. What Pu implies is that the ruthless levy of governors is nothing but the barbaric conduct of bandits, only in a high-sounding way. Evidently, with the unbridled emotions of anger, indignation and defiance in writings, the temperament of Pu has deviated far from the standard norm of becoming a gentle scholar.

## **2. Poe's Order: The Challenge to the Muse in Mimetic Aesthetics**

Truly, it is on the basis of Plato's "Form" that Poe refuses the artistic realism and develops his mimetic theory in seeking the ideal art form, namely, the Beauty abstracted from matter, but Poe does not agree to Plato's relegation of poets to the mere imitators of the real world and even the essential "Form". That largely accounts for Plato's insistence on the mere imitation of poets is the theory of inspiration that has questioned the subjectivity and consciousness of poets. In the words of his respected teacher Socrates, Plato doubts the truth of the interpretation poets make on their own works, noting that "almost everyone present, so to speak, would have spoken better than the poets did about the poetry that they themselves had made (Plato 5)". In other words, even a passerby understands more about the poetry than the poet does himself. The explanation Plato gives to such a case is that "(poets) do not make what they make by wisdom, but by some sort of nature and while inspired, like the diviners and those who deliver oracles (6)", and the "nature or inspiration" is the blessing of the Muse. Therefore, the skilled rhapsodists - the classical Greek professional poets who recite Homer's epic poetry, in particular - transmit to the audience the poets' initial inspiration from Muse by virtue of divine ownership rather than of their own ability or understanding. In "Ion", the rhapsodist is likened to the last lodestone (i.e. magnet) of a chain of lodestones.

The poet (in Ion's instance, Homer) is inspired by the Muse and then the poet inspires the rhapsodist, suggesting that the talent of Ion the rhapsodist is a god-given one, and his Homeric performance is unconsciously in the guidance of the Muse because he himself actually cannot understand the poetry.

Although the focal point of the artistic trend since the 18th century has been switched to the inner world, it is exactly in the theory of Platonic imitation and inspiration that the source of the romantic idea is traced that the poetry is considered as "unpremeditated, spontaneous, irrational kind - a kind of natural cry not executed according to the poet's intention and reflective consciousness (Zhang 1)". What romanticists are interested in is the process - though they will surely not note it as the course of imitation - of poets' imitation in the inspiration of the Muse. They ascribe the unconscious creation of poets to the trait of "genius". In the essay "Whether Genius is Conscious of Its Powers?", William Hazlitt makes an account for the inspired composition of poets, claiming "[t]he definition of genius is that it acts unconsciously; and those who have produced immortal works have done so without knowing how and why....Correggio, Michael Angelo, Rembrandt, did what they did without premeditation or effort" (Hazlitt 300). Along with the inspiration of the similarly self-generated passion that also dominates the creation of genius, because genius and passion are a matter of "Nature" (357), and the greater "the Enthusiastick Passions...the more they show the Largeness of Soul and Greatness of the Capacity of the Writer" (Dennis 340).

Poe, however, is not convinced that poets imitate in the inspiration of the Muse. Instead, he believes that poets can exert their subjective initiative to create and innovate something in a way that is more specific than the endowed inspiration. Also, it is evident that the romantic writers who exalt the inspired genius stand apart from Poe, who is indifferent to the romantic passion of rare talented persons,

“miserable in solitariness”, and “frustrated by the restrictions of the subjective perspective” (Unrue 113). What Poe yearningly values in literature is “order (114)” which helps to account for the conscious literary creation. At the onset of the essay *The Philosophy of Composition*, Poe goes straight to “the mode of accounting for what had been done” through the introduction of Charles Dickens’ concern with that topic (Poe 193). He firstly overthrows the conventional method of story formation, the usual mode of constructing a story, that is, the design to fill in the striking events with description, dialogue, authorial comment or action. What he then proposes as the real procedures of composition includes the commencement with the selection of a literary genre (novel in Poe’s case), and the following consideration of a vivid effect, and the final incorporation of the effect into the proper incident and tone. Beside that, Poe is attentive to the arduous process of literary construction in mind, scrupulously treated with “the elaborate and vacillating crudities of thought”, “the true purposes seized only at the last moment”, or even “the fully-matured fancies discarded in despair as unmanageable” (194). The thinking process thus negates the passivity of art practisers as well as proving the consciousness of their creation. With the precise mode of writing and worthy mental struggle in practice, Poe is proud to claim that he has “the least difficulty in recalling to mind the progressive steps of any of [his] composition” (195).

Accordingly, the concept of Beauty that Poe proposes is differentiated from Plato’s “Form”. It is the abstracted object that must be contemplated and then attained through proper means, namely, certain effects. “Melancholy” is selected as the most legitimate tone of the Beauty and the death of a beautiful lady, as it is the event most associated with Beauty. In addition to that, the Beauty is achieved not simply with “the sense of the beautiful” and the “glowing enthusiasm” (273) with which the genius is usually endowed, because, as Poe explains, “it is no mere

appreciation of the Beauty before us, but a wild effort to reach the Beauty”, and “[h]e who shall simply sing, with however glowing enthusiasm...he, I say, has yet failed to prove his divine title (as a poet)”(273). Even it is to express the intensive enthusiasm, the talented poets is suggested to retain their autonomy in poetic composition and the substantiality of their works through the creation of an emotional connection between them and the audience. As already aforementioned, Poe has reprocessed his personal feeling (i.e. the sorrowful mourning for dead women) to a consensual emotion of terror to be objectively accepted. With an aim to cool the excessive passion of the romanticists and direct their attention to a more sensible and systematic practice of composition, Poe is no wonder to be also noted as “the romantic as classicist (Unrue 112)”, which marks his affinity with the classical order and proportioned style while using the romantic materials.

As Unrue states, Poe “[appreciates] and [engages] in good imitation, and he [demands] of himself and others...fidelity to predetermined rules of correctness and style” (114). To Plato, he makes the assertion that the poet is able to clearly explain his works in the achievement of the Beauty; to the romanticists, Poe suggests a substantial way of literary composition rather than the unrestrained high-sounding writing out of unknowing forces. The mimetic theory of Poe thus challenges the conventional imitation theory, that is, the commitment to the Muse in a thorough manner from its historical source to the revitalization of it in full flourish.

## D. Conclusion

The influence of the historical change and depressing life experiences is significant in Pu's Strange tales and Poe's Gothic fiction, since it has shaped the literary appreciation of the two writers into the obsession with grotesque elements that break away from the conventional aesthetics. For Pu, he has tapped the potentiality of fanciful inscription to the greatest possibility in contrary to the serious writing practised for the Imperial Examination; while for Poe, his fascination with the uncanniness in narration goes against the lyrical themes of traditional romanticists. To further understand their preference for the unconventionality and its different manifestation in writings, one needs to parallelly and systematically fathom the aesthetics of the two fiction writers.

The aesthetic study on Pu's Strange tales and Poe's Gothic fiction in the light of mimetic theories and expressive theories in one way supplements the insufficient probe into the parallel of the two writers, and in the other way, separates the aesthetic values of Pu and Poe from the fixed model that the Chinese aesthetics is expressive while the Western aesthetics is mimetic. The mimetic aesthetics and expressive aesthetics of Pu and Poe are both illustrated in detail. About the discussion of mimetic aesthetics, in following the trend of reporting the defected Imperial Examination and the restricted love between couples at issue, Pu has experienced the tremendous change of the Chinese mimetic theories from the compliance with the natural law since the Pre-Qin Period to the reflection of social reality in the dynasties of Ming and Qing. That put to the fore as the mimetic theory of Poe is not the imitation of the objects in the real world, but the abstraction of them to reach the form of "ideal" art, that is, the concept of the Beauty. In the analysis of the expressive aesthetics, Pu is presented as a loyal disciple of Li Zhi,

following Li's theory of preserving childlike innocence to freely express his emotion and work on literature with resentfulness at the disappointing reality. Different from Pu's strong reaction to the outside world, Poe was immersed in a distressed mood for the loss of intimate women in his life. Besides that, his recurrent theme of the dead women, one of the bizarre themes, implies his insistence on originality that lack in America at the time, and his purpose to be read through an emotional connection with his audience. Such a penetration into the mimetic theory and expressive theory of Pu and Poe proves that neither allow their aesthetic values to be fitted into only one fixed model of either "mimetic" or "expressive" school. In addition to the synchronic study of the two authors that places them in the realm of both mimetic aesthetics and expressive aesthetics, a diachronic study is also conducted to demonstrate the historical mobility of the aesthetics of Pu and Poe, both of whom respectively break through the conventional paradigm of mimetic aesthetics and expressive aesthetics with a revolutionary spirit.

Although the terms "mimesis" and "expression" of the Western aesthetic system are adopted to describe the aesthetic theories of both Pu and Poe for the sake of convenience, it is manifested that the terms are interpreted differently from the context of Chinese literature and Western literature. Through the synchronic as well as diachronic penetration into the connotations of the two terms in the texts of Pu and Poe, the finding is that, firstly, the unconventional aesthetics of Pu and Poe was affected by their different social background and personal experiences. Secondly, mimetic and expressive aesthetics are both necessary and detectable in the literary works of the two fiction writers of the different cultural background. Finally, the challenge to the conventional significations of expressive aesthetics and mimetic aesthetics indicates the unfixing of aesthetic theories in the historical sense.

To simply classify the aesthetics in one literary work as mimetic, while that in the other, expressive, is, therefore, not appropriate and accurate.



## V. Comparative Study on Poe's and Pu's Works

### A. Comparing Similarities and Differences between Their Works from the Perspective of Plot

The strongest and most profound impression of Poe's Gothic fictions and Pu Songling's *Strange Tales from a Chinese Studio* is their grotesque and horror. Therefore, this chapter will start with the grotesqueness and horror of the plot, compare the similarities and differences between Poe's Gothic fictions and Pu's *Strange Tales from a Chinese Studio*, and clarify the theoretical connotations of the grotesque and horror as well as their unique aesthetic value and significance. A detailed textual analysis of the significant similarities and differences exhibited by the two is also carried out.

#### 1. Similarity and Difference of Grotesque

##### a. Grotesque in Edgar Allan Poe's Gothic Fictions

*Tales of the Arabesque and Grotesque* was the name of Poe's first collection of short stories. Poe states in the volume's preface:

“The epithets ‘Grotesque’ and ‘Arabesque’ will be found to indicate with sufficient precision the prevalent tenor of the tales here published. But from the fact that, during a period of some two or three years, I have written five-and-twenty short stories whose general character may be so briefly defined, it cannot be fairly inferred — at all events it is not truly inferred — that I have, for this species of writing, any inordinate, or indeed any peculiar taste or prepossession. I may have

written with an eye to this publication in volume form, and may, therefore, have desired to preserve, as far as a certain point, a certain unity of design” (Poe 2).

It’s clear that Poe views the labels “grotesque” and “arabic” as indications of craft rather than as having a metaphysical component. Readers’ emotional reactions to these conflicting incompatibilities form the basis of the grotesque, and it is in these contrasting emotional states that readers experience alienation or ambivalence.

Poe’s Gothic work places readers in an essential position. Poe puts the listener in a position to evaluate Gothic symbolism and extratextual information while while challenging them to sympathize with the first-person narrator. The reader is left feeling trapped in a state of exquisite, physical dread as a result of this conflict between identification and interpretation. This experience for the reader is emotive, evoking emotional reactions while they read the tale. Poe purposefully produces the sense of ambiguity through the concept of the emotive reader, a reader who feels strongly connected to the story’s protagonist while still standing outside the narrative. Berenice, whose beauty evokes such high exclamations from Egaeus that it is compared to “sylph amid the shrubberies of Arnheim” and “Naiad among its fountains”, wins no love from her cousin and fiancé but impresses him with her “spectrum of the teeth” instead. Karen Weekes assumes that Berenice “is exchanging her innocence for sexuality” and “foregoing her contented, naive feminine role for that of the male sphere of knowledge”. (*Berenice* 2) Such grotesqueness encourages Egaeus to take revenge on Berenice. Being informed of the “violated grave” of the freshly entombed Berenice by the horrified valet, Egaeus responds in a deranged manner. However, his garments that were “muddy and clotted with gore”, his hand that was “indented with the impress of human nails”, his spade against the wall, the “instruments of dental surgery” and the

“thirty-two small, white and ivory-looking substances” (*Berenice* 8) that scatter onto the ground combine to create an impression that it is Egaeus himself who had extracted her teeth from the tomb.

These narrative components that produce a pervasive feeling of dread or a propelling terror are a crucial component of Poe’s grotesque. This feeling of dread generates a dreadful atmosphere that permeates the story and propels it toward a climax that both seems predestined and yet still astounds the reader. These narratives add to the story’s increasing volatility by stoking the feelings of dread and horror already there, creating a luminous area where the protagonist and the reader come together. In *The Fall of the House of Usher*, a poem by Roderick Usher, which reflects the story of baronial collapse that serves as the narrative of Usher’s fall, is an illustration of this. The “The Haunted Palace” introduces the narrator and reader to a very eerie vision of a building collapsing. The final sentences describe how the reader will be left after reading the narrative. Roderick writes:

VI.

And travellers now within that valley,  
 Through the red-litten windows, see  
 Vast forms that move fantastically  
     To a discordant melody;  
 While, like a rapid ghastly river,  
     Through the pale door,  
 A hideous throng rush out forever,

And laugh — but smile no more. (*The Fall of the House of Usher* 9)

Through Usher’s high poetics, the poem enables the reader to speculate about Usher’s mental state while also assuming an almost mystical prediction of

forthcoming events. We are tourists in this strange land, listening to Usher's bold compositions' discordant melodies, and yet, like the narrator, we find ourselves attracted into the castle's magical surroundings. Ironically, the poem's last lines underline the reader's role in the narrative. Taking assuming the narrator's character, the reader leaves the house while feeling a mixture of silliness and anxiety. Usher describes the inner agony of the absurd and doomed household while also feeling the coming destruction. He is accountable for the narrative's horrifying absurdity, the eccentricity of the individual who thinks the dwelling is sentient, and the awful conclusion of the last conflagration. The poem creates a setting where the mental and physical coexist by conjuring the craziness of Usher's mind and distorting the dramatic events of the story's climax.

The poetry in *Ligeia* intensifies the action, enveloping the remaining parts of the story in a grotesquely dreadful propulsiveness that accelerates the plot's resolution. *Ligeia* writes:

Out - out are the lights - out all!  
 And over each quivering form,  
 The curtain, a funeral pall,  
 Comes down with the rush of a storm -  
 And the angels, all pallid and wan,  
 Uprising, unveiling, affirm  
 That the play is the tragedy, "Man,"  
 And its hero the Conqueror Worm. (*Ligeia* 8)

The narrator and reader are given very little context for these lines other than to know that they refer to Ligeia's death throes. The darkness and trembling shapes, the curtain and burial shroud reflect the transitory transcendent world of the chamber. The sight of the curtain falling is reminiscent of the Lady Rowena's bridal

bedroom, which has a variety of effects designed to evoke both grotesque and pleasurable feelings. Both Ligeia and Roderick Usher's poetry create a grotesque dread and forecast these outcomes.

Animals are used by Poe to represent the grotesque in *The Black Cat*. The wife initially saw the black cat, named Pluto, which had one distinctive feature: a white patch of hair that grew larger until it resembled a "gallows". She continues to feel the same affection and affinity for this specific cat as she previously had for Pluto. In "fastening his long and sharp claws in his garment, climb, in this fashion, to my breast", the cat exhibits some peculiar behaviors. This gives the narrator a lot to worry about, giving him "absolute dread of the beast" (*The Black Cat* 5), whose terrifying mode gives him a restless night because "I found the breath of the thing upon my face and its weight-an incarnate night-dream that I had no power to shake off-incumbent eternally from my heart" (*The Black Cat* 5). In addition to being weird in and of itself, the second cat apparition also serves as a kind of retaliation for the narrator's terrible treatment while awaiting execution for the murder of his wife. Following the death of his wife with an axe and hiding her in the hidden walls, the narrator first kills the black cat by hanging it to a tree, causing the entire home to burn down except for the wall where the black cat hangs unharmed. However, it was subsequently found out, which led to him receiving the death penalty he is currently waiting for. The cause of the fire is unknown, but only the husband, his wife, and a servant managed to escape its raging blaze. The cat's hanging place on the wall was spared the flames.

