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## Supernatural Aspects In The Raven By Edgar Allan Poe

John S. Elledge Jr. American Literature I15 April 2018 Supernatural Aspects in "The Raven" by Edgar Allan Poe "The Raven" by Edgar Allan Poe has a supernatural element without being a dedicated horror narrative. The poem in its entirety can give the reader goosebumps without using the genre's typical methods of fright. These methods might include techniques such as sudden twists and menacing tones from secondary characters intent on harming someone within the story, all of which are not present in "The Raven." Edgar Allan Poe's ability to achieve this level of frightening supernatural tones while disregarding the horror genre, (general) rules is nothing less than impressive and can be observed throughout the entire narrative.

In the beginning of "The Raven" the mood is set for the rest of the poem. The opening line, "Once upon a midnight dreary, while I pondered, weak and weary..." (Line 1, Poe, Edgar Allan), places the reader's frame of mind in a dark and dreary place. This helps to set up the supernatural events to come. Poe then incorporates a supernatural being, the raven, adding to the uneasy feeling that has already been established. It is common to feel the fright, as a reader, upon the raven's entrance into the poem; although the entrance is sudden, it does not follow the horror genre's typical guidelines because it is not a plot twist due to the fact that an entrance of some sort was expected from the lines, "As of someone gently rapping, rapping at my chamber door." "'Surely,' said I, 'surely that is something at my window lattice..." (Lines 4 and 33 Poe, Edgar Allan). In this already uncommon situation of a raven sitting on top of the Goddess of Wisdom, "But, with mien of lord or lady, perched above my chamber door—/ Perched upon a bust of Pallas just above my chamber door..." (Lines 40 and 41 Poe, Edgar Allan), the narrative turns supernatural when this raven begins speaking English. "Quoth the Raven 'Nevermore.'" (Line 48 Poe, Edgar Allan).

In the majority of supernatural stories someone is deceased, and in "The Raven's" particular case it is a loved one being longed for after her untimely death. The speaker is pondering about his lost love, Lenore, and this foreshadowing of a deceased loved one enables the reader to begin feeling the supernatural elements of the story before they are ever introduced. "Eagerly I wished the morrow;—vainly I had sought to borrow / From my books surcease of sorrow—sorrow for the lost Lenore..." (Lines 9 and 10 Poe, Edgar Allan). As a reader, it is easy to link the deceased woman and the haunting done by the raven within the poem. Without saying it the speaker gives the sense that this talking bird is either his dead lover or the spirit of his dead lover who is now haunting him, in an untraditional sense, never to give him relief from the sorrowful grief being felt. The symbolism being used by Poe helps to contribute to the daunting and an unwavering sense of urgency and grief being felt by the reader. He uses it to his advantage to pull the reader deeper into the feelings of loneliness, making it impossible not to share the emotions that he himself is feeling while writing this poem. There is a great potential that Poe wrote this poem in a Georgian home rich in history (Marks, Rusty). This style of home is widely associated with spooky feelings, helping Poe to achieve the supernatural emphasis that can be associated with similar style homes today.

The supernatural aspect of "The Raven" is portrayed well throughout the poem, even though no horror aspects accompany it. There is never any danger present or any goal to escape a

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situation which is what typically occurs in a horror narrative. A supernatural effect can be given without compromising any other part of the narrative. This is a poem about the speaker being haunted by a raven that is a metaphor for the desire to be with the lost Lenore. The haunting will never stop due to the fact that it is a jail of the speaker's own making because he is desperately trying to remember a forgotten lore. Poe is able to pull from his own life experiences of death, sadness, and depression to achieve such levels of supernatural sorrow (Rooney, David). Some examples that contribute to Poe's (melancholy at best) storytelling are mental illnesses from which he suffered. Poe suffered from manic depression with "The Raven" obviously being written during a depressed phase (Birch, Douglas). The lack of horror associated with his supernatural embodiment of pain never waivers throughout the poem.

Common sense dictates that wild animals do not speak English warranting this a supernatural story both when it was written and today. It can be used today as an example of a supernaturally creepy story without presenting any terrible or horrific scenes. Today we see an increase in the telling of this story around Halloween which is traditionally associated with the most frightening things in modern culture. Spin-offs from Poe's original work, "The Raven," are seen around the world. One such example is "Nevermore': The Poignant Song of The Raven" (Marks, Peter) which takes the supernatural elements of the poem and sad moments from Poe's life and puts them together in a theatrical show. Examples like this helps to demonstrate that "The Raven" is a timeless, classic, supernatural narrative. Although "The Raven" can be frightening while reading alone in the dark, there are no traditional horror aspects to it.

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