**Unveiling Death and Desire: A Psychoanalytic Criticism of Edgar Allan Poe’s *Lenore***

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**ABSTRACT**

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| **Aims:** This study aimed to analyze Edgar Allan Poe’s *Lenore* through the framework of psychoanalytic literary criticism, with a focus on the interrelated themes of death and desire. By employing Freudian and Lacanian perspectives, the research sought to uncover the symbolic structures that informed the poem’s portrayal of death and mourning.  **Study design:** The study used a qualitative design, with a theoretical literary analysis conducted within the framework of psychoanalytic literary criticism.  **Methodology:** A close textual analysis was employed to examine the poem's symbolic structures, including language, imagery, and thematic oppositions, to uncover the underlying emotional and unconscious forces at work. Also, this study explored how repressed emotions, idealization, and unconscious desires were encoded within the poetic form and how these aspects influenced the reader's perspective on loss and psychological turmoil. **Results:** Lenore is deeply infused with Freudian motifs that reflect the unconscious processes of sorrow, repression, and desire. The poem, viewed via a Freudian lens, depicts mechanisms such as melancholia and the death drive, in which the speaker's idealization of Lenore acts as a coping strategy for dealing with personal grief and emotional loss. Lacanian theory also reveals how Lenore serves as a symbolic object of unachievable desire—absent yet central—highlighting the role of language in molding and distorting emotional truth. The debate highlights how the poem transforms pain into poetic transcendence, demonstrating how the psyche navigates trauma through symbolic frameworks and unconscious projections. Ultimately, Lenore is more than an elegy; it is a portrayal of the psychological conflict with mortality, in which loss is reinvented via idealization and the endless quest for what cannot be reclaimed. **Conclusion:** In summary, Lenore's symbolic patterns and emotional depth depict the psyche's complicated struggle with mortality, demonstrating how the human subject copes with pain by transforming unresolved feelings into lyrical transcendence and unreachable longing. |

*Keywords: Lenore, close textual analysis, Freudian, Lacanian, Psychoanalysis*

**1. INTRODUCTION**

Psychoanalytic literary criticism applies the theories of psychoanalysis, initially developed by Sigmund Freud, to the interpretation of literature. This approach examines how unconscious impulses, repressed emotions, and psychological dynamics influence literary works, characters, and even the creative processes of authors. Central themes, such as the Oedipus complex, repression, transference, and the unconscious, are frequently employed to uncover hidden meanings in texts. These methods also examine how literature functions as a site of psychic conflict and symbolic expression, mirroring the structure of life and death.

Jacques Lacan and other critics enlarged on Freudian theory by emphasizing the significance of language and the symbolic order, combining psychoanalysis with structuralist and poststructuralist ideas. Texts, viewed through various lenses, are not simply reflections of the author's psyche, but also intricate systems for constructing and disrupting identity and desire. As Barry (2017) explains, “Psychoanalytic criticism is not interested in what the author intended, but in what the text reveals unconsciously, and what it represses” (p. 96). This critical approach thus enables more profound insight into the psychological dimensions of literature and challenges conventional readings by revealing underlying tensions and symbolic patterns.

Psychoanalytic literary criticism delves into the underlying meanings, symbolic structures, and repressed emotions that emerge in character behavior, narrative structures, and even the author's own life. In the case of Edgar Allan Poe, psychoanalysis gives a strong lens through which to study his recurring themes of death and madness. Poe's writing, which is frequently steeped in psychological tension, lends itself well to psychoanalytic interpretation. Stories like "The Tell-Tale Heart," "The Fall of the House of Usher," “Lenore,” and "William Wilson" highlight preoccupation with guilt, identity, and the fractured self, all of which are central to Freudian theory. For example, the narrator in "The Tell-Tale Heart" could be interpreted as a representation of the Freudian id and superego in conflict, with his paranoia and compulsive confession expressing internalized guilt. Similarly, the twofold motif in "William Wilson" can be read as a dramatic representation of the divided self, a major psychoanalytic subject.