In *The Gothic of Reading and Poe's The Fall of the House of Usher*, Harriet Hustis writes, "It would seem that Poe is interested in creating more than just a bizarre story of incisive parody - his dual critique and enactment of the Gothic in *The Fall of the House of Usher* represent an exploration of the very nature of

Gothic textuality itself and its effects (both aesthetic and psychic) on the reader” (Hustis 116). Poe helps the reader to relate to the narrator while also placing them in a position where they may perceive the Gothic literary aspects of the narrative without being inside the text. The writing emphasizes the grotesque mood while yet responding directly to the story as a built Gothic setting.

A lavish, pleasant sorrow frames Poe’s grotesque. Poe’s aesthetic demands that these intricacies not only astound the reader physically and logically, but also imply a haptic place where these aspects transcend the categories of physical or mental. Poe outlines the components necessary for creating a successful story in *The Philosophy of Composition*. “Two things are invariably required - first, some amount of complexity, or more properly, adaptation; and, secondly, some amount of suggestiveness - some under-current, however indefinite, of meaning. It is this latter, in especial, which imparts to a work of art so much of that richness (to borrow from colloquy a forcible term) which we are too fond of confounding with the ideal” (Poe 22). These principles play a crucial role in Poe’s grotesque, which combines the logical, and the irrational, the external and the interior, while also evoking the concept of a haptic realm where these complexities might be reconciled.

## **b. Grotesque in Pu Songling’s *Strange Tales from a Chinese Studio***

Pu Songling showed the grotesque features in *Strange Tales from a Chinese Studio* in the following aspects: First, ugly, absurd, and radical supernatural forms existed in the short stories.

For example, some stories related to legal cases reflected dark side of society. The protagonist's father in *Shang San Guan* was beaten to death by an official. So she went to the court but came back with no result. Then she was addressed as a man and went to her enemy's house, revenging on her enemy for her father and later committing suicide. Wrong laws brought people death and bitterness. In *Sequel to the Yellow Millet Dream*, Zeng Xiaolian dreamt of becoming a Grand Tutor, who was supported by the emperor, accepting bribes and killing kind officials and raping the innocent girls and occupying the land and property of ordinary people. As a result, he was killed by an axe. When he went to the nether world, he suffered a lot from penalties. The official summed all the property he took up when he was alive and put them into ghost a big melting pot and then fed him with the liquids, burning him to death at last. Sometimes grotesque technique does not serve the reflection of dark side of society only, and it is also combined with absurdity. Liu Faming thus said: "If we judge the aesthetic facts at home and abroad, we have to admit that the entire grotesque art or life image should include evil and absurdity. If either is missing, it will not arouse aesthetic effects and it is not grotesque (Liu 51). Absurdity is the necessary component. For example in *An Earthquake*, an old woman went to toilet in the courtyard but when she returned she was surprised to find that a wolf took her baby in the mouth. She, with her neighbors, struggled with the wolf and got back her baby. Then she told the whole story to her neighbors, totally forgetting she was naked. After a while she realized suddenly and rushed into the house. The readers may feel horrible when reading the section that she faced that wolf and cried and struggled but may feel relaxed and absurd when they saw a naked woman. Others stories related to imperial examination system had their own sarcastic features and reflected the evil outcome of the system. In *The Inspectorate of Misdeeds*, the chief was called the

Empty-Bellied Ghoul-King who required that when any bachelor of letters had a first audience with him, he must offer him pieces of flesh cut from their thighs. This is typical work full of “grotesque” which satirized the ancient officialdom. Apart from the absurdity, the supernatural was the dominant trend showing grotesque feature. In *Fairy YunCui*, the protagonist Liang Youcai was a wanderer and later married a fox fairy who was very beautiful and attractive to other men. Liang was induced by others, trying to sell his wife to the bawdyhouse. When his wife knew his evil thought she brought him to her mother and he was punished severely when he suddenly found he sat on the impending cliff and about to fall down. He cried and a branch saved his life at last. It is immoral for Liang to sell his wife and it is also an absurd experience of his punishment. All these create grotesque effects and fantasy and reality mix together in the plot and grotesque mixed with the supernatural. In reality, people cannot choose to interact with ghosts, but in the story *Fox-girl Qingfeng* narrated a strange event: Geng Qubing, the story’s main character, was reading a book at night when he unexpectedly witnessed a ghostly figure with wild hair and a lacquer-black face enter the space and look at him with wide eyes. He glanced back at the ghost with a scorching glare as he laughed and smeared ink on his face with freshly-rubbed fingertips. The ghost fled in humiliation. It is humorous and absurd to see ugliness defied against ugliness in this way. In some love stories in *Strange Tales from a Chinese Studio*, Pu personified some fox fairies and flower spirits in order to pursue supernatural effects. For example, human beings fell in love with animals and flower spirits. The protagonists in *The Laughing Girl* and *Xiaocui* were both lovely fox fairies; in *Twenty Years a Dream* a ghost woman and in *Xiangyu* a flower spirit. Love between a human and a ghost or a fairy or a spirit can be romantic but meanwhile it bears heteroptic features. After all, it is unbelievable in human world.



As mentioned above, indicating the corruption and absurdity is the commonest way to show grotesque. However, in Chinese literature more significant body, the ways to show grotesque flourish, for example, the displacement of human body, the dissimulation of human beings, and unexpected connection. According to Mikhail Bakhtin, the combination of human and animal or the transformation from one species to another is one of the most ancient grotesque forms, for it concerns the abject body (Bakhtin 316).

There are such kinds in *Strange Tales from a Chinese Studio*, for instance, a story about burglar narrated: a burglar was caught by an official and asked for capital punishment and as a result his head was removed but he could still speak and praised the official. The fantasy in story lacks reality; the reality implies absurdity. Another example in *Stealing a Peach*, a scene of body dispatching was described vividly. A magician opened his trunk and brought out a coil of rope that appeared to be several hundred feet long. He got one end of the rope ready and threw it upwards until it was soon lost in the clouds and the coil in his hands was all played out. Then he asked his son to climb up to the heaven to steal peaches. At first, peaches fell down one by one but suddenly the rope broke when he anxiously cried that his son was caught and was bound to die. As expected, the head, legs of his son fell down the ground, followed by the remaining pieces of a dismantled corpse. All the audiences were shocked and kept silent when they believed the fact. Interestingly, the magician then opened the box where his son came out. The strange plots of the entire story made a lasting effect on the readers.

In the story *The Magic Sword and the Magic Bag*, the ghost named Nie Xiaoqian transforms into a human, in which the fox transforms into a Little Beauty, in which the flowers transform into two women. Another story *Living Dead*, it means literally “The Changing Corpse”, “The Transforming Corpse”, and “The

Evil Dead”. The corpse was resurrected from the dead, and when she got up, she used the ghost energy to blow the sleeping strangers. Three strangers were killed one after another; the fourth man fled the room after he discovered the corpse’s tricks. By using animalistic imagery, the grotesque figure, a prominent element in Gothic and ghost stories, exposes human baseness or primal impulses.

When the protagonist of *The Painted Skin* begins a love affair with an ethereal young woman, she makes him swear never to reveal her presence to anybody. One night, he sneaks a peek through a window and discovers “the most hideous sight, a green-faced monster, a ghoulish creature with great jagged teeth like a saw, leaning over a human pelt, the skin of an entire human body, spread on the bed ... The monster had a paintbrush in its hand and was in the process of touching up the skin in lifelike color.”(*The Painted Skin 2*) Bloodthirsty creatures in painted skin devour humans but may also turn into civic citizens. The anthropomorphized and grotesque body shows off this confluence of seemingly diametrically opposed characteristics. All the stories showed the essence and the best of ancient Chinese culture and literature. Many of them originated from folk tales and from certain aspects they represent the life and experience and ideals of common people and vividly explode the people’s instinct and unconsciousness and also profoundly reveal the essential world of human beings. Pu built a bridge between human world and fantasy world through the dissimulation of human beings which created a wonder in Chinese *Zhi Guai* fiction. For example, in *The Metamorphosis* and *The Cricket*, both authors told us an eerie and absurd story - man becomes the insect. Although Edgar Allan Poe and Pu Song-ling, the two great authors, not only represented the complaints towards the society and the reality, also, they posted a ubiquitous but profound question: the dissimulation of the human beings. At the same time, the indifference that formed between the “man” and “real man” in

society enhanced our thinking. Cheng Ming in *The Crickets* could not catch good crickets and consequently was beaten black and blue. Later his son died and became a satisfying cricket, saving his life. The society was so dark that the government officials abused people in various ways and a person's life was even less important than a cricket's. Many people could not bear and fought back, just as was illustrated in *Xiang Gao*: Zhuang killed Xiang's brother and Xiang wanted to take revenge. One day he hid in the grass when it rained and a Taoist priest gave him a coat for warmth. Unexpectedly, he became a tiger when he wore it and finally bit his enemy.

Zhu Guanqian once said, "The beauty of grotesque lies in the weirdness of plot in which the stories happen in an unnatural and illogical manner" (Zhu 90) Works including abnormal connections and correlation in plot can create grotesque effects. *The Rakshas and the Sea Market* in *Strange Tales from a Chinese Studio* was a good example. In this story, Ma Ji, a fourteen-year-old boy was handsome and unconventional and versatile. He began to do business and accidentally he reached a city Rakshas where he was shocked to hear that all inhabitants were ugly were, because they value appearance and no literary accomplishment. The uglier they the higher their official position was. Ma painted his face black; he was immediately favored by the King. By contrast when he arrived at Sea Market, Ma was considered as "talented person" and later appointed an official. Readers may be convulsed with laughter that ugliness meant beauty and Pu satirized that society in which people confused black and white.

Grotesque techniques arouse exceptional aesthetical effects. Although this artistic method reflects more romantic features, it is in no way inferior to other realistic works to expose and satirize the real human society. First the vile practices and terror have a shocking effect on our readers. Social evils bring people a sense

of hatred and hate. This emotion enhances their decision to fight against the ugly features. Whereas, terror creates a horrible atmosphere or character which makes people amazed and fearful. This is a kind of beauty that readers can experience in novels. For example in *The Magic Sword and the Magic Bag*, Pu depicted a terrible and mysterious picture at the beginning:

“The once-grand temple was now covered in weeds and appeared to be abandoned. The doors leading into the monks’ cells in the east and west wings stood ajar, and the only place that showed any sign of being inhabited was a single room on the south side, which, Ning observed, had been fitted with a new door-bar and lock. In the eastern corner of the main courtyard, below the main hall of worship, grew a stand of large bamboos, their stems two hands round, and below the steps leading up to the terrace stretched a vast pond, covered with a mass of water-lilies in full bloom”( *The Magic Sword and the Magic Bag* 1).

In such a deserted monastery, Nie Xiaoqian always came and went away in the dark night, inducing Ning Caicheng by her beauty and money but Ning ignored all these and his virtue moved Nie Xiaoqian. When he knew Nie Xiaoqian was a ghost controlled by Granny, he tried to save her. When they fell in love with each other, horrible atmosphere eroded.

Pu consciously negated the real world in order to emphasize his pursuit for the ideal world. He personified the ghosts, flower spirit, fairies and socialized the nether world, Dragon palace and described love between a human and a ghost, between a human and a fox fairy or between a ghost and a ghost so as to reveal the clashes in human world and his ideal in the supernatural world. This is in fact Pu’s reverse way of thinking. For example, in *An Other Worldly Examination*, Pu created a nether world where scholars were respected and loved. The examiners were equal to everyone. Reversely, the examiners in human world judged a scholar

by his money. Talented scholars always died of depression and anger and taught knowledge to people when they became a ghost. To some extent, Pu exaggerated the plot in the grotesque way, portraying the antagonists and exposing the dark side of human society. Readers can't help laughing when witnessing the absurd characters or events but meanwhile they profoundly feel the reality of society which can be called "authentic fantasy". Such techniques implying mystery and absurdity in corruption are rarely found in any other classical Chinese novels.

Comparing the grotesque expressions between Edgar Allan Poe's Gothic fictions and Pu Songling's *Strange Tales from a Chinese Studio*, although many of the bizarre and quirky imaginations of the two works are expressed in unexpected places, there are still many differences. Firstly, in terms of the level of grotesqueness, Pu's *Strange Tales from a Chinese Studio* is far inferior to Poe's Gothic fictions. The grotesqueness and its mysterious and mysterious color are difficult to compare with Gothic fictions. Moreover, the grotesque in Poe's Gothic fictions is closely related to the nature of horror, and horror has become an important factor in the grotesque. Perhaps Western ghost art, including Poe's Gothic fictions, has a close relationship with horror in its creative practice, so Western theorists often emphasize horror as an important factor within them when discussing the grotesque. The grotesques in *Strange Tales from a Chinese Studio* mostly focus on the "grotesque" itself, and what it shows is a kind of fantasy beauty and warmer taste. From the perspective of the creative practice of such strange tales in China, the horror nature is generally not regarded as an important factor to be infinitely exaggerated; from the theoretical perspective, the horror is even more rejected.

Secondly, in the description of ghosts and human feelings, in general, Gothic fictions are not as good as ghost tales, because Western writers "do not imagine the

realm of ghosts through self-experience like Chinese writers” (Ying 122). As a result, Poe’s Gothic fictions and Pu’s Strange tales have obtained the psychological motivation of transferring, sustenance from people’s life ideals and emotional world, and reflecting people’s psychological motives through ghost and fantasy. Their works use ghost and fantasy to show people’s various emotions and desires that are difficult to achieve in real predicaments, eager to rebuild the destroyed and fascinating Garden of Eden in fantasy and restore its unity fundamentally. Satisfying the emotions and desires of human beings that are difficult to achieve in the real predicament, and satisfying the needs of human beings’ innate desire to explore the unknown realm with strong curiosity, are exactly the general principles of Edgar Allan Poe’s Gothic fictions and Pu Songling’s strange tales, which is also the true meaning of the art of fiction. Therefore, both Gothic fictions and Strange tales have all acquired enduring artistic charm and meaningful aesthetic values.

## 2. Similarity and Difference of Horror

As mentioned before, the grotesque is a major feature of the plots of Edgar Allan Poe’s Gothic fictions and Pu Songling’s *Strange Tales from a Chinese Studio*. However, Poe’s Gothic fictions and Pu’s Strange tales are not only grotesque in their plots, but also in the horror created by the atmosphere. It can be said that horror is a quality shared by Gothic fictions and Strange tales, and we can clearly feel this quality by reading such works. But the difference in the overall effect and strength of their horror is also obvious. Comparatively speaking, the former has a strong horror atmosphere, while the latter is weaker.

## a. Horror in Edgar Allan Poe's Gothic Fictions

One of the most powerful impressions and feelings of Poe's Gothic fictions is horror. This kind of horror is rooted in the process and ending of the event and this kind of horror is not local, but permeates all aspects of the work. It is the main tone of the work. The four Poe's Gothic fictions we discuss here all have this quality, and the world they show is a bloody horror world full of violence, murder, incest, rape, greed and other kinds of evil.

The description of the crumbling home in *The Fall of the House of Usher* is likewise horrifying. Poe's amazing writing abilities are clearly demonstrated by the vision and structure of this wonderful short story. Although previous books like *Metzengestein*, *The Assination*, *Berenice*, *Morella*, and *Ligeia* that dealt with the horror that results from the impact of Gothic settings came before it, it is regarded as one of his finest works. We are never informed where or when the events of the novel take place in terms of setting, which gives the story a feeling of remoteness and indefiniteness. The Usher house is located in a remote area of a forest in an unknown nation. The story begins on one "dull, dark, and soundless day in the autumn of the year, when the clouds hung oppressively low in the heavens" (*The Fall of the House of Usher* 1). Through the narrator's choice of words and allusion to autumn, the season of death and melancholy, this phrase by the unidentified narrator effectively summarizes the tone of this Gothic fiction of death and the uncanny.

Poe skillfully describes the dark, melancholy, and frequently terrifying surroundings, which could be mistaken for a dream and frequently have a surrealist undertone. The reader anticipates some fresh and uncommon possibilities since they are conscious of a sense of death and deterioration from the outset, just like

the narrator who “wondered to find how unfamiliar were the fancies which ordinary images were stirring up” (*The Fall of the House of Usher* 3). The narrative excellently demonstrates Poe’s compositional rule, which argues that every element in a narrative must work together to create a single, cohesive result. As a consequence, every phrase, every picture, and every characterization in the story is selected with the intention of evoking a sensation of utter terror in both the author and the reader.

The protagonist of the narrative *The Black Cat* is plagued by a maddening angry emotion that has no apparent origin. His wife is kind and content, and she also like animals, particularly their pet cat Pluto. Then, after making an axe murder attempt on the new cat, his wife gets in the way and he turns on her. She then passes away instantly without making a sound, and he attempts to hide his horrifying act by walling up her corpse in the cellar. The protagonist confesses his guilt as the police pull a wall down and the black cat, wailing in retaliation, perches on the victim’s head as they arrive in the cellar and suddenly hear the cry of an unknown thing. He captures the cat one night after his customary alcoholic drink. The cat “inflicts a slight wound upon my hand with his teeth.” This sends him into a rage:

“The fury of a demon instantly possessed me. I knew myself no longer. My original soul seemed, at once, to take its flight from my body; and a more than fiendish malevolence, gin nurtured, thrilled every fibre of my frame” (*The Black Cat* 2).

Although the narrator is well conscious of his illness, he is powerless to stop his descent into insanity. The narrator is forced to commit crimes and self-destruction by an uncontrollable power. At this stage, both the protagonists and the readers are terrified of being unreasonable about themselves. Absolute and



complete horror was the main impression that Poe sought to evoke. It is obvious that many of the narrator's actions lack purpose or logic and are plain perverse. It is something out of the ordinary, perverse, and hence frightening to people, and thus to the reading.

One of Poe's most well-known stories is about *Berenice*. Poe acknowledged that *Berenice* was excessively horrible in a correspondence to H. G. White. The chief character of the story Egaeus belongs to a family of "gloomy, gray, hereditary" parents:

"Our line has been called a race of visionaries and in many striking particulars in the character of the family mansion, in the frescos of the chief saloon, in the tapestries of the dormitories in the chiseling of some buttresses in the armory but more especially in gallery of antique painting in the fashion of the library chamber and a lastly in the very peculiar nature of the library's contents there is more than sufficient evidence to warrant the belief" (*Berenice* 1).

Here the narrator lives with his cousin, Berenice. Although both grow together, their constitution and nature are different. The narrator then exposes his own mental disorder, which "consisted in a morbid irritability of those properties of the mind in metaphysical science termed the attentive" (*Berenice* 3). The fixation is the factor that makes the tense and uneasy environment created by the figures of the married couple with distorted psyches change into a dreadful repugnant atmosphere. The narrator's twisted mind is fascinated on Berenice's teeth: "The teeth! – the teeth! – they were here, and there, and everywhere, and visibly and palpably before me [. . .] I had no thoughts but for the teeth" (*Berenice* 6). At the end of this rather sick rumination he conveys the thought which later becomes the motive of a disgusting act: "I felt that their possession could alone ever restore me to peace, in giving me back to reason" (*Berenice* 6). This clue combined with the narrator's

following confusion has a potent impact. The reader realizes the reality, which causes terror that is heightened in the next paragraphs. Due to their abnormality, which is sometimes seen as worse than the violent acts of sane individuals, such and other comparable warped mind crimes are welcomed with tremendous horror.

*Ligeia* is listed as one of the most outstanding short novels in the world. It has a typical Gothic color for in this novel it is filled with horror and thrill and it is enveloped with a gloomy and weird atmosphere. In the very beginning of the story, the narrator tries to recall Ligeia, he utters her name and remembers the drabs and drabs he has spend with Ligeia. The narrator of the story, married with Ligeia who was not only beautiful and elegant, extraordinary temperament but also knowledgeable and full of unusual but wonderful ideas. They loved each other deeply, read volumes of books together and talked about a variety of classical and mysterious knowledge. The narrator was brought into a forbidden area in literature by his deeply loved wife; he stated that he has an ethereal feeling in heart but can't help feeling confused and horrified. In fact the narrator at this time is strongly resisting the academic restrict area where the ordinary people little reached. The narrator in one way wanted to explore the unknown world followed his wife, in another way feared some unknown power, all this caused the husband's dilemma feeling toward his wife. As readers ideas are following the narrator's narration, they inevitably possess the same impression towards the heroine Ligeia in the very beginning of the novel. That is to say Ligeia appeared a horror image to readers when they first acquaint with her.

The name of Ligeia itself owns multiple meanings which symbolized the coexistence of horror. In the ancient Greek myth, Ligeia is one of the sirens. After reading this short story, the readers find Ligeia using her strong will killed Miss Rowena and reviving in Rowena's body so it is easily to conclude that Ligeia has a

character of ghost. It seems that Poe observes and studies hardly when choosing the heroine's name Ligeia. It was more like a ghost coming and going freely. In the impression of Chinese readers who are familiar with *Strange Tales from a Chinese Studio*, she is more like a female ghost under Pu Song Ling's pen. These female ghosts are tending to omit the memories in scholar's mind which might seem to expose their identity and tending to disappear completely after a vigorous and vital love with the poor scholar. Only leaving the poor scholar languishes for her and their love. So Ligeia herself is just a combination of horror and beauty. Readers appreciate and admire her but at the same time revere and fear Ligeia.

The most horrible can be well reflected in the description of how Ligeia bring back to life. The portrayal, also really also imaginary, about Ligeia's resurrection in the last section of story can be regarded as both the centre and the climax of the whole texture. Miss Rowena was ill not long after the narrator married her. With the deterioration of her disease, Miss Rowena was more and more easily terrified by any slightly sound in the veiling where she lay. When reading about this, readers can't help questioning whether the unusual sound in the veiling is real or not and whether it has any connection with Miss Rowena's suddenly fall ill.

Poe paid much attention not only to the unity of atmosphere and effect but also to the effect - horror. He also enlarged the horror effect to bring the readers in his story and horror. The whole story is spoken out by an unconsciousness narrator who takes in opium which can easily bring readers in a chaos world. Readers deeply indulged themselves in the enjoyment of horror and can't come back to reality for a long time.

Consequently, I think it is accurate to say that Allan Poe was a master at creating a spooky atmosphere because, despite the stories' apparent simplicity, they actually contain a complicated structure of various elements that Poe purposefully

selected and combined in order to produce the intended effect - fear. He achieved that purpose, as evidenced by the large number of readers who recognize the strength of the influence that his horrible stories have.

## b. Horror in Pu Songling's *Strange Tales from a Chinese Studio*

Lu Xun once said, "In *Strange Tales from a Chinese Studio*, ghosts and fairies are like humans, kind and sincere and easy-going" (Lu 35). This is not always the fact. Some ghosts appeared to be terrible and frightening but in fact they were very kind and they actively chose to interact with people and help them; on the other hand, still others were evil and always conducted wrong doings. For the former, it is needless for us to be afraid of them and we will love them and try to appreciate them gradually because they give us satisfying and mixed aesthetic feelings; Horror is just an ingredient of the story, an implied setting which is placed gradually and is bound to lead abrupt turns in the plot; while for the latter, we only get "horrible aesthetic feelings". Here, we will present a general analysis of the horror in *Strange Tales from a Chinese Studio*.

In *Strange Tales from a Chinese Studio*, Pu Song-ling depicted some evil ghosts in order not to express his depression in failing the imperial exams, not to show his anger and dissatisfaction for the society and government but just perform his horrible aesthetic interests. The most horrible thing in the world is death. The story *Living Dead* was filled with the chasing game from beginning to the end. Four strangers checked in a village inn but there were no empty rooms and they had to sleep with a dead female body in a house. It can be imagined that it was very frightening to sleep with a dead body. In the midnight, the body woke up and became a ghost, whom the fourth man saw killing many of his sleeping fellows. He felt very fearful when he saw the ghost cruelly kill everyone and flew closer to him. Fortunately, he fled away without her notice and arrived at an old temple when the ghost chased him. Unluckily, the door of the temple could not open, so he continued to run desperately until he rushed into the wood but the ghost still did not

give up. The fourth man was very tired at that moment when it would be dawn. He struggled with the ghost to the last minute when her hands were trapped in the branch and restored to the dead body. He did not know how long he was chased but only remembered he was saved at last by the passers-by.

We may see that the female ghost was neither kind nor evil and she was just the symbol of death. She was like a prop Pu used in the story to show his thrilling feelings. What the fourth man faced was not a living human being, but the dead ghost whom he struggled with and finally surpassed. The whole story fully unfolds Pu's artistic talents. In *Living Dead*, there were no dialogues but the scene deeply touched our sensory organs. We may see "Her face gave off a golden glow"; we may hear "her breathe on him just as she had done on the others"; and we may decide "then slipped quickly into them and ran barefoot towards the door". She chases the survivor all the way to a temple's grounds when he leaves the chamber. The trapped survivor ducks and sideways as the zombie monster ferociously swipes at him from behind a big tree. The living corpse is now even more enraged, so she lunges with all her strength and drives her claws deep into the tree trunk. The last traveler then passes out. The next day, an inert female corpse is found by the tree. Additionally, several fellas are required to remove her claws from the trunk. In the words of the text, "the finger holes were long and narrow as if they had been bored by a carpenter's awl." Pu Songling directed to set a more horrible atmosphere in which the ghosts lived so as to pursue special aesthetic tastes. Horror and kindness were two features of ghosts and mutually dependent in *Strange Tales from a Chinese Studio*, which horrible stories created kind characters, the ghosts, fairies and flower spirit and verse versa, they could show their personalities and feelings in horrible settings. Readers can enjoy amusement in a series of horrible scenes and appreciate aesthetic features from various aspects. However, we still

admit that some ghost stories in *Strange Tales from a Chinese Studio* are related to feudalism in China, but most ghosts are just props to aid the writer to finish his artistic masterpiece.

*The Painted Skin*, one of Pu's most well-known stories and one in which the monster blends dread and desire to stunning effect, must be brought up in any discussion of horror in *Strange Tales from a Chinese Studio*. In this story, Wang, the protagonist, meets a gorgeous young woman and invites her to his home. But one day, he peeks into her chamber and realizes she isn't even a young lady; rather, she is a terrible monster. "Creeping stealthily up to a window, he peeped through and saw the most hideous sight, a green-faced monster, a ghoul with great jagged teeth like a saw" (*The Painted Skin 2*), and she's using a paint brush to touch up human flesh. She transforms into the beautiful lady he had fallen in love with when she starts wearing the skin, which she does like a cloak. The demon rips open Wang's chest and takes out his heart before running from the home after discovering she has been found. But owing to Wang's devoted wife, the narrative has a fairy-tale ending, with Wang being restored and the demon being vanquished. The monster from *The Painted Skin* alludes to the peril of romantic love. The story plays on the same tension that the collection as a whole manipulates to great effect: that the world is unpredictable, that monsters might be discovered close to home, and that they are rarely as simple as they appear.

A heart made from a crazy beggar's spittle revives Wang's body. Wang's wife, Chen, approaches this person despite the fact that he oozes snot and sleeps on a dunghill because she has heard from a Daoist priest that he might be able to resurrect the dead. She endures his humiliation; he hits her with a stick, and then forces her to eat his sputum while a throng gathers around them. Wang's wife eats some of the beggar's ugliness when she swallows this. Later, while she sobs over her

deceased husband, “Then she felt the lump of phlegm rising in her gullet and brought it up, so suddenly that she had no time to turn away, but spat it directly into the gaping wound in her husband’s chest. She stared aghast: the phlegm had become a human heart and lay there throbbing, hot and steaming....In the middle of the night when she lifted the covers, she was already breathing through his nose. By the next morning, he was fully alive” (*The Painted Skin* 7). The deformity of the beggar has been transmitted from her to her husband, becoming a component of his body and reviving him. There aren’t many Chinese ghost stories more ruthlessly merciless and heartbreaking than *The Painted Skin* as the story of how looks may be deceiving.

*The Magic Sword and the Magic Bag*’s Nie Xiaoqian, the most well-known female ghost from *Strange Tales from a Chinese Studio*, is a gentle female spirit who is made to kill innocent men by more powerful ghosts. When she performs her gruesome duties with reluctance, she is really terrifying. Nie Xiaoqian failed to entice the moral Ning Caishen. Ning then freed Xiaoqian from enslavement with the aid of Swordsman Yan. She eventually became his second wife. Amazingly, Nie Xiaoqian transformed into a person after spending years around people. Even Ning has children from her.

It has been lauded for the author’s skillful use of these characters - ghosts, foxes, and demons - to highlight human emotions, flaws, and relationships. Only at the very end of *The Laughing Girl* does Yingning explain the source of her horrible nature:

“There’s something I have never told you,” she sobbed. “I haven’t told you about it before, because we hadn’t known each other very long and I didn’t want to frighten you. But now that I know you better, and I know how much you and your mother love me, I must tell you the truth. “I am the daughter of a fox. When my



fox-mother went away, she entrusted me to a ghost-mother, who looked after me for ten years. I have no brothers. You are all I have in the world” (*The Laughing Girl* 15) .

Her origins are even more suspicious given that she is not just a fox’s offspring but also that she was raised by a ghost as a foster mother. By the time this is made known, however, Yingning is already a somber and devoted wife, and Wang is not alarmed by her admissions.

The darker aspect of these renowned personalities is hinted at in each of the two stories mentioned above. Before Ning Caichen helps Nie Xiaoqian, she has already injured several men while under the control of an evil demon. Yingning, who is charming and amusing, also tricks her neighbor into having a horrible encounter with a scorpion as a kind of retribution for his passion.

As mentioned above, Pu Songling’s Strange tales have some local horror characteristics, but overall they present a warm sentiment. The formation of this style closely related with China’s own special economic and political forms, historical and cultural traditions, national psychology, religious thoughts, etc. Entering the world of Poe’s Gothic fictions, the content of horror, thrill, darkness, and evil in the text is not vulgar, on the contrary, the pain caused by horror, thrill, darkness, etc. can be transformed into a sublime aesthetic pleasure. However, due to the unique historical situation of novels in China, we attach too much importance to the educational function of novels, so Chinese novels have a little more seriousness and a sense of mission, but a little less pleasure. In this way, compared with the multiplicity and openness of the western novel, the Chinese function of the novel has obviously shown the characteristics of singleness and closure. Naturally, extreme and bloody horror cannot be tolerated in Chinese novels! This is not only the main reason why the Pu’s strange tales generally fail to appear

as strong and universally characteristic of horror as the Poe's Gothic fictions. This is also the main reason why Gothic novels have not been widely translated and studied in China like other outstanding foreign literary works.

## B. Comparing Similarities and Differences between Their Works from the Perspective of Theme

Different people come from different countries and live in separate places. They have their own experience, personalities and habits. They live together on the earth and experience roughly similar process of historical development, so they have desires, hardship and feelings in common. Everyone is closely related to each other. Because people own all of these feelings, they have some of the similar feelings which just called “universal sense of justice and rationality”. And all of these cognitive abilities will be reflected in authors’ literary outputs, then the literary outputs will produce the similar literary phenomenon, at the same time all of the expression have their own personality because of the differences in national characteristic and cultural tradition. In comparative literature, parallel study is to compare the different literary authors, literary works, coming from different nations that have similarities so as to study their differences and to understand the cultural characteristics and the authors’ intentions.

Both Edgar Allan Poe’s Gothic fictions and Pu Songling’s *Strange Tales from a Chinese Studio* have their own themes of expression. For example, karma, love, revenge, opposing tyranny, praising the ideal world, expressing desire for longevity, etc. are often themes expressed in *Strange Tales from a Chinese Studio*; while opposing greed, exposing brutality and sin, karma, love, revenge, rape, incest, etc., are themes in Poe’s Gothic fictions. In the following, from the perspective of comparative literary themes, we will examine the two common themes expressed in Poe’s Gothic fictions and Pu’s *Strange Tales from a Chinese Studio*, namely death and beauty.