Critics such as Marie Bonaparte, a close associate of Freud, famously analyzed Poe’s works through the lens of his traumas, particularly the loss of his mother and the absence of a stable father figure. Bonaparte argued that Poe's fiction reveals deep-seated castration anxiety and unresolved Oedipal tensions. As she writes, “The nucleus of all Poe’s inspiration lay in the constant, obsessive return of the death of the mother” (Bonaparte, 1949, p. xix). Marie Bonaparte has interpreted Poe's work as an expression of maternal grief and unconscious longing due to his constant preoccupation with the dead or dying lady, as shown in "Lenore". The titular woman in "Lenore" serves as both a symbol of idealized femininity and a vehicle for the speaker's unmet ambitions. The sublimation of sensual desire into mourning rituals, as well as the speaker's denial of sadness, reveal strong psychological defenses against loss. Bonaparte's seminal psychoanalytic study of Poe states, "For Poe, the death of a beautiful woman is the most poetical topic because it sublimates forbidden desire through the idealization of death" (Bonaparte, 1949, p. 110). Through such readings, Poe emerges not just as a master of Gothic fiction but as a profound explorer of the unconscious mind.

The ghostly presence of lost ladies frequently plagues Edgar Allan Poe's poetry, none more mysterious than Lenore. Poe's poem "Lenore" reflects on sadness, mourning, and idealized love through the eyes of a deceased beloved whose purity is preserved by death. The poem can be interpreted as a symbolic portrayal of unconscious desire and unresolved emotional conflict using the psychoanalytic framework, namely Freudian concepts of repression, grieving, and the death drive (Thanatos). The poem's speaker alternates between celebrating Lenore's memory and refusing traditional gestures of grief, suggesting an inner conflict that is consistent with Freud's beliefs on melancholia and the return of the repressed. By examining *"Lenore"* through this lens, one uncovers the repressed desires and psychic displacements that animate the poem's surface tranquility.

This study aims to analyze Edgar Allan Poe’s *Lenore* through the framework of psychoanalytic literary criticism, with a focus on the interrelated themes of death and desire. By employing Freudian and Lacanian perspectives, the research seeks to uncover the symbolic structures that inform the poem’s portrayal of death and mourning. The study aims to explain Poe's depictions of death and desire in relation to loss and mortality, while shedding light on these questions.

1. How do the emotional responses to death and mourning in *Lenore* reflect unconscious desires and repressed emotions, as interpreted through Freudian and Lacanian psychoanalysis?   
2. What symbolic structures within *Lenore* reveal deeper psychoanalytic meanings related to loss, denial, and idealization?   
3. How can Freudian and Lacanian theories be applied to analyze the interplay between desire and mortality in Poe’s *Lenore*?

**2. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE**

Psychoanalytic literary criticism has long been used to explore the unconscious impulses and symbolic meanings embedded in literary works. Sigmund Freud's theories, particularly those involving the unconscious, repression, and the death drive, have had a considerable impact on literary studies. The review is organized into sections that discuss the essential psychoanalytic theories employed in literary criticism, existing psychoanalytic scholarship on Edgar Allan Poe's writings, and studies that specifically examine themes of death, desire, and sorrow in "Lenore." In "The Interpretation of Dreams" (1900), Freud argued that literature often reveals underlying desires and fears that writers are unable to articulate directly. Dreams, fancies, and myths, according to Freud, represent repressed emotions and desires. Psychoanalytic readings of literature, such as those by Bloom (1995) and Schork (2000), reveal how these psychological forces manifest in characters and narrative structures, offering profound insights into the text's symbolic layers.

Lacan's elaboration of Freud's theories, particularly his emphasis on language and the unconscious, has had a comparable impact. In Écrits (1966), Lacan presents the concept of the Symbolic Order, in which the subject is permanently marked by an unachievable desire or "objet petit a"—the object of desire that stays elusive and unfulfilled. Lacanian critics, such as Evans (1996) and Fink (2004), have applied Lacanian theory to literary works, investigating how characters are shaped by their desires, sense of lack, and interaction with language. Lacan's ideas shed light on how desire is never entirely satisfied and is frequently built around a loss, which is especially useful when studying works that address themes of death and idealization, such as Lenore.