## 1. Similarity and Difference of Death

Death, the ending of an individual life, has long been a focus of interest for human beings. Being related to religion, customs, and being involved in the fundamental human existent problems, death has always been one of the most eternal and favorite motifs of literary creation. Edgar Allan Poe and Pu Songling are particularly obsessed with the theme of death.

We attempt to explore more about these two similar literary types, to approach them in a more concrete and scientific ways, and to discover the reasons why they share great similarities or dissimilarities and implicit cultures, ideologies or meaning lying behind.

Pu Songling is addicted to writing a person's death and resurrection. Among his works the more famous chapters are *Living Dead*, *The Painted Skin*, *The Laughing Girl*, *The magic Sword and the Magic Bag* and so on. Most of Poe's short stories are also depicting the death and resurrection, such as *The Fall of the House of Usher*, *The Black Cat*, *Ligeia*, *Berenice*, etc. Although death is the most terrible topic of human problem, the two literary giants write in an incredible enthusiasm to depict the death, and make the reader wonder the beauty created in the process of death.

We set an example by comparing the two stories *Ligeia* and *Living Dead* which have similar contents.

In *Strange Tales from a Chinese Studio*, *Living Dead* is about four strangers who decided to stay in an inn at Cai Village, but there was no room for them, so they had to be arranged in the dead room where a woman's body was stored. At midnight, after they were asleep, the body got up and blew their faces. Eventually three of them were killed in their sleep; the fourth man escaped from death only

because he had not fallen asleep and found the female ghost. Then he pretended to be dead a few times and held his breath. Later, he escaped from the room before the ghost had noticed. In this story, Pu described that “Opening his eyes, he was able by the light of the lamp to distinguish the figure of the girl as she lifted off her paper shroud, got down from the bed ... Her face gave off a golden glow, and she had a turban of raw silk wrapped around her forehead. When she reached the beds, she blew on each of the three sleeping men in turn, and the fourth man, terrified that she would come to him next, stealthily drew the bedclothes up over his face and lay there holding his breath and listening ... He did not dare to make a sound, but stretched out a foot and furtively kicked his companions, not one of whom made the slightest movement in response.”(*Living Dead 2*) Pu has put the terror to the maximum, “the corps rose from its bed and set off in hot pursuit”, and the fourth man “All the while he ran ahead of her, screaming”. The fourth man ran to a Buddhist temple gate, but the monks were too frightened to let him enter into the temple. Finally the fourth man had no choice only to hide after a poplar tree in front of a temple gate. The female ghost stretched her arms around the tree, so the fourth man fell on the ground in fright. *Living Dead* fully embodies the thrilling struggle between man and ghosts for survival instinct and death, giving people the horror of a unique aesthetic temperament and interest.

And Poe created the same effect-beauty terror of death in *Ligeia*. In *Ligeia*, it writes a story about an unsurpassed beautiful, learned and capable ex-wife Ligeia. Only two or three months after she died, her husband bought a house temple in a sparsely populated place in Britain and married a young lady named Rovina. After their honeymoon, Rovina fell ill, and then something weird happened. First Rovina heard noises and found some abnormal draperies, but her husband couldn't hear. Second he found a seemingly fairly shadow walking past. Third there are a few red

SAP drops on the roof into Rovina's glass, and she died on the third day after drinking it. Things happened later pushed the terror into maximum. Late at night, the hero heard a whimper where the body was, and Rovina showed signs of revival. Then she got up, and the blanket wrapping the body fell off from the body, then the body slowly opened her eyes, the rolling, dark and blank eyes, originally not Rovina, but the previous wife Ligeia. Then the novel comes to an end. There are many stories describing dead bodies at all times and all over the world, but *Ligeia* gives the readers a sense of raw cold and sometimes makes people immersed in the mysterious thick terror atmosphere for a long time, which is scary but difficult for readers to resist its charm. Poe is under the influence of Romantic literature, which despises about ordinary people and things and is keen on strange weird things, also thinks "beauty" always has a sense of queer.

The death in these two works is unique and appealing, which doesn't mean the exact boundary, but creates the mysterious relationship between human and ghosts.

In *The Masque of the Red Death*, by his gorgeous style of writing Poe describes the opulence and hidden smell of death. Luxurious surface will not be the shadow of death at all times, and the indulgency of pleasure and the hidden fear, finally taking off the mask of death symbolizes the inevitable of death. The extraordinary of the story and the building of the atmosphere and the rendering of the colors all embodied in the Poe's description of the death theme have reached to the point. In his novels the use of these images such as ghost, dead, black cat and tomb, crow convey a thick grey sense of horror. In the tale *The Black Cat* it is about a man who will change his disposition much after getting drunk. Black cat was originally his loving pet, but later he feels disgust for the cat, and at last he can't resist it and dig out the eyes of the cat and killed it. When reading here, readers will feel a sense of horror and find that the man in the story has

psychological illness. The story has not come to the end. The protagonist eventually killed his wife by his evils hidden in his inner world, and as a result he ruined himself completely. In *The Black Cat*, Poe creates unexpected plot which gives the readers stronger, more horrible stimulus.

*Strange Tales from a Chinese Studio* writes about ghosts, foxes and demons. It definitely has the horrible appeal of foxes, demons and ghosts. *Strange Tales from a Chinese Studio* expresses the appeal of horror; at the same time has its own style characteristic. In the tale Lian Suo, Pu describes the meeting of human and ghosts lingering and touching, and in the tale Gongsun Jiunian describes the departure of human and ghosts melancholy and sad. Pu expresses the horror of death by adding a horrible atmosphere and describing the queer images to make people feel afraid.

In *Strange Tales from a Chinese Studio*, death does not mean the end of life, but a new beginning of life. In Pu's opinion, death in his tales is an escape from the reality. The hero who dies and comes back to life from ghosts is more attractive than the heroes in reality. Chinese believe that the immortality of the soul after death still can return after entering the hell, the dead process the unfinished business, and then into the next reincarnation samsara. Ghosts can live like the dead, not only have their normal desires, but can fall in love with people in this world and have babies with them.

They are many tales of Pu dealing with these subject matters. Like *The Magic Sword and the Magic Bag* (Nie Xiaoqian), Nie Xiaoqian is a ghost, but she gave birth to two sons with Ning Caicheng like a ordinary woman did. It is likely that people who came back from the dead had something unfinished in this world. They can't lay down the heart, so the ghosts of the dead returned to earth, attached to the body, thus resurrected. After they finished what they cared, they would die at ease. In the tale *Zhang Arui*, after Wang's wife died, the woman ghost Zhang Arui came

to the world to have a date with Wang. But Wang missed her wife so much; Zhang took the ghost of his dead wife to here. Wang with ghost wife had deep love in each other, so they resumed the previous incarnations. Qiao Sheng in *Lian Cheng*, who had gained his talents and reputation in an early age, was full of courage and passionately devoted to Lian Cheng. He inscribed a poem for Juan Tu which Lian Cheng embroidered and got her praise. Then he selected Lian Cheng as a spouse, missed her day and night and regarded her as “bosom friend”. But when her father wanted her to marry the son of a salt merchant, Lian Cheng felt so depressed that she was terribly sick. That she needed to cure her was the medicine made of men’s meat. After Qiao Sheng knew that, he cut off his heart without hesitation. After the death of Lian Cheng, Qiao Sheng personally condolences, and killed herself for being extremely sad. Although Qiao Sheng died, he was still sentimentally attached to Lian Cheng. He had been looking for Lian Cheng and did speak out: “you are dead, dare I be alive?” The sincerely love of the two finally touched the friend of Qiao Sheng who at that time was a officer in the nether world politics. He made them back to regenerate and married.

In Pu’s works, death neither means the disappearing of spirits nor the missing of bodies. People after death also have feelings and emotions, so death, in Poe’s opinion, is a lasting of life.

Allan Tate has remarked, “Everything in Poe is dead: the houses, the rooms, and the furniture, to say nothing of nature and of human beings” (Tate 99). Indeed, the atmosphere in Poe’s stories is always motionless and dead, and the characters are almost invariably living under the shadows of hunting death, like those in *The Masque of the Red Death*, *The Black Cat*, *Morella*, *Ligeia* and so forth. Even in a few cases in which the heroes obtain narrow escapes due to a good luck or intelligence, as in *The Pit and the Pendulum* and *A Descent into the Maelstron*, the



dread of death at all time prevails. The theme of death reaches such an insurmountable intensity in his stories.

*The Masque of the Red Death* takes place in a legendary haunted monastery that has been infiltrated by a malevolent villain who murders everyone who have sought safety there. An atmosphere of tension suffuses the whole abbey. Each person wants to hide their nervousness by masked ball. If the “Red Death” mummer is so frightening to them, he is so because they fear realities of time and death. Duke Prospero seals himself and a thousand followers into an abbey to escape the plague. Unfortunately, Prospero and his followers vainly combat the Red Death and die from the Red Death. In this story, human cannot break away from death. Poe emphasizes his theme by implying the foolishness of those who mistakenly think they might avoid death by such physical barriers as lofty walls and iron gates. In the abbey, Prospero has created an environment in which masked figures can throw off the fear of the approaching death and live a very happy life. The entire effect is influenced by the contrast between the joyous inside and the devouring death outside. Suddenly, the reveler, a tall, gaunt, masked figure appears. He is shrouded from head to foot in the blood-smeared “habiliments of the grave” (Poe 207), and his visage resembles that of a stiffened corpse. He aggravates man’s fear of hunting death and its horrors. The description that the figure “with a slow and solemn movement, as if more fully to sustain its role, stalked to and fro among the waltzers” dramatically shows the forever companion of death with life (206).

Another typical feature in Poe’s works is that he is fond of describing the death of beauties. In his essay *The Philosophy of Composition*, Poe prompts the idea of “death of beauty.” He claims that the greatest poetical topic in the world is the death of a beautiful lady. Of all his renowned works, many of them are dealing

with this topic, including poems like *The Raven*, *Annabel Lee*, and fictions like *Ligeia* and *Berenice*.

By analyzing Poe's works in detail, we can find that he has a set pattern for annotating the theme -"Death of Beauty". First, he often uses the first person to narrate and the narrator always appears to be the lover of the dead person. Secondly, the beauty exists in his novel often died at the beginning. Third, the narrator is trapped in deep miss and pain, so they always hallucinate or see unusual things. Take the poem *The Raven* for example, the protagonist is lamenting on his lost love, Lenore, on a stormy night, while a raven flies into his room. The narrator feels quite surprised and starts to make fun of the bird. Soon he becomes serious and superstitious, and turns into a quite different mood. He keeps asking the raven questions about the afterlife and receives "nevermore" as the answer all the time. By this self-torture he "experiences a phrenzied pleasure", and the answer is "the most delicious because the most intolerable of sorrow" (459).

Though when Poe makes his conclusion he is commenting upon poetry, we may also apply his idea of beauty to his fiction as well, for the unique sort of beauty that produced in his stories is born from the same resource.

As we mentioned above, there are differences on the theme of Death. The main reason of those is that they belong to different religions. Poe believes in Christianity. The main doctrines of Christian creeds are salvation and redemption. Besides, the immorality of soul, restraining themselves and suppressing sensual enjoyment are also the component of Christian creeds that are reflected in Poe's works. While Pu blends the features of Buddhism and Taoism. Buddhism believes that the lust is the root of suffering. If people have lust, they will talk and do which cause retributive justice and transmigration. Taoism, one of the most important

religions in China, advocates that people should divorce from reality and make pills of immortality to become an immortal.

In Christian doctrines, death comes from the Christians' own sin. People originally are deathless, and the ancestors Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden are immortal, only because Eve can't withstand the temptation of the devil (Satan). Then she and Adam ate the wisdom fruit and committed the unforgivable sin, thus receiving the punishment of god, since then they had lost their immortality. So death and "evil" are closely linked. They went to heaven or hell after death, and then waited for the end of the trial, so they are forever out of contact with the earth. In this sense, in the eye of western people, death means the forever separation from life. This is why Poe renders the atmosphere of terror in the scene of death.

Based on Christianity, soul after death will divorce from the earth forever, which can be manifested in "Buried" written by Edgar Allan Poe. It describes some characters in the tale who are buried alive. Lauder Rick's younger sister is put into the coffin before death. She awoke to climb out, which is also a form of "dead".

It's obvious that *Strange Tales from a Chinese Studio* has been influenced by Buddhist thoughts such as retributive justice and transmigration that can be found everywhere in Poe's works. Through these Buddhist ideas, Pu expresses the main idea in his works to punish viciousness and advice virtuousness, to influence people and guide custom.

The death in the *Strange Tales from a Chinese Studio* rarely makes people feel fear, because it is not the end of life, but a new starting point. It is inseparable with the impact of Buddhism. In Buddhism, "cycle" is a very important doctrine, referring to the life circulating in different present fields.

Retributive justice is a main doctrine of Buddhism. In Pu's works, there are some stories talking about Retributive justice. Jiangcheng in *Strange Tales from*

*Make-do Studio* tells a love story of scholar Gao and Jiangcheng. They are innocent playmates. After they grow up, they meet in a narrow alley and fall in love with each other. After marriage, they treat each other with sincere respect. And then Jiangcheng begins to swear at and beat her husband who is afraid of her. As a matter of fact, Jiangcheng, who was a mouse that bred by a monk in her previous life, was killed by scholar Cao unintentionally. So scholar Cao suffers retribution in his life. The purpose of this story is to exhort people to do good deeds. In the story, there is another Buddhist idea-transmigration. In Jiangcheng's previous life, she is a mouse. After her death, she turns to be a girl and takes revenge on scholar Gao.

In addition, in Pu's works, we can find the influence of Taoism. In *The Painted Skin*, the Taoist, one of the main characters in this story, kills the female ghost. When scholar Wang finds out the female ghost, he searches the Taoist and begs to be saved. The Taoist offers the scholar a fly-whisk, instructing him to hang it above the door to his bedroom. The fly-whisk that is used by Taoist can prevent ghosts and monsters. But the ghost tears it to pieces and kills scholar Wang. But in the end, the Taoist kills the ghost and brings out his bottle gourd, uncorks it and sucks the smoke that is changed by the ghost's corpse. The whole story has a clear imprint of Taoism. Fly-whisk, wooden sword and bottle gourd are Taoist tools that can exorcize ghosts.

Death is an eternal motif under writers' pen. Ever since the dawn of humanity, death has become a kind of taboo. Death is an inalienable right to life, liberty and happiness and makes people fill with fear from the bottom of their heart. Fear of death is common with death view of things in Pu Songling's and Poe's novels. However, their consciousness of death has similarities and differences due to a deep imprint of Chinese and western culture. Pu Songling's death can be transcended, to continue life through death; While Poe regarded death as final

pursuit to lead to the shore, which is Paramount. Pu Song-ling and Poe analyze the inner world of people when facing death from the perspective of literary and peel away the most profound, secretive feelings of man's sub consciousness to people, and in turn, allows the readers to know the world and themselves from the understanding of the works.

## 2. Similarity and Difference of Beauty

“In every glimpse of beauty presented, we catch, through long and wild vistas, dim bewildering visions of a far more ethereal beauty beyond” (Poe 18). Therewith, Allan Poe traces beauty in a level that no longer bears the imprint of a live being anchored in worldly necessities and resides beyond the visible realms.

The fundamental idea of beauty is expressed and defined as follows, however it remains unidentifiable in the end: on the one hand, there is a universal human desire for a transcendental real called beauty, and on the other, there is an earthly real that is immanent to the human since it is located inside a portion of the brain. Poe therefore acts as a bridge between the natural world and the supernatural in his writings.

Many of Poe’s short stories exhibit an unflinching interest in love and beauty. Edward Wagenknecht comments that Poe’s conception of beauty is more Gothic than that of classicism, and he is fond of quoting Bacon’s “There is no exquisite beauty without some strangeness in the proportion” (Wagenknecht 143). Yet the beauty which the writer seeks is not sensuous but supernal. Meanwhile, in his thinking about love, he sees love as a manifestation of supernal beauty and a link between human and divinity. Poe idealizes the vulnerability of woman, a portrayal that extends into his fictions such as *Ligeia* and *The Fall of the House of Usher*.

Even so, Poe can hardly be called a love-idolator, for he insists upon viewing love in its relationship to the other values of life (174).

Poe's *Ligeia* is a story that after the first wife of the protagonist died, he is unable to endure the depressing loneliness of living in the abandoned building where he formerly shared a home with *Ligeia*. After several months, he purchased a place when he is wandering in a weary and aimless state, and he repairs the place, one of the wildest frequented parts of the fair England, which he shall not name. He married Lady Rowena, a stunning woman with light hair and blue eyes who had never forgotten *Ligeia*. The Lady Rowena was suddenly struck down with an illness after the second month of his marriage. Her recuperation was sluggish, and then a series of odd occurrences occurred. In his eyes, the corpse belongs to *Ligeia*. Poe narrated a similar beautiful lady in his work *Ligeia*.

“In stature she was tall and slender... in vain attempt to portray the majesty, the quiet ease, of her demeanor, or incomprehensible lightness and elasticity of her footfall...the raven-black, the glossy, the luxuriant and naturally-curling tresses...the delicate outlines of the nose...the same luxurious smoothness of surface” (*Ligeia* 2).

In the husband's eyes, *Ligeia* is an art object: *Ligeia*'s hair reveals the “full force of the Homeric epithet, ‘hyacinthine’”; her skin of “rivaling the purest ivory” and her “marble hand” highlight the beauty beyond anything else; her nose evokes the “graceful medallions of the Hebrews”, and her chin is compared with the “contour which the God Apollo revealed but in a dream, to Cleomenes, the son of the Athenian”. More than comeliness, *Ligeia* represents divinity as the husband describes her as “an airy and spirit-lifting vision more wildly divine”.

Rowena is the blonde, blue-eyed beauty in *Ligeia*, while *Ligeia* is the clever, dark-haired, dark-eyed lady. They are both beautiful. Rowena and *Ligeia* are nearly like the two sides of every woman.

In *The Fall of the House of Usher*, the emphasis through the story is placed on the narrator's perception of the frightening house and of Roderick rather than on Madeline. However, Madeline plays a powerful and independent role, especially compared to her brother Roderick.

An example of this would be Roderick's physical description: "eyes large, liquid, and luminous beyond comparison", "a nose of a delicate Hebrew model", a "finely moulded chin" (*The Fall of the House of Usher* 2) etc; whereas Madeline is seen as a shadow, caught hobbling with "retreating steps" only once, and she is even described as having a "striking similitude between the brother and sister" (*The Fall of the House of Usher* 5).

Poe was following popular Gothic fiction traditions in *Berenice*, a genre that had been popular among American and British readers for several decades. Berenice, whose beauty evokes such high exclamations from Egaeus that it is compared to "sylph amid the shrubberies of Amheim" and "Naiad among its foundations", wins no love from her cousin and fiancé but impresses him with her "spectrum of the teeth" instead (*Berenice* 5). When Berenice is stricken, the narrator reports that "a fatal disease, fell like the simoon upon her frame, and, even while I gazed upon her, the spirit of change swept over her, pervading her mind, her habits, and her character, and, in a manner the most subtle and terrible, disturbing even the identity of her person." (*Berenice* 5) Ironically, Berenice is betrothed only after she is fatally ill, and Egaeus is obviously repelled by visible signs of Berenice's illness. When he is overcome with emotion, he becomes corpse like: as the narrator reads the words of Ebn Iaiat in *Berenice*. Egaeus desires for death after seeing her fangs and hideous grin before vanishing from the reader's view and into the space created by the big ellipsis. In the story of *The Black Cat*, an unnamed narrator has a strong affection for pets until he perversely turns to abusing them.

For example, in *The Black Cat*, it sends cold shivers down our spines when “I approached and saw, as if graven in bas relief upon the white surface”, the only remains of the fire that takes place right after “I” hang Pluto, “the figure of a gigantic cat”, the impression of which “was given with an accuracy truly marvelous” (*The Black Cat* 4), and it even appears unreasonably bloodcurdling that the story ends with the wife’s corps exposed “greatly decayed and clotted with gore” and the cat’s reappearance “with red extended mouth and solitary eye of fire” (*The Black Cat* 8); Poe acclaims that imagination gleams from every page, there is no doubt that he himself is a genuine expert in vividly exhibiting his world of imagination to create the beauty.

Although Poe expresses interest in love and beauty, as Fain has noted that women are generally regarded as less important than men, but it is difficult to see how they could play a larger role than they do in his tales. In fact, Poe portrays these beautiful women in order to provide a background for the bitter experiences of the heroes. Poe also supplies his philosophy of beauty: “When, indeed, men speak of beauty, they mean, precisely, not a quality, as is supposed, but an effect—they refer, just to that intense and pure elevation of soul—not of intellect, or of which I have commented, and which is experienced in consequence of contemplating the beautiful” (Weeks 14). Poe draws inspiration for the sensation of beauty in all its tragic extremity from the death of a beautiful woman, which only helps to sate Poe’s creative ambitions. Pu had an outstanding technique at describing women’s beauty. In *The Magic Sword and the Magic Bag*, the heroine Nie Xiaoqian is a beautiful female ghost who died at the age of 18 and was buried in an old temple. The description of Nie’s beauty is from the words of another elder female ghost: “Why, you are looking pretty as a picture today! If I were a young man, I’d be head over heels in love with you!” (*The Magic Sword and the Magic*



*Bag 2*). Later, the hero Ning had saved her from the evil ghost and brought her home, “Ning’s mother had to admit herself that she was very charming. Nie waited on his mother morning and evening, bringing water for her to wash with, busying herself with house-hold chores, trying to please her in every way she could. [...] and with the passage of time she grew fond of her and gradually came to think of her as her own daughter. She ceases to regard her as a ghost” (*The Magic Sword and the Magic Bag* 10). Pu used the mother’s reactions to portray the beauty and tender of Nie. The description was not specific but gave the readers some space to imagine “their own Nie”.

In the story *The Laughing Girl*, the appearance of Yingning is stunning. At the first time, the hero Wang Zifu met her, he was so attracted by her and could not move his eyes. “She had the prettiest face imaginable, with a great beaming smile. Wang stared at her utterly captivated, mindless of the usual rule of modesty and propriety.”(*The Laughing Girl* 1) Besides the literal beauty on the appearance, Pu had another favorite kind of beauty for his heroines - “naive and innocent”. In *The Laughing Girl*, there are two characters of Yingning that showed her laughter, her naive and innocent. Yingning’s ghost mother described her as “she is sixteen years old but silly as a child ... she’s a bright cheerful child.” (*The Laughing Girl* 6). Even the hero Wang Zifu who was fascinated by Yingning “was angry with her for being too naive, but there was no help for it” (*The Laughing Girl* 6). A woman being too naive is not a bad thing in the old days, for one of the women’s virtue is un wisdom and men did not expect their wives to be so talented. Women’s job was only to obey the husband and raise the children. Later, when Wang visited her at her home, the author wrote “after some time, there were giggles at the door”. Then there was a “great tittering as the maid pushed her in, covered her mouth all the time to try and keep from laughing”. Later on, “Yingning controlled her laughter

difficultly ... which sent Yingning off into another fit of laughter”. At the end of their meeting, ... off they (Yingning and the maid) went together, Yingning stuffed her sleeve into her mouth until she got outside, where she burst into a hearty fit of laughing (*The Laughing Girl* 7). The laugh of Yingning is a very famous and unique character among other heroines. Her laugh represents a women’s free character that no feudal codes could restrain. For a certain degree, Pu had revealed his appreciation for unrestricted girl. It’s a great improvement for a writer like Pu to have this kind of enlightened awareness.

Pu was actually not a narrow sensualist. From a certain point of view, Pu’s view on the appearance of women was dialectical, that is, whether for beautiful women or unattractive women, his attitudes were both praiseful and rejective at the same time. Throughout his whole tales, Pu had a mixed view for beautiful women. Although this kind of female image occupies a large proportion in quantity, and it expresses the author’s aesthetic pursuit for female’ appearance, Pu also wrote many stories to warn people not to be confused by beauty. And those who obsessed with beauty will eventually be punished. Like the famous stories *The Painted Skin*, a grim-faced evil spirit who put on the well-painted human skin painted and dressed up as a beloved beauty. She juggled all kinds of deceptive means in order to allure human and eat their hearts. Later, the evil spirit was saw through by a Taoist priest, he used a wooden sword to force her revealing her true face and finally died by the sword.

Pu is very interested in love and beauty. Most stories of Pu relate to the theme of love, which adequately embody the writer’s achievement in ideology and art and are well received by readers. We can also divide Pu’s female images into two categories: one is good wives such as Yingning; the other is female ghosts such as Nie Xiaoqian. From these female images, we can know the ideal female image in

Pu's heart is having an attractive appearance with wide knowledge and defying female virtue.

*The Laughing Girl in Strange Tales from a Chinese Studio* is a masterpiece singing of love. Like Eleonora, Yingning stands for young, incomparably beautiful and worshipping love. Wang Zifu, the hero of this story, who loves Yingning at first sight. Wang then took Yingning to his own home. Wang and Yingning were soon married. The family lived happily together ever after. Comparing with Eleonora, the love of Yingning is sweet and happy. Wang Zifu is not only faithful in love but strives to make a progress in his studies.

Some female images in *Strange Tales from a Chinese Studio* are similar to those in Poe's works, which create a physical threat to the male. *The Painted Skin* talks about a young beauty who meets Scholar Wang in the street and follows him to his house to live with him together. When Scholar Wang indulges in happiness, he finds the beauty is a frightful demon with green face and jagged, sawlike teeth. After the beauty finds that Scholar Wang has discovered her lie, she kills him and eats his heart. The wife of Scholar Wang has the scholar's second brother run to tell the Taoist. The Taoist kills the female ghost and recommends a man who can save Scholar Wang. When Wang's wife finds the man who is a beggar, the man says "Any man could be your husband. Why bring him to life?" and hacks up phlegm until it filled his cupped hand, then holds it up to Chen's face, saying "Eat it." (*The Painted Skin* 6) In order to save her husband, she forces it down. Finally, phlegm turns into a human heart and Scholar Wang is rescued. In this story, Pu portrays two female images: one is the beauty who makes Scholar Wang suffer physical threat; the other is Wang's wife who gives no thought of her husband's forsaking and saves her husband and family. It is different from Poe's *Berenice*, which makes

Berenice die and Egaeus fear. Scholar Wang learns lessons from this matter that he lives with the ghost and is killed by her and then comes back to life.

Like Morella and Legiea, Miss Yingning in *Strange Tales from a Chinese Studio* is not only a perfect lover, she is pure, kind, lively, and full of the charming charm of a girl. At the same time, after marrying Wang, she is also a perfect wife. She understands life, filial to her elders, loyal to her husband, smart and witty. Miss Yingning does the same as Morella and Legiea do about this. But the husband of Wang Zifu does not eager to escape from his wife. On the contrary, he works hard in order to pass the examination. In *The Laughing Girl*, Yingning uses her wisdom to make her family happy and rich, but Morella's and Legeia's wisdom leads to their broken families.

All in all, Poe and Pu portray some female images that have the similar characters, but these characters lead to different stories to happen. Although both write the beauties and their love, Poe pays attention to the heroes' experience and the change in the heroes' attitudes towards heroines, while Pu attaches importance to the sweet love between the beauties and their lovers. Though their feelings go through hardships, they have a happy-ending.

In Poe's works, Poe confers more prestige on women, in other words women have greater wisdom than men. However, in the end, with the heroines' death this prestige is broken up. Comparing with Poe's works, in Pu's stories, which is different from Poe's. In order to highlight the ghost's critical writing, *The Painted Skin* employs both the *Zhiguai* and *Chuanqi* styles of writing. Pu encourages faith in karma and punishment and meant the narrative to be seen as a metaphor of human desire and its unfavorable effects. It also reflects women having a low social status in the male-dominated society.

## **C. Comparing Similarities and Differences from the Perspective of Narrative**

Narrative perspective is an important concept well concerned in the literature field, referring to which narrator a novel chooses, and which perspective the narrator chooses to tell the story. An author, through choosing proper narrator and controlling the narrative perspective, can guide readers into the world of novel in exactly the way he wants, so the choice of narrative perspective can reflect the effect an author decides to achieve.

### **1. Similarity and Difference in the Narrative Point of View**

Generally, novels will have a narrative perspective, and the narrative perspective is mainly operated through the narrator. That is, the person used by the author when expressing his intentions. There are generally three persons narrative perspectives, which includes the first person perspective, the second person perspective, and the omniscient third person perspective. Each perspective has its own advantages, and it is better to express the author's ideas by flexibly switching various perspectives or using them in combination. The first-person narrative is employed universally in Poe's Gothic fictions, with which the narrator usually uses the form of "I", or sometimes "we" to deliver the plot of story. In this occasion, the narrator is frequently the protagonist, who relates the events he is experiencing at that time, or recounts the recollections he had experienced, and the narrator may be just a witness of the major plot. The narrator, in second-person narrative, often tell the story with the form of "you" assuming the reader as a character in this story. This type of narrative point of view is infrequently adopted in most literary

narratives. The narrator, in the story of the third-person narrative mode, refers to all the characters as “he”, “she”, “they”, or “it”. The narrator may be an anonymous and non-personal entity, or a person who doesn’t get involved in the story, or in other words, is not a character within the story. The third-person narrative is a mode employed commonly in literature, and the third-person narrative can fall into two categories: subjective narration or omniscient narrative, which will express the internal thoughts of characters, and the objective narration, also called limited narrative, describing the actions of characters alone, instead of their feeling or thoughts.

### **a. Use of First-person Point of View**

In the Chinese classical fiction first-person narrative appeared early in Tang Dynasty Romances, which can be illustrated like this: “the narrator of the novel exists in the fictitious world and the first-person narrator, like any other characters, should be one character in the world. The worlds of characters and narrator should be coherent” (Luo 316). The first-person point of view can be divided into two types: one can be a minor character or a witness telling all events; the other can be a protagonist which plays a central role in the fiction. For instance, the first-person in Chinese classical fiction to mean “I”. In the Tang dynasty romances, the uses narrator, on hand, the minor character in the fiction, witnesses all the events and first-person point of view to narrate the story. “I” function as a witness telling the events of getting an ancient mirror and getting rid of goblins. However, sometimes a story told in the first person is necessarily limited to what the narrator has seen, heard, or surmised. So the narrator takes a transition from first-person point of view to third-person point of view which can make the whole story more believable and

compensate the limit of first-person narrative. On the other hand, the narrator can also be a protagonist in the story and uses first-person narrative to tell the story. Here, first-person “I” is used to record the narrator’s mental activities and to state the other people’s activities and surroundings too.

Turning to *Strange Tales from a Chinese Studio*, we can see that in almost 500 short stories, few follow the stylistic feature of Tang Dynasty romances - the use of first-person narrative but the narrative effects are clear and thorough. The most typical one *Stealing a Peach* starts with:

“When I was a boy, I went up to the prefectural city of Jinan to take an examination. It was the time of the Spring Festival, and, according to custom, on the day before the festival all the merchants of the place processed with decorated banners and grums to the provincial yamen. This procession was called Bringing in the Spring. I went with a friend to watch the fun” (*Stealing a Peach* 1).

And next, the narrator went on to tell some information about the performance of peach theft with first-person narrative “I, the youth” and used the external focalization on the conjuring performance, indicating the child joy and interest and excitement from beginning to the end of the story. Another example:

“There was a huge crowd milling about, and ahead of us, facing each other to the right and left of the raised hall, sat four mandarins in their crimson robe. I was too young at the time to know who they were. All I was aware of was the hum of voices and the crashing noise of the drums and other instruments” (*Stealing a Peach* 2).