Several scholars have examined Edgar Allan Poe's writings via psychoanalytic lenses, focusing on the themes of lunacy, obsession, and death that pervade his characters. According to Mabbott (1978) and Silverman (1995), Poe's characters often represent internal struggles with repressed impulses and unresolved emotional issues. According to Mabbott (1978), Poe's protagonists, notably in works such as "Lenore" and "The Raven," frequently exhibit symptoms of Freudian melancholia—an unwillingness to let go of a connection to the lost item, resulting in chronic psychological suffering. The themes of death, grief, and desire in "Lenore" have dominated psychoanalytic readings of the poem. In his essay "Mourning and Melancholia" (1917), Freud distinguishes between the healthy process of mourning and the pathological state of melancholia. In melancholia, the subject's grief is internalized, and the lost object is idealized or turned inward. This hypothesis has been applied to the poem's speaker, whose refusal to grieve Lenore in the traditional sense and instead elevates her to almost celestial status displays a melancholy fixation. According to Kenny (2007), the speaker's inability to participate in traditional mourning traditions, as well as his idealization of Lenore, reveal an unconscious attachment to the lost object and unresolved emotional tension.

Lacanian psychoanalysis sheds more light on the poem's symbolism surrounding Lenore's death. According to Lacan (1973), desire is always constituted by an absence, which can never be entirely filled. In this context, Lenore represents the Lacanian object petit a—a symbol of the unattainable and idealized, whose death heightens the speaker's desire for an object he cannot possess. This argument supports Silverman's (1995) observation that Poe's protagonists frequently create idealized representations of their deceased loved ones, complicating the grief process and distorting the subject's relationship with reality. Furthermore, Hutcheon (1999) and Kenny (2007) argue that Poe's treatment of death in "Lenore" is more than just a representation of loss; it is also a dramatization of the repressed return. The speaker's persistent thoughts about Lenore following her death indicate a repressed longing for the lost item, which is never fully satisfied. According to Lacanian theory, this idealization process represents the speaker's failure to reconcile with the Real—the ultimate, unrepresentable loss at the heart of their psychological and emotional struggle.

Recent psychoanalytic research has concentrated on the significant themes of bereavement and psychological denial present in Lenore. Ahmed (2020) investigated how the speakers in Poe's death-themed poems, particularly Lenore, become caught in a state of psychological denial. Using Freud's theory of grieving, she contends that Poe's protagonists frequently resist the inevitability of death by creating an imaginary world, showing deep anxieties of abandonment and unresolved trauma (Ahmad, 2020).

Harsono and Dukut (2020) use a biographical-sociological reading of Lenore to identify important symbols like "Stygian River" and "Peccavimus" as signs of Poe's internalized fear of death and spiritual strife. The study focuses on how Poe expresses deep psychological struggle through myth and gloomy imagery, which is congruent with Dark Romanticism. These symbols serve as both aesthetic methods and expressions of Poe's own psychological suffering (Harsono & Dukut, 2020).

Psychology in Edgar Allan Poe, edited by Gerardo Del Guercio, reaffirms Poe's writings, notably Lenore, as having greater psychoanalytic value. According to Miquel-Baldellou (2020), Poe's writing has frequently been evaluated through the lens of psychoanalytic theory due to its emphasis on loss, the unconscious, and death. Though not limited to Lenore, this assessment emphasizes the continued importance of psychoanalysis in interpreting Poe's artistic motivations and symbolic representations (Miquel-Baldellou, 2020).

Makarova and Goncharov's 2023 study on Poe's Annabel Lee emphasizes how the image of the idealized, departed woman recurs across Poe's female characters, including Lenore. The research suggests that archetypal figures of eternal love and feminine purity create a subconscious pattern in Poe's work, indicating a long-term mourning process that is most likely founded in personal tragedy (Makarova & Goncharov, 2023). Recent scholarship confirms that Lenore, like many of Poe's works, is heavily influenced by Freudian themes such as repression, sorrow, and symbolic expression. The poem's language, imagery, and tone are consistent with Freud's ideas of grieving and denial, demonstrating the importance of psychoanalytic critique in understanding Poe's inner environment.

**3. METHODOLOGY**

**3.1 Research Design**

This study used a textual literary analysis, specifically the psychoanalytic critical framework. The study investigates the interconnected themes of death and desire through a close reading of Edgar Allan Poe's Lenore, employing Sigmund Freud and Jacques Lacan theories. This approach enables a more in-depth examination of the poem's symbolic and unconscious elements.

**3.1 Sources of Data**

The primary source for this research is Poe's poem "Lenore." The entire text is studied, with an emphasis on diction, imagery, symbolism, and structure to reveal underlying psychological patterns. Secondary sources include scholarly papers on Lenore, studies of Poe's broader literary themes, and foundational psychoanalytic literature, such as Freud's "Mourning and Melancholia" (1917) and Lacan's "Écrits" (1966).

**3.1 Data Analysis**

The study employs two-pronged psychoanalytic approaches. First, Freudian Perspective: The analysis examines Freud's concepts regarding the unconscious, sorrow, melancholy, repression, and the death drive. The poem's depiction of loss is analyzed in the context of the psyche's reaction to death and the retention or change of libidinal ties. Second, Lacanian Perspective: Lacan's theories of desire, the Symbolic Order, the Imaginary, and the Real will be used to understand how absence and loss shape subjectivity in the poem.

The study maintains validity by employing recognized psychoanalytic ideas and peer-reviewed literary criticism. The use of theoretical concepts will be consistent throughout the study, enhancing reliability and facilitating repeatability in the procedure, if not in interpretive outcomes—a common element of qualitative literary research. This study does not involve human participants in the traditional sense, as it is based on qualitative literary analysis rather than empirical social research. Instead, the major text—Edgar Allan Poe's Lenore—is the focus of analysis. The poem is evaluated as a literary "subject" for exploring symbolic and psychological elements. Instead of direct respondents, the study consults secondary sources to hear from a variety of critical and theoretical voices, such as literary critics and psychoanalytic theorists, whose perspectives feed and expand the analysis. The fundamental tool for this research is psychoanalytic literary criticism, which serves as an analytical prism through which Edgar Allan Poe's Lenore is evaluated. This preparatory process ensures that the facts, both literary and theoretical, are carefully selected, methodically examined, and suitably prepared for close reading and interpretive analysis.

**4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

This section presents an interpretive analysis of Edgar Allan Poe's "Lenore" through the lens of Freudian and Lacanian psychoanalytic theories. The conversation is organized around three leading questions: emotional responses to death and grieving, symbolic structures in the poem, and the relationship between desire and mortality. Each theme is investigated by a close reading of the poem supplemented by psychoanalytic principles. In Lenore, the title character's death elicits complicated emotional responses that can be read as expressions of hidden and suppressed idealization of death and desire.

**4.1 Unveiling of Death and Desire**

Freud regards desire as a fundamental force in the unconscious, motivated by the libido and the search for pleasure. Lacan reinterprets this, arguing that desire is a byproduct of lack—something we will never fully achieve. On the other hand, Freud proposed the concept of the death drive (Thanatos), a counterforce to the life drive (Eros) that represents an unconscious desire to return to inanimate form. Poe has wittingly infused these two contrasting ideas within the lines of "Lenore."In the opening stanza of "Lenore," death is frequently described literally, in the sense that a powerful image of physical death and the conventions and burial practices of that era are depicted.

*“Ah, broken is the golden bowl! the spirit flown forever! Let the bell toll! — a saintly soul floats on the Stygian river; And, Guy De Vere, hast thou no tear? — weep now or never more! See! on yon drear and rigid bier low lies thy love, Lenore! Come! let the burial rite be read — the funeral song be sung! — An anthem for the queenliest dead that ever died so young — A dirge for her, the doubly dead in that she died so young.”*"Broken is the golden bowl" represents the end of life in a Metaphorical sense. The golden bowl could also mean the dreams and goals based on the golden term, which were undoubtedly wasted, or the author referring that he himself is at the end of the line. "The spirit flown forever" expresses explicitly that Lenore's soul has left her body and died. But in a more profound sense, it may not only symbolize a certain individual. From a different perspective, this may represent the life that was once his but is now long gone, due to the irrevocable choices he made in the past. The term "Stygian River" relates to the River Styx, which in Greek mythology separates the living from the dead. In a literal sense, it could represent the circumstances and choices that limited Edgar Allan Poe's full potential as an individual or as a poet.

*"See! on yon drear and rigid bier low lies thy love, Lenore!"* A bier is a platform for a coffin or body, signifying that Lenore has died and is being mourned. The author may be reminiscing about all the things that could have happened if only the deceased individuals were still alive. *"A dirge for her, doubly dead in that she died so young." She is "doubly dead"* – not simply physically dead, but unjustly or tragically taken in the prime of youth. This could represent the prospects and opportunities that were unjustly and unrightfully taken away from Poe. *"The liveliness on her golden hair, but not within her eyes—The life is still there, onto her hair—the death upon her eyes."* This unsettling image combines the lingering beauty of her body (her hair) with the evident lifelessness in her eyes, a clear depiction of death. Poe may still be alive and breathing, but deep down, he must feel like a hollow corpse with no will to live, and as good as dead due to the tragic life he has bequeathed. Desire is conveyed more subtly than death in "Lenore," but it is definitely present, especially in the shape of grief-stricken longing, lost love, and spiritual yearning. *"Leaving thee wild for the dear child that should have been thy bride —"*This line implies both romantic and emotional desire. Guy de Vere mourns not only Lenore's death, but also the future they were supposed to share - marriage, love, and a life together. His desire is for what may have been had he been given the opportunity to repent and redeem himself.

*"To friends above and fiends below, the outraged spirit is riven—From Hell to a high home far up in Heaven —From pain and groaning to a golden seat alongside the King of Heaven."*

This passage expresses the aspiration for spiritual salvation and transcendence. Guy de Vere does not weep in despair; rather, he expresses a noble, hopeful wish for Lenore's soul to rise beyond sorrow and take its place in Heaven. These lines may not only be for those who have departed, but a simple message unto himself as he comes to realize that his life will end as well. It is as if he were pleading, for he was not yet satisfied with the life he had led, and he pleads that he may find a place of redemption and acceptance. *"Wretches! Ye loved her for her wealth and hated her for her pride..."* This section demonstrates a concern for honesty and justice. Guy de Vere blames people who pretended to mourn while secretly resenting Lenore. His fervent defense of her reveals a profound emotional commitment and a desire for her dignity to be respected. This could be a plea for justice on behalf of Poe himself. At the time, he was misjudged, overlooked, and misunderstood. It suggests that he deserves honor, glory, and praise rather than hatred and bitter criticism from the public. Death and desire may be polar opposites, but they are ironically intertwined.

**4.2 Symbolic Structures in "Lenore" (Loss, Denial and Idealization)**

In psychoanalytic criticism, symbolic structures are the underlying psychological patterns in a literary work that reflect unconscious impulses, conflicts, or defense mechanisms. These symbols are not always obvious, but are embedded in the text and frequently symbolize deeper emotional or psychological states. This paradigm includes three typical symbolic structures: loss, denial, and idealization.

*"Ah, broken is the golden bowl! the spirit has flown forever!" "See! on yon drear and rigid bier low lies thy love, Lenore!"* represents separation or pain, frequently based on early childhood events (e.g., loss of the mother or the ego-ideal). In literature, characters may obsess over a deceased loved one, suggesting unacknowledged grief or abandonment concerns. In this example, the broken bowl may refer to Poe's own broken state, given that his mother had died and his father had abandoned him. He may have been adopted, but Poe longed for his true parents to fill the void he felt could not be filled by adoptive parents. It was a bit selfish and ungrateful on Poe's part, but it was his choice not to acknowledge the better life that was given to him. As a matter of fact, he leisurely threw it away by gambling, drinking, and countless bed choices, which led to his actual demise. His desire to live has already vanished or departed from his existence as a result of the traumatic experiences he has suffered, and these traumas have never been healed or even recognized in the slightest.

*"Avaunt! — tonight my heart is joyful — no dirge will I raise, But waft the angel on her flight with a Paean of old days!"* These lines clearly represent the psyche's defense mechanisms for protecting itself from painful truths, such as death, guilt, or forbidden desires, which are frequently demonstrated by characters who refuse to accept reality, distort it, or idealize others. Denial was evoked in these lines. Poe may have been scared and terrified to accept the reality that the people he loved had left and abandoned him. He portrayed his grief in a joyful facade. However, it did crumble, revealing a man who was lonely and tired of pretending to be resilient and unwavering in the face of life's storms. Denial was a pleasure he indulged in to cover up the worn-out being he had become.

*"An anthem for the queenliest dead, who died so young—A dirge for her, the doubly dead in that she died so young."* These lines represent a psychological projection in which a person or object is portrayed as ideal or divine, frequently disguising inner turmoil or fear of loss. This is frequently depicted in texts as celestial women or heroic heroes on pedestals. In this case, he regards Lenore as the queenliest, implying that she is of royal descent. This may pertain that Poe regards himself as someone equally valuable to someone who has royal blood running in their veins. It may not be in a literal sense in which he was descended from kings and queens of old, but he placed himself on a pedestal with the great poets of his time, or simply the individuals who were at peace with who they are, what they have, and made the most of their lives.  
**4.3 Interplay Between the Theories (Freudian and Lacanian)**

According to Freud's idea of grief and melancholia, mourning is a conscious process of absorbing the loss of a loved one, but melancholia is an unconscious obsession and internalization of the lost item. The speaker's tone, marked by defiance, veneration, and ambivalence, implies not only loss but also an unresolved personal attachment to Lenore. The line *"No dirge shall I upraise, / But waft the angel on her flight with a paean of old days"* challenges customary mourning customs by substituting joyous rhetoric. This rhetorical elevation of Lenore could be seen as a coping mechanism—denying the agony of loss by idealizing the deceased. The inability to grieve ordinarily shows suppressed grief that has been transformed into artistic glory. In Freudian terminology, this could represent the ego's attempt to control the painful break through symbolic substitution. The death of Lenore elicits not only grief but also a complicated emotional response from the speaker, Guy de Vere, who rejects traditional grieving. This can be interpreted as a protection strategy, a type of denial that prevents the ego from completely experiencing the trauma of loss. Rather than express his grief, Guy de Vere insists on praising Lenore's ascension, which may suggest repressed emotion or guilt.

Lacan's concept of the Real—the inexpressible emptiness beyond language—is also applicable here. The speaker's avoidance of direct mourning gestures may represent a confrontation with death's reality: a severe loss that destabilizes symbolic meaning. The subsequent elevation of Lenore to angelic, almost divine status serves as a compensating gesture in the Symbolic Order, aiming to confine the trauma of death behind idealized language. Poe creates Lenore using symbolic oppositions—life/death, love/loss, celebration/lamentation—that reflect the inner effort to suppress grief. The name "Lenore" represents loss, a hollow symbol imbued with emotional intensity. In Lacanian words, Lenore represents the lost object or objet petit a, the unreachable object of desire that shapes the subject's psychic life. Her absence in the poem intensifies her symbolic function, rendering her not as a fully fleshed character but as an idealized fantasy figure. The speaker's rejection of public mourning rituals *"Wretches! ye loved her for her wealth and hated her for her pride"* sets him apart from conventional standards, emphasizing a private, internalized sorrow that is consistent with Freud's melancholia. This also implies projection and displacement—defensive behaviors that assign socially inappropriate feelings (such as wrath, guilt, or sensual longing) to others rather than confronting them directly. Furthermore, the stylized diction—filled with alliteration, elevated language, and romantic imagery—creates a symbolic veil over the rawness of bereavement. This is consistent with Lacan's thesis that language may reveal and conceal desire. By idealizing Lenore and using lyrical words to cover inner distress, the speaker establishes a symbolic barrier against unconscious worry. 

Both Freud and Lacan see desire and death as inextricably linked. Freud's death drive (Thanatos) denotes an unconscious urge to self-destruct or return to an inorganic condition. Lenore's repeated invocation of death is not solely sad, but also infused with sensual sublimation—a redirection of libidinal energy toward the deceased beloved. The persistence on celebrating her "flight" rather than lamenting her death can be read as a translation of grief into a yearning for transcendence, or possibly a fantasy union with the lost item. Lacan's understanding of desire as a deficit is essential to this discussion. The poem expresses a yearning for Lenore as a symbol of wholeness, purity, and unreachable love, rather than for her as an individual. Her death solidifies her as the ultimate unreachable object, a function of the Symbolic that shapes the subject's desire. The speaker's relationship with Lenore thus exemplifies the Lacanian theory that want is never fulfilled but is always deferred, especially when the object of love is unattainable due to death. The interplay between desire and mortality in Lenore highlights the psychoanalytic tension between the conscious wish to commemorate the deceased and the unconscious impulses that affect how death is processed, expressed, and symbolized. Through a psychoanalytic lens, Lenore reveals a rich psychological landscape shaped by unconscious defenses, symbolic substitutions, and repressed desires. Freudian analysis reveals melancholy tendencies and misdirected mourning, but Lacanian theory emphasizes the function of language, absence, and idealization in shaping the subject's reaction to loss. Poe's poetic choices—elevated language, symbolic imagery, and emotional ambiguity-create a literary space where mourning becomes a performance of desire, and where death is both feared and romanticized.

This may have been the case for Freud and Lacan but a simple piece to the puzzle was missing. They never considered that maybe Poe was writing Lenore for himself and not for the loved ones he had lost. They may have contributed to his psychological transcendence but the bottom line is that Poe was romanticizing his death that he was clearly preparing for. It was not just him questioning the norms of society, or longing for his mother and wife, the approval that he craves from his absent father but his last cry to be seen and heard for what and who he is. It may not be for anybody but himself. He was not mourning for them, he was grieving for the life which was supposed to be his but was denied as if the gods finds it amusing to bestow such a tragic life unto an unknowing being. To be accepted, to be acknowledged, to be honored and to be given the chance. Lenore was Poe’s battle cry, his comfort piece, his last hurrah where he doesn’t have to dedicate his art to anyone else but him. Lenore was Poe’s only shot at redemption.

**5. Conclusion**

This study has examined Edgar Allan Poe’s *Lenore* through the lens of psychoanalytic literary criticism, specifically drawing from the theories of Sigmund Freud and Jacques Lacan. By focusing on the interrelated themes of death and desire, the analysis has revealed how Poe’s poetic depiction of mourning conceals deeper layers of unconscious emotion, symbolic idealization, and repressed psychological conflict. The emotional responses to death and mourning in *Lenore* reflect a complex interplay of unconscious desires and defenses. Freud’s concepts of melancholia, repression, and the death drive illuminate the speaker’s avoidance of conventional grief and the idealization of the deceased, suggesting a transformation of loss into symbolic reverence.

Meanwhile, Lacan’s theories of desire, lack, and the Symbolic Order further reveal how Lenore functions not as a real woman, but as a fantasy-constructed object of unattainable love. Her death renders her absent yet central—a locus of projected longing and unresolved emotional tension. The symbolic structures in the poem—its language, imagery, and thematic oppositions—reveal how Poe