The narrator described the scene from the youth’s view that the children themselves were too young to understand everything. The narrator uses “I” to remind the reader that they were young and knew little about the performers. In their mind, the whole performance was filled with mystery and strangeness. Thus

we can see that in the first-person narrative, the narrator appears in the novel as “I” or “me”. While giving up the benefit of omniscience, the narrator gains the reader’s respect by adopting the persona of “I”. With first-person narrative, the narrator creates an immediate sense of reality and sincerity. Because we are listening to the testimony of someone who present at the events described, we inclined to trust the narrator and to enter into experience.

From above we can see how Pu Songling applied first-person narrative to his works, though he was not that skillful. By contrast, the American writer Allan Poe is a master of first-person point of view and consistently developed it. In his *The Black Cat*, I, the narrator, was once a person renowned for his kindness and docility. He was extremely fond of animals and has a compassionate heart. When he got married, he started gathering all sorts of pets and breeding them with his wife. For example:

“I grew, day by day, more moody, more irritable, more regardless of the feelings of others, I suffered myself to use intemperate language to my wife. At length, I even offered her personal violence. My pets, of course, were made to feel the change in my disposition. I not only neglected, but ill-used them” (*The Black Cat 2*).

In the fiction, the narrator always used “I” to narrate the events. There are about two reasons to shorten the distance between readers and the narrator and what “I” see, feel and hear is usually more reliable than the other. More importantly, this kind of narration can arouse the readers’ emotion, making them trust the story and identify with the narrator. In the fiction, Ligeia had almost no voice and she was always “watched” by the people. Maybe readers feel alienated from and unfamiliar with Ligeia at first but later their emotion shifts when they finish the story and they understand the tragic fate of her and cannot help showing sympathy



for her. The narrative voice comes from the narrator “I”, it can be found from the fiction that “I” represents all the people living in the home except Ligeia. The arrangement indicates the conflicts between home and Ligeia. In *The Fall of the House of Usher*, the narrator “I” has to pass a very long way to the House of Usher. The mansion is owned by his intimate friend, Roderick Usher, who is suffering from a mental illness and has privately asked the narrator to come.

“A letter, however, had lately reached me in a distant part of the country--a letter from him-which, in its wildly importunate nature, had admitted of no other than a personal reply. The manuscript gave evidence of nervous agitation. The writer spoke of acute bodily illness ... and of an earnest desire to see me, as his best” (*The Fall of the House of Usher 2*).

As a member living in this house, the narrator heard or witnessed all the events from beginning to the end. When telling the story, he can be a witness narrating the story introspectively, so the technique of first-person witness is used which is usually classified in the first-person introspective narration. In this course of narration the narrator “I” traced the past memories or experienced the past events. As a rule, the first-person witness should know everything about the story. Sometimes, the narrator hides somewhere watching so-called “I”, experience all the events and this is inner viewpoint which limits the reader’s understanding the events, characters, the plot, development and the ending of the story. Therefore, it creates suspense and arouses the reader’s curiosity and desperation to know the truth. It aims to highlight the dramatic effect that readers would take a tumble when finishing the novel and knowing the truth.

The story ending of “death” or “living dead” takes readers and the narrator to walk into that dim, long-deserted and dust-covered room to feel the tense and surprise which the resolution to a series of suspense brings. It seems that readers

are experiencing all the horrible events vividly. Poe can enhance the character's uniqueness owing to the first-person narrative. In a large number of his short works, Poe employs the first-person point of view. First-person point of view gives the narrator authority over the story and lets the reader see the world from his or her perspective. The narrator frequently describes his or her own morbid behavior in such detail that it makes clear just how insane they truly are. They become unable of distinguishing their own lunacy at that point.

### **b. Use of Third-person Point of View**

Sometimes first-person narrative results in difficulties which may strike us when we try to write stories ourselves. For example, the narrator must be present at all the essential events, or the author must invent a way of supplying the information. This can lead to the contrivances we have all come across in our reading of fiction - overheard conversations, letters opened by mistake - that strain credibility. Coincidences occur in fiction as in life, but the writer who relies too heavily on coincidence to extricate the hero from the conflict risks losing the reader's trust. Yet it presents another difficulty. Ordinarily, we expect that the narrator should be a good judge of character and be reasonably gifted with words; a stupid or inarticulate narrator seems a contradiction in terms. But what of the storyteller who is dishonest or is deluded by other characters in the story? Should such a storyteller be barred from the role of narrator? Not always. A gifted writer may create some of the most telling effects when the reader grasps the truth that a narrator is deceitful or fails to understand the implications of his own tale. To avoid these problems, the writer may elect to have a minor character tell the major character's story. Obviously, first-person narrative has its own limits. The reader's

understanding of the story is sometimes restricted to the knowledge of the narrator and cannot completely and objectively comprehend the development of the story. This, meanwhile, can be supplemented by the choice of other types of point of view.

The third-person narrative can be a good choice. The narrator of the third-person narrative does not really appear; instead, all characters are referred to as “he”, “she”, “it”, or “they”. The narrator has the privilege of knowing everything that occurs, or at least what he chooses to know, including not just what really happened but also what the characters are thinking. There are three types: omniscient, limited omniscient, and dramatic or objective.

Authors may at times feel the need for greater scope than first person point of view affords. They aspire to be the all-knowing narrator, free to travel and offer commentary whenever they like and not constrained by space, time, or character. Such a point of view is called third-person omniscient. The narrator, evidently the author, sees all, knows all, and, presumably, tells all. While the omniscient point of view might seem at first glance the most flexible and functional, the author who adopts it pays a price. The reader may very well feel remote from the action. Certainly the reader will not as easily identify with the protagonist. The story might be told from the limited-omniscient point of view if the author does not want to give up omniscience but yet wants the reader to identify more with the protagonist. Although continuing to write in the third person, the author limits himself or herself to what is known by one character. John Steinbeck uses the limited-omniscient point of view with notable success in *The Chrysanthemums*. One further method of telling the story should be mentioned here - the objective point of view. By using this style, the author observes events from a distance, much like a camera, without penetrating the thoughts of the characters. Without any

authorial commentary, the reader witnesses the incidents unfold. Such a method makes great demands on the reader, but at the same time promises great rewards, since it offers us a great share in the creative process.

If we say third-person narrative aims to of view tends to reveal the metal world of characters, tell stories related to history and character's life. The narrator usually observes outside the story, like the omniscient God and reports the events more objectively. This technique is appropriate to reflect every bit of life and history. For example, novels in Chinese Ming Dynasty - *The Romance of the Three Kingdoms* and *Outlaws of the Marsh* were narrated by third-person point of view. It was convenient for the narrator to do so and it is objective to reflect the depth and width of history. In *Strange Tales from a Chinese Studio*, third-person narrative is the dominant, such as "she said", "he said", "the woman said" and "the child asked", etc. Because many stories concern ghosts, fox fairy, and goblins which do not exist in reality, these stories will lack of authenticity and the author cannot show his emotion and attitude toward life and the world if they are narrated with first point of view. The narrator took the omniscient and limited omniscient point of view to depict a beautiful picture of ghosts and fairies and perform highly developed artistic skills and achievement.

Comparing the techniques of third-person limited omniscient narrative used by Pu Songling and Edgar Allan Poe, we find that they could exercise their imagination bravely and create their characters to their heart's content without the restraint of "factual recording". Actually, they were recording the "lives on the paper", that is, the fictional characters, which can better avoid the negative comments resulting from direct narration. The two writers successfully coordinated the conflicts between "factual recording" and "imagination". And the appearance of this narration symbolizes the challenge to the traditional "factual recording."

## 2. Similarity and Difference in the Narrative Time

Like music or movies, literature is a sequential kind of art; a literary work develops through time, just like any other verbal output. Language is a temporal phenomenon, yet its purpose is to express and indicate. Time itself is one of the things that may be represented. Any narrative literature contains in itself the narrating time and story time. A narrative work is a complex entity with different time-present forms. Time is an important focus of modern narratology, just as Todorov pointed out that the narrating time is linear time and the story time is stereoscopic time. In the story several events may happen together but in the discourse they will have to be narrated one by one, thus, a complex image is reflected in a line. Narrating time is also called “textual time”. “Story time refers to the natural time state when the story happens, whereas the narrating time means the time state which the stories represent in actual narrative text.” The difference between the two is very complex. Genette said, “we find a represented time in a text we are identifying if not an actual narrative at least a narrative trait or structure. But we come closer to the spirit of narrative temporality proper when we define it as the use of the time of the representation as an icon of the represented time. By virtue of this mapping of one time into the other, the textual time becomes a representational time, and the fabula time becomes a represented time. Things might stop there, and the two temporal sequences would overlap in a perfectly homogeneous way. But we must remember that fabula time is also represented semantically by means of the linguistic chain. The mapping of fabula time into textual time is governed by the semantics of the text, to the extent that, far from coterminous homogeneity being the true, no two texts present the same temporal formula. The interplay of iconicity and semantized time ensures that the

represented temporality is distorted in a manifold of ways and degrees. What we experience in a narrative text is therefore not the fabula time as such, but a represented fabula time, what we call the story time” (Genette 268). Typically, narratives advance in an indexical way that denotes time passing. However, this is simply a generalization, and they occasionally veer sharply in the other direction of temporal growth. They could also skip forward, breaking the flow, or travel at different speeds in one way or another, shortening or lengthening the narrated time. All this represented the complicated relationship between the narrating time and the story time. The time order causes great attention and has many variations. Here, anachrony appears and it is defined as a temporal distortion between the time pattern of the story and the time pattern of the fabula and it includes two types: analepsis and prolepsis respect to the-an anachronical event may belong either to the past or to the future with events which form its immediate context respectively. Besides, there exist duration and frequency which can also better explain such relation.

Based on the typical western narrative theory, we can analyze the classical Chinese novels in the same way and release some differences and similarities between Chinese and western novels in terms of narrative time. Here we still take Pu Songling’s *Strange Tales from a Chinese Studio* and Edgar Allan Poe’s Gothic fictions for example.

### **a. Narrative Duration**

Narrative duration or speed is defined by Genette as “the connections between the variable duration of these events or story sections and the pseudo-duration (in fact, length of text) of their telling in the narrative.” As with Genette’s paradigm

generally, this definition ignores the intricacy of discourse systems. At the textual level, time may be fictionalized; the narration itself can be considered a narrative in and of itself, and the period of the fictitious time that surrounds it can be dramatized. It's ambiguous if Genette's "narrative time" refers to the idealized reading time or the depicted period during which the narrative discourse takes place. But one of his contributions to narratology is that he created four movements in regard to narrative duration which can be explained by the following formulas: with ST designating story (fabula) time and NT the pseudo-time of narrative:

Scene:  $NT=ST$

Pause:  $NT=n, ST=0$ . Thus:  $NT > ST$

Summary:  $NT < ST$

Ellipsis:  $NT=0, ST=n$ . Thus:  $NT < ST$ .

The formulas seem to work out perfectly. However, under our definition, these movements would be those of the narrative text rather than the actual story, which necessitates a number of conceptual changes.

Such division is necessary and feasible for analyzing the novels, while for the short stories only scene and summary can help perfectly. The feature of "short" determines that the writer can only selectively arrange the story and he may use summary as well as ellipsis. Besides, "pause" in fact can still be considered as a static scene. Genette holds the view that until the 19th century; summary had been the natural transition between two scenes, just like the setting of a stage, so it is the best connective organization of narrative novels. Indeed, summary is an effective strategy to coordinate sceneries, narrate stories and adjust narrative speed and rhyme. However, in short stories, typically in short classical Chinese novel, summary is the body of narrative discourse besides the functions mentioned above.

Short story has its own problems: on one hand, it is short and it expresses ideas in limited time and space; on the other hand, it aims to reflect the abundant social life filled with profound meanings. Under such circumstance, some western short stories usually capture one aspect from real life and focus on theme and characters in it while classical Chinese novels usually take the way of “condensing” and “summarizing” the story, combined with narration to convey meaning. It is just like a plant in a flowerpot, with its own roots, stems, branches, leaves and flowers and it is cute and exquisite and complete enough to be the microcosm of real social life rather than a certain scene. In *Strange Tales from a Chinese Studio*, the stories are narrated diachronically just like history recording. For example, in *Past Lives* the story told us Li Xiaolian’s life experience from a government official, horse, dog to a snake with only 600 words.official, horse, dog to a snake with only 600 words. In *The Magic Sword and the Magic Bag*, the narrator told us the story of a ghost named Nie Xiaoqian who has been enslaved by a hideous demon, preventing her timely reincarnation. The demon uses her to seduce young men - Ning Caichen, whom the demon then devours. Instead, she instead falls in love with him. By excavating Nie’s remains under a nearby poplar tree and transporting them for an appropriate burial close to his homeland, Ning Caichen intends to assist Nie. When he does this, Nie shows up and offers to accompany him on the way home. She returns his favor by moving in with the family as his sworn sister. The Yaksha-Demon arrives seeking retribution, but Ning Caichen traps it with the help of the magic bag. Three kids are born to Nie and Ning. All three sons ended up having successful careers as mandarins. Obviously, it is the novel in which the narrator chose the way of summarizing as the dominant, regardless of the trivial details concerning love affairs. In this way, Pu attached great importance to the



summary of many tales in *Strange Tales from a Chinese Studio* and many bear historical profundity while developing with the passage of time.

Influenced by the ancient Chinese Eight-legged essays and historiographic literature, *Strange Tales from a Chinese Studio* has fixed narrative mode. Almost 200 biographical novels in *Strange Tales from a Chinese Studio* started with the summary of main characters in reality and its mode unfolds like this: some person, some place, and some characteristics. In the tale of *Butterfly*, it said:

“Luo Zifu was born in Bin County, and lost both his parents at an early age. When he was eight or nine years old he went to live with his Uncle Daye, a high official in the Imperial College and an immensely wealthy man. Daye had no sons of his own and came to love Luo as if he were his own child.” (*Butterfly* 1)

At the beginning of the story, Pu introduced the main character, and minor characters which plotted a “setting” for later scenic description and narrative summary. The setting on which the narrator depended to enrich the character’s personality and push forward the development of the whole story and it is a necessary part of the novel. Summary is a unique narrative feature of short stories but it is unacceptable for us to see a novel full of summaries and goes to the extreme to pursue “perfection” in “conciseness”. After all, narration is different from telling stories. Stories without the narrative scenes and descriptions are just summaries which are empty in content and dull in characters and cannot embody the writer’s talent and aesthetic interest. So sometimes the narrators should have a control on it. Pu had already realized that narrating time and story time were correlated and it was necessary to shorten or extend story time.

Turning to the scene, we have got a lot of comments. Pu consciously obeyed the stylistic features of novels: novels are different from historical records; it is unavoidable to fictionalize in the narrative novels and it can enhance the artistic

fascination of novel through describing scenes vividly in the fictitious way. The fascination of *Strange Tales from a Chinese Studio* partly lies in its vivid and subtle and flexible description of scenes. Moreover, summary and scene are mutually dependent and it is impossible to focus on scene description if summary is not used in narration. Whereas, summary will be lifeless if delicate description of scenes does not exist. Summary provides the basic foundation for scene; and scene is the actual distillation of it and scene description can exercise the readers' imagination. The transition between summary and scene in *Liao Zhai Tales* took the forms of dialogues. In *Strange Tales from a Chinese Studio*, there appeared many speeches which included many summarized events to compensate the limit of short stories. For example, in *The Laughing Girl*:

“I married into the Qin family”, replied the old lady, “I’ve no children at all of my own. There’s just a girl who was born to my late husband’s concubine. When my husband, Mr Qin, died, the girl’s mother, the concubine, remarried and left the girl here for me to bring up” (*The Laughing Girl* 6).

Several sentences explained clearly Yinnig’s life experience and her relation with Wang Zifu. Another example in *Living Dead*:

“One evening, as dusk fell, four strangers arrived at the inn and asked for lodging, only to be told by the landlord that every bed was taken. They protested that it was too late for them to journey on, and pleaded with him to take them in. Finally, after much pondering and hesitation, he said that he could perhaps offer them a place for the night, but that he feared it would not meet with their liking” (*Living Dead* 1).

This paragraph is a scene description as well as a summary, further explaining the mysterious journey mentioned in the previous paragraphs and unfolding the suspense the readers. Summary and scene should be necessary components of a

novel and have respective narrative functions. In classical Chinese novels, summary is the bone of a novel structure controlling the life of a novel and scene the narrative body of novel, being the flesh and blood of lives on the paper.

Compared with the classical Chinese short stories, the short ones in the west still have such narrative features. Allan Poe in his Gothic fictions paid special attention to the narrative duration too. Firstly, the narrator skillfully used “ellipsis” to narrate the minor events and time periods in characters’ life experience. Ellipsis can not only save the length of narrative text but is helpful for portraying the characters and projecting the main events. Poe tried ellipsis many times in their Gothic fictions. For example, in *The Black Cat*, an ellipsis exists between the time when everything seemed to be all right at first, until then he experiences a radical change of his disposition. Poe wrote:

“Our friendship lasted, in this manner, for several years, during which my general temperament and character - through the instrumentality of the fiend Intemperance - had experienced a radical alteration for the worse” (*The Black Cat* 2).

In *Berenice*, Egaeus and Berenice lived in the same mansion but in a different way. Poe wrote, “Berenice and I were cousins, and grew up together in my paternal halls. Yet differently we grew - I, ill of health, and buried in gloom - she, agile, graceful, and overflowing with energy” (*Berenice* 2).

Such ellipsis creates suspense which covers the whole story with a horrible and mysterious veil. Like Pu Songling, Poe was also good at describing scenes combined with summary. Look at the following examples, in the beginning of *The Fall of the House of Usher*, the narrator create the section to explain the setting of the story.

“During the whole of a dull, dark, and soundless day in the autumn of the year, when the clouds hung oppressively low in the heavens, I had been passing alone, on horseback, through a singularly dreary tract of country; ... with the first glimpse of the building, a sense of insufferable gloom pervaded my spirit. ... upon the bleak walls - upon the vacant eyelike windows - upon a few white trunks of decayed trees - with an depression of soul” (*The Fall of the House of Usher*1).

Such dim, bleak house stood in front of the readers, what about its host? Such scenic description provided the background for the appearance of Roderick Usher and at the same time, depicted a horrible and mysterious picture in Gothic novels. The narrator gained the effects of scenic narration. The dreadful event happens at the conclusion of the narrative. While a tornado howls around the phosphorescent walls of the outer house, Lady Madeline, who is still alive in reality, comes back and confronts her brother before falling upon him and ultimately sending them both to their deaths. Scrambling, the House of Usher plunges into the neighboring tarn. Readers may feel that terror and that tension every minute: grave-like house. The story ended with such a climax.

## **b. Narrative Order**

Stories usually happen in their own discourse. The natural order of events in the stories is chronological and always remains unchanged. But during narration, the usually controls the narrative and story time in several different ways for narrator special narrative purpose and the narrative order comes into being. The sequence of the events in the story is subject to numerous distortions. Anachronies are the name for the distortions. In literature, anachronisms are assessed in relation to a narrative reference point established by the sequential order of events rather

than the moment of enunciation (as, for example, verbal tense). An anachrony, according to our definition, is a brief divergence between the timelines of the fabula and the story. Anachronies come in two different forms. Depending on the events that make up its immediate background, an anachronistic occurrence may either be from the past or the future. The first type is known as a flashback or analepsis, while the second is known as a flashforward or a prolepsis. Anachronies are assessed in relation to a narrative reference point established by the sequential order of events rather than the moment of enunciation (as, for example, verbal tense).

Now we compare the classical Chinese novels with the western novels, both of which share some similarities and differences in narrative order.

In Chinese narrative literature, especially the classical Chinese, influenced by the historiography and romance, narrative time is almost equivalent to the story time. Many short stories from *Strange Tales from a Chinese Studio* were narrated in chronological order, and the choice of prolepsis and analepsis in *Strange Tales from a Chinese Studio* symbolizes the maturity of the classical Chinese novels. According to Wang Pin in *The Research on Narratology in Ancient Chinese Novels*, he said, “in the development of classical Chinese novels, the actual analepsis first appeared in *Strange Tales from a Chinese Studio*” (Wang 2) Stories in it usually have a complex plots and many “narrative heads” start together and one head must be handled by analepsis which begins with such words as “early”, “at the beginning” or a direct conversation. For example in *The Magic Sword and the Magic Bag*, Ning Caichen, who seeks refuge in an ancient temple, rebuffs the ghostly advances of Nie Xiaoqian. The ghost is scared of a journeying hero named Yan, who offers Ning Caichen a magical bag. Since this plot was not closely related to the whole story, the narrator used analepsis, inserting this plot into their

conversation for supplement. Besides, some stories in *Strange Tales from a Chinese Studio* were related to legal cases and the narration of these stories often has analepsis. It can support the framework of anticipation, intrigue, and suspense when it is present. For example in *Rouge*, the narrator had the analepsis of characters. Following the sequence of the story, readers may easily know that Big Mao is the murderer but the characters in the story did not know. Readers know the truth, which to some extent minimizes their expectations; on the other hand suspense appears among characters. Because characters in the story did know the truth, they would ask whether the real murderer would be punished and whether Mr. Zhang and Mr. Su would suffer from his sins. The narrative order leads us readers to the truth of the case quickly but the story order always hides the result until the last minute. Analepsis first sets suspense and then reveals it. This is true of western short stories. Analepsis has been considered as the traditional narrative method in the west. Poe in *The Black Cat*, *Berenice*, *Ligeia* and *The Fall of the House of Usher* exercised his skill of anachronies - analepsis. He successfully combined present, fragmented based past and future in the story to narrate events which were seemingly on one theme: love tragedy. Every event implied the inevitability of her tragedy. Poe took analepsis to hide suspense. When readers read the story, they may forget time or sometimes get an unexpected surprise. The narrator may lead them back sometimes to reconstruct the time order. Such narrative technique will leave readers some questions and suspense and enhance their thinking about the traditional narrative methods and force them to make judgment about the story. As an illustration, because the narrator of *Ligeia* adores Ligeia so deeply, he finds it difficult to forget her shadow. Throughout the remainder of his life, his buried lovely lady returns to him in the shape of fantasy. When Lady Rowena comes back to life and moves, the narrator knows that the spirit of his beloved Ligeia has

incarnated in the body of poor Rowena. Many years go through from Lady Ligeia to Lady Rowena. These gaps would arouse readers' interest to the end of story because there they found the answers to their questions.

Prolepsis refers to the future events narrated ahead of main events. According to Luo Gang, in western novels prolepsis is not frequent than analepsis but in classical Chinese novels the prolepsis is so popular that it bears the Chinese national characteristics (Luo 3). Yang Yi once pointed out too that prolepsis is the strong point of Chinese novels and Chinese writers should start a work with an overall control of predictability of probing into history and life experience of people rather than a detailed description of a specific character. Moreover Genette once made the similar conclusion that prolepsis was far less in the western novels. Take *Strange Tales from a Chinese Studio*, prolepsis mainly exists in the stories with the topic of retribution, for example the Taoist priest, ghost, goblin, or fox fairy usually exercises some prophecy on the ordinary people and later the prophecy comes off. It is possible development in the novel that such Taoist priest, ghost, goblin, or fox fairy can tell the fortune of ordinary people. And people's final destiny and the ending of the story will be out when readers finish reading. So, prolepsis does not reduce the readers' curiosity but arouse their interest and attention until the end of story. Such technique can reflect the narrator's attitude towards the world and life. It can further reflect the conception of retribution deeply rooted in the mind of Chinese people who always believe that all is predestined. Such "fatalism" once brought heated argument. However, it is just an artistic approach to explain the retribution and ghosts in Pu's Stange tales. By this approach, Pu aims to educate people. Such narrative technique reflects the particular cultures in a particular society.

## VI. Conclusion

This dissertation makes a rough comparison between Edgar Allan Poe's Gothic fictions and Pu Songling's *Strange Tales from a Chinese Studio* from five aspects: culture and literature, aesthetic value, plot, theme and narrative. It is not difficult to find:

Firstly, the dissertation analyzes the different cultural origins, living environment and national faith which lead to the different and similar aesthetic pursuit of the two works. Through interpretation of the human-oriented Western culture and ethic-oriented Eastern culture, the meanings and values of the two works are further studied, and in the meanwhile, it is conducive to promoting equal dialogue and communication between Eastern and Western Cultures. Literature, as a component part of national culture, also has this feature, that is, different national literatures have similarities. It can be said that either the Western Gothic fictions or Chinese tales of mystery and supernatural are horrible stories, readers may well imagine these novels' situations. These stories are writers' subjective conjecture to visionary world. So these universal classics fully prove the different national literature have common understanding similarities.

Secondly, the dissertation discusses aesthetic value of Pu's Strange tales and Poe's Gothic fiction. In reviewing the existing discussions of Chinese aesthetics and Western aesthetics in which Pu and Poe situate their aesthetic views, one can find that most of them have categorized the former as the expressive type, while the latter, mimetic. Through the synchronic as well as diachronic penetration into the connotations of the two terms in the texts of Pu and Poe, the finding is that, firstly, the unconventional aesthetics of Pu and Poe are in the impact of their different social background and personal experiences. Secondly, mimetic and expressive



aesthetics are both necessary and detectable in the literary works of the two fiction writers of different cultural background. Finally, the challenge to the conventional significations of expressive aesthetics and mimetic aesthetics indicates the non-fixation of aesthetic theories in the historical sense.

Thirdly, the dissertation holds the comparative study of Edgar Allan Poe's Gothic fictions and Pu Songling's *Strange Tales from a Chinese Studio* from their plot, theme, narrative art and other aspects. Since it is a parallel study, it is necessary to discover and study the similarities and correspondence between them. Therefore, emphasizing comparability is not only an important logical starting point of this dissertation, but also one of the important issues that this dissertation focuses on. From the analysis of their works of Poe's Gothic fictions and Pu Songling's *Strange tales*, we find that horror and grotesque are the peculiar ways of expressing the world in Gothic fictions. The cognitive value and aesthetic value of the world are also contained in it. In the form of deformation, exaggeration and magnification, it exposes various sins that destroy human nature, threaten human beings or degrade human beings, and in the exposure, it shows the ideological spirit of punishing evil and promoting good. Since the advent of Gothic fictions, its influence has gradually expanded, and it has continued to grow and develop, so that a strong Gothic tradition has been formed in American countries. By virtue of this quality, Gothic fiction makes people doubly alert to the tragedies caused by greed, injustice, crime and killing, which are tantamount to a wake-up call. The *Strange tales* contains abundant fiction elements, not only unique in plot, theme, and narration, etc., but also fully shows the artistic height it can reach at that time. Especially through the discussion on the themes of beauty, death and other aspects of narrative art that have always been neglected or understudied, the important value of *Strange Tales from a Chinese Studio* as narrative art is even more evident.

Meanwhile, it can be seen from the comparison that due to the influence of historical literature, strange tales have obvious objectified narrative features, and this objectified narrative feature has brought aesthetic appreciation to those classic texts. The artistic tension also leaves a lot of space for readers to imagine and think about art. This creative concept, which is highly respected by modern western fiction aesthetics, has already begun to emerge in the Chinese fiction creation, which shows the fact that Chinese fictions are not subjective narratives from the beginning.

Fourthly, although Poe's Gothic fictions and Pu's Strange tales are separated by more than a hundred years from the American and China, it is true that there is consistency in life ideals, aesthetic thinking, and artistic expression, which is a solid foundation for their dialogue and mutual understanding. And the differences shown in the commonality are exactly the unique factors of the two, and they are the representation of different cultural traditions. Not only such differences need mutual recognition and respect in equal dialogue, but also need mutual tolerance and understanding. Different countries and nations in China and the West aspire to have frequent cultural exchanges, which irrefutably proves that communication and understanding between qualitatively different cultures is entirely possible. Through this case study, we could seek the path to construct an ideal world literature of equality, diversity and mutual exchange, and to prove that Chinese and Western peoples still have common principles and the psychology of mutual understanding base although they have different beliefs and cultural traditions.

Fifthly, from a literary perspective, I also want to respond to the views of some Western scholars represented by Huntington who deliberately exaggerate the conflict and antagonism between Western and non-Western civilizations or cultures. Huntington stands on the standpoint of Western-centrism, especially emphasizes

and exaggerates the conflict and confrontation between China and the West, and believes that the relationship between countries and groups belonging to different civilizations is not only not close, but often confrontational. Dangerous conflicts in the future could occur under the interplay of Western arrogance, Islamic intolerance, and Chinese arbitrariness (Huntington 3). He is sensational, one-sided emphasis on differences, and attributes the political and economic factors that caused disastrous wars and even world wars among different nations to factors of civilization. He also aroused people's attention to the danger of the clash of civilizations, which will help to promote the dialogue of civilizations in the whole world (2). But in his bones he did not regard other peoples as an equal dialogue. He even ignored the positive aspects of seeking truth for good, opposing evil, loving peace, and longing for equality in the civilizations or cultures of other nations in the world. His words revealed fear and hostility to civilizations or cultures such as China. Therefore, the idea of not learning to respect the civilization or culture of any other nation, but deliberately trying to conquer or even destroy it is an irreparable fault, whose sin is no less than treating man as an animal (Elliott 142).

In the word, we find two points of thought from the comparative study of Poe's Gothic fictions and Pu's Strange tales. First of all, even although Poe's Gothic fictions and Pu's Strange tales are on the fringes of their respective literary history, they have shown strong vitality, and even squeezed into the ranks of mainstream literature. This proves that comparative literature often plays an irreplaceable and important role as "broadcaster" and "transmitter" in the history of literature. This fact shows that the growth point of literary novelty is often not in the center, but at the edge. The uninhibited edge is often the most active and exuberant place for the vitality of literature. The literature on the fringe is precisely the weak link in our previous research vision. Secondly, we should re-examine the

value of the fiction that wins by plot, and establish its due position in the history of literature. Since its birth, the fiction has roughly gone through three stages: from the emphasis on the storyline to the emphasis on the shaping of typical characters, and then to the emphasis on the psychological awareness of the characters. But for a long time, we have paid attention to the stage of forming typical characters, and often regarded this stage as a sign that the art of novels has changed from naive to mature, and used whether or not typical characters have been created as a criterion to measure the artistic level of novels. Once upon a time, Western modernist fictions featuring deconstructed stories and deconstructed characters were discriminated against and resisted by our research and criticism circles because they did not conform to the traditional aesthetic standards of typical character modeling. Now we no longer reject modernist fictions and many of these fictions have been written into the literary history.

In fact, in the garden of novel art creation, there should be a hundred flowers blooming, and one should not be forced to be the same. This is true of creation, and so is aesthetic appreciation. Storytelling is always the foundation of the fiction. From a conventional point of view, readers pay attention to storytelling firstly when reading a work. There are many factors that attract readers, but storytelling should always be one of the main factors. Poe's Gothic fictions have left readers with an extremely deep, unforgettable and intriguing impression not only by their bizarre and fascinating plots, but also by the fairly typical artistic images they portray. Of course, we are firmly opposed to blindly pursuing a quirky plot that makes no sense at all.

# References

## Main Books Cited

Pu Songling, *Strange Tales from a Chinese Studio* (Translated and edited by John Minford). London: Penguin, 2006.

Edgar Allan Poe, *The Collected Works of Edgar Allan Poe*. Wordsworth Editions Ltd, 2009.

## Other Works Cited

Allan Lloyd-Smith, *American Gothic Fiction: An Introduction*. Shanghai: Shanghai Foreign Language Education Press, 2009.

Anderson Madelyn Klein, *Edgar Allan Poe: A Mystery*. NY: F. Watts, 1993.

Allan Barr, *Pu Songling and the Qing Examination System*. Late Imperial China. 1986.

Allan Tate, *Our Cousin, Mr. Poe*. Robert Regan Englewood Cliffs. Poe: A Collection of Critical Essays. New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1967.

Ann Radcliffe, *On the Supernatural in Poetry*. New Monthly Magazine, 1826.

Aristotle, *Excerpts from Poetics*. *Literary Criticism: Plato to Dryden*. Ed. Allan H. Gilbert. Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1982.

Arthur H. Quinn, *Edgar Allan Poe: A Critical Biography*. New York: Cooper Square, 1969.

Ban Gu, *History of Han Dynasty: The Version of Song Period*, Yan Shigu (Note). Beijing: National Library Press, 2017.

- Beth Ann Bassein, *Women and Death: Linkage in Western Thought and Literature*. Westport: Greenwood Press, 1984.
- Cai Xiangzong, *Analysis and Criticism of Karma in Strange Tales from a Chinese Studio*, Pu Songling Research, 2004.
- Cao Shunqing, *History of Chinese and Foreign Comparative Literary Theory*. Shandong Education Press, 1998.
- Cao Shunqing et al. *A Theoretical Study of Comparative Literature*. Bashu Shushe, 2001.
- Chang Yaoxin, *A Brief History of American Literature*. Tianjin: Nankai University Press, 2008.
- Chuang-tzu, *Chuang-tzu with Notes and Translation*. Edited by Chen Guying. Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company, 2012.
- Darlene H. Unrue, *Edgar Allan Poe: the Romantic as Classicist*. International Journal of the Classical Tradition, 1995.
- David Punter, *The Literature of Terror-A History of Gothic Fictions from 1756 to the present day*. London and New York: Longman, 1980.
- Ding M. and A. M. Wang, *A Comparative Study of Allan Poe's Gothic Novels and Pu Song-ling's Supernatural Tales*. Journal of Changchun Normal University (Humanities and Social Sciences), 2008.
- Edgar Allan Poe, *The Raven and Other Writings*. New York: Aladdin Paperbacks, 2003.
- Edgar Allan Poe, *Sixty-seven Tales*. New York: Gramercy Books, 1985.
- Edgar Allan Poe, *The Works of Late Edgar Allan Poe*. Vols 4. Ed. Rufus W. Griswold. New York: B. B. MUSSEY&CO., 1850.
- Edgar Allan Poe, *The Selected Writings of Edgar Allan Poe*. New York: WW. Norton&Company, Inc., 2004.

- Edgar Allan Poe, *Essay and Reviews*. Ed. G. R. Thompson. New York: Library of America, 1984.
- Edgar Allan Poe, *The Collected Letters of Edgar Allan Poe* Vol. Eds. John W. John W. Ostrom, Burton R Pollin and Jeffrey A. Savoye. New York: Gordian Press, 2008.
- Edgar Allan Poe, *Complete Stories and Poems of Edgar Allan Poe*. New York: Doubleday Dell Publishing Group, 1966.
- Edgar Allan Poe, *Tales of Grotesque and Arabesque - Preface*. Edgar Allan Poe Society of Baltimore, 2016.
- Edgar Allan Poe, *The Philosophy of Composition*. Graham's American Monthly Magazine of Literature and Art, Philadelphia, 1846.
- Edgar Allan Poe, *Selected Writings of Edgar Allan Poe*. Ed. Edward H. Davidson. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1956.
- Edgar Allan Poe, *Essays and Miscellanies. The Complete Works of Edgar Allan Poe*. Vol. 14. Ed. James A. Harrison. New York: Thomas Y. Crowell & Company Publishers, 1902.
- Edgar Allan Poe, *Edgar Allan Poe: Storyteller*. Washington, DC: Office of English Language Programs, 2013.
- Edward Bulwer Lytton, *The Haunted and the Haunters*. Boston and New York, 1849.
- Eckermann Johann Peter, *Conversations of Goethe with Eckermann and Soret*, Translated by John Oxford. London: Smith Elder, 1850.
- Edward Wagenknecht, *Edgar Allan Poe: The Man behind the Legend*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1963.
- Fred Botting, *In Gothic Darkly: Heterotopias, History, Culture. A Companion to the Gothic*, 2012

- Gerard Genette, *Narrative Discourse*. Trans. Jane.E. Lewin. Newyork: Cornell University Press, 1980.
- Gene H. Bell-Villada, *Art for Art's Sake and Literary Life*. Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 1996.
- G. R. Thompson, *Introduction: Gothic Fiction of the Romantic Age: Context and Mode*. Romantic Gothic Tales 1790-1840.
- Gerald Kennedy, *The Violence of Melancholy: Poe against Himself*. American Literary History. 1996.
- Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Ästhetik II*, Frankfurt/Main, Suhrkamp, 1970.
- Harry Levin, *The Power of Blackness: Hawthorn, Poe, Melville*. New York: Vintage Books, 1960.
- Harriet Hustis, *Reading Encrypted But Persistent: The Gothic of Reading and Poe's The Fall Of The House Of Usher*. Edited by Harold Bloom, Chelsea House Publish, 2006.
- He Muying, *A Comparative Study of Pu's Strange Tales and Poe's Gothic Novels*. Journal of Sichuan Normal University (Philosophy and Social Sciences Edition), 1999.
- He Tianzhong & Hu Fang, *On the Differences and Interrelations between the Western Imitation Theory and the Ancient Chinese Theory of "Observing Objects and Taking Images"*. Journal of South-Central University for Nationalities (Humanities and Social Sciences Edition), 2013.
- Hoffman Daniel, *Poe Poe Poe Poe Poe Poe Poe*. NY: Doubleday & Company, 1972.
- Howard Phillips Lovecraft, *Supernatural Horror in Literature*. Xi'an: Northwest University Press, 2014.



- Horace, *The Art of Poetry, Literary Criticism: Plato to Dryden*. Ed. Allan H. Gilbert Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1982.
- Ian Walker, *Edgar Allan Poe - The Critical Heritage*. London and New York: Routledge, 1997.
- Jeffrey Meyers, *Edgar Allan Poe-His Life and Legacy*. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1992.
- Jin Liangnian, *Commentaries on the Works of Mencius*. Shanghai: Shanghai Ancient Books Publishing House, 2016.
- Jin Yuanpu, *Reception Response Literature*. Jinan: Shandong Education Press, 2002.
- Jin Zheng, *The Imperial Examination and Chinese Culture*. Shanghai: Shanghai People's Publishing House, 1990.
- John Dennis, *The Critical Works of John Dennis*. Ed. Edward N. Hooker. Maryland: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1967.
- John Stuart Mill, *Thoughts on Poetry and Its Varieties*. Autobiography and Literary Essays Eds. John M. Robson and Stillinger Jack. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1981.
- Julian Symons, *The tell-tale heart: the life and works of Edgar Allan Poe*. NY: Harper & Row, 1978.
- Karen Weekes, *Poe's Feminine Ideal*. The Cambridge Companion to Edgar Allan Poe. London: Cambridge University Press, 2007.
- Kenneth Silverman, *New Essays on Poe's Major Tales*. London: Cambridge University Press, 1993.
- Leo Tak-hung Chan, *The Discourse on Foxes and Ghosts*. The Chinese University Press, 1998.

- Li Wenfang, *Pu Songling and Edgar Allan Poe's novels of super different beauty and similarities and differences*. Learning and Exploration, 1999.
- Li Zhi, *Collected Works of Li Zhi*. Edited by Zhang Jianye & Liu Yousheng, Beijing: Social Science Literature Press, 2005.
- Liu Famin, *The grotesque: The Modern Expansion of Beauty*. China Society Press, 2000.
- Liu Xie, *The Literary Mind and the Carving of Dragons*. Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company, 2017.
- Longinus, *On Literary Excellence*. Literary Criticism: Plato to Dryden Ed. Allan H Gilbert Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1982.
- Lu Ji, *Wen Fu (Exposition on Literature)*. Zhang Shaokang (interpretation). Beijing: People's Literature Publishing House, 2005.
- Luo C. T, *Parallel Research on Evil Dead and Ligeia*. Guangxi Normal University for Nationalities, 2012.
- Luo Gang, *Introduction to Narratology*. Kunming: Yunnan People's Publishing House, 1994.
- Luo Hui, *The Ghost of Liaozhai: Pu Songling's Ghostlore and Its History of Reception*. Diss. University of Toronto, Department of East Asian Studies, 2009.
- Luo Hui, *The Ghosts of Liaozhai: Pu Songling's Ghostlore and its History of Reception*. University of Toronto. Archived from the original (PDF), 2012.
- Lu Dahuang, *A Chronicle of Pu Songling's Life*. Jinan: Qilu Publishing House, 1980.
- Lu Sheng, *Comparison between Pu Songling's Strange Tales and Edgar Allan Poe's Gothic Fictions*. Journal of Weifang University (Philosophy and Social Sciences Edition). 2005.

- Lu Xun, *A Brief History of Chinese Fiction*. Beijing: People's Literature Publishing House, 1981.
- Ma Zhuorong, *Chinese and Western Religion and Literature*. Hunan: Yuelu Academy, 1991.
- Mark Neimye, *Poe and Popular Culture*. London: Cambridge University Press, 2004.
- Meyer H Abrams, *The Mirror and the Lamp: Romantic Theory and Critical Tradition*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1971.
- Merton Stark Yewdale, *Edgar Allan Poe, Pathologically*. The North American Review, 1920.
- Mikhail Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World*. Iswolsky, H. (trans). Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984.
- Nathaniel Parker Willis, *Death of Edgar Poe*, Home Journal (New York), 1849.
- Nowell C. Smith, *Wordsworth's Literary Criticism*. Montana: Kessinger Publishing, 1905.
- Paul Frankl, *The Gothic: Literary Sources and Interpretations through Eight Centuries*. Princeton: Princeton University, 1960.
- Paul John Eakin, *Poe's Sense of an Ending*. On Poe: The Best from American Literature. Ed. Louis J. Budd and Edwin H. Cady. London: Duke UP, 1993.
- Plato, *Plato's Apology of Socrates: An Interpretation with New Translation*. Ed. Thomas G. West. New York: Cornell University Press, 1979.
- Plato, *Excerpts from The Republic. Literary Criticism: Plato to Dryden*. Ed. Allan H. Gilbert. Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1982.
- Pu Songling, *Merriam-Webster's Encyclopedia of Literature*. Springfield, MA: Merriam-Webster. 1995.

- Pu Songling, *Notes and Commentaries on the Poetry of Pu Songling*. Zhao Weizhi (Note). Jinan: Shandong University Press, 1996.
- Pu Songling, *The Chronicler of the Tales Comments*, Dennis Marr, trans. Beijing Foreign Languages Publishing House, 2004.
- Pu Songling, *The Collected Works of Pu Songling*. Sheng Wei (ed.). Shanghai: Xuelin Publishing House, 1998.
- Richard Mckeon, *Literary Criticism and the Concept of Imitation*. Critics and Criticism: Ancient and Modern Ed. Ronald S. Crane. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1953.
- Robert D. Jacobs, *Poe's Earthly Paradise*, *American Quarterly*, 1960.
- Robert E. Spiller, *The Cycle of American Literature*. Shanghai: Shanghai Foreign Language Education Press, 1996.
- Robert T. Tally, *Poe and the Subversion of American Literature: Satire, Fantasy, Critique*. New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2014.
- Roger Asselineau, *Pamphlets on American Writers*. Number 89: Edgar Allan Poe, Minnesota UP, 1970.
- Samuel P. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*. Simon & Schuster, 2011.
- Sarah Hellen Whitman, *Edgar Allan Poe and His Critics*. London and New York: Gordian, 1981.
- Shira Wolosky, *Poetry and Public Discourse in Nineteenth-century America*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010.
- Silverman Kenneth. *Edgar A. Poe: mournful and never-ending remembrance*. NY: Harper Collins Publishers, 1991.
- Si Maqian, *Shiji*. Yang Xianyi, trans. Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 2004.

- Sing-chen Lydia Chiang, *Collecting the Self: Body and Identity in Strange Tale Collections of Late Imperial China*. Leiden: Brill Academic Publishers, 2005.
- Susan Weisse, *The Home Life of Edgar Allan Poe*. New York: Broadway, 1907.
- Scott Peeples, *The Afterlife of Edgar Allan Poe*. New York: Camden House, 2004.
- Symons Julian, *The tell-tale heart: the life and works of Edgar Allan Poe*. NY: Harper & Row, 1978.
- Taylor Stoehr, *Unspeakable Horror in Poe*. *South Atlantic Quarterly*, 1979.
- T. S. Elliott, *Christianity and Culture*. Ecco, 1960.
- Ulrich Weisstein, *Comparative Literature and Literary Theory: Survey and Introduction*, Indiana University Press, 1974.
- Vincent Buranelli, *Edgar Allan Poe*. Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1977.
- Wang Ping, *A Review of the Study of Strange Tales from a Liaozhai Studio in the 20th Century*, *Literary Heritage*, 2001.
- Wang Yuchao, *Imperial Examinations and Novels in Ming and Qing Dynasties*. Beijing: Commercial Press, 2013.
- Wang Wei, *A View of the Archetype of Chinese Fox Spirit*. *Research on Chinese Classical Novels*, 2007.
- Wang Renfu, *On the Narrative Art of Fiction by Edgar Allan Poe and by Pu Songling*. Hebei Normal University for Nationalities, 2016.
- William Hazlitt, *Selected Essays of William Hazlitt Ed.* Pan Wenguo, Shanghai: Shanghai Foreign Language Education Press, 2011.
- William Wordsworth and Samuel Coleridge, *Preface. Lyrical Ballads: 1798 and 1800 Eds.* Michael Gamer and Dahlia Porter. Ontario: Broadview Press, 2008.
- Xiao Weisheng, *The Genealogical Connotation of Expressive Theories and Its Physical Turn*. *Literary Theory Research*, 2011.

- Yang Bojun, *Commentaries on The Analects of Confucius*, Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company, 2008.
- Ye Lang, *The History of Chinese Aesthetics*. Shanghai: Shanghai People's Publishing House, 2005.
- Ying Jinxiang, *Chinese Fiction in the Pattern of World Literature*. Peking University Press, 1997.
- Yonjae Jung, *The Return of the Real: A Lacanian Reading of Poe's Dying Women Stories*. American Studies in Scandinavia, 2005.
- Yu Tianchi, *Chinese Fantastic or Terrorist Fiction and Its Aesthetic Interests Seen from Liaozhai Zhaiyi*, Literary Heritage, 2002.
- Yu Tianchi, *On the Aesthetics of Pu Songling*. Journal of Beijing Normal University Vol6, 1982.
- Yuan Hongdao, *Complete Works of Yuan Zhonglang*. Taipei: World Book Company, 2009.
- Yuan Shishuo & Xu Zhongwei, *A Critical Biography of Pu Songling*. Nanjing: Nanjing University Press, 2000.
- Zhang Longxi, *The Tao and the Logos: Literary Hermeneutics*. East and West. Durham: Duke University Press, 1992.
- Zhou Yi, *The Culture Source and Philosophy of Love Between Human and Goblin*. Ming and Qing Fiction Studies, 2001.
- Zhu Guangqian, *The History of Western Aesthetics*. Beijing: People's Literature Publishing House, 2002.
- Zhu Guangqian, *Letters on Beauty*, Peoples Literature Publishing House, 2001.
- Zhu Liangzhi, *Fifteen Lectures on Chinese Aesthetics*. Beijing: Peking University Press, 2006.

Zhu Xi, *Classified Conversations of Zhu Xi*. Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company, 1988.

Zhu Zhenwu, *A Study of Edgar Allan Poe*. Beijing: People's Literature Publishing House, 2011.

Zhu Zhenwu, *On the Plane of Psycho-aesthetics-A Study of William Faulkner's Novel Creation*. Shanghai: Xuelin Press, 2004.

## Acknowledgments

I would like to express my deepest gratitude to my supervisor Professor Kim Cheol-soo for his immeasurable support, advice and patience over the last few years. Professor Kim played an instrumental role throughout my PhD studies at the Chosun University. He extended my intellectual horizon by recommending a number of books in various fields of literature, language and culture studies that became central to my dissertation.

Moreover, I would be remiss in not mentioning the many teachers from the Department of English Language and Literature in Chosun University who offered insightful comments and suggestions to my academic study. In Chosun University I met dear friends whose unwavering encouragement and support over the years have been crucial to the completion of this dissertation.

Finally, I cannot thank my family enough for their unlimited love and unconditional support. Over the years, my parents and my wife made huge sacrifices to allow me to pursue my dreams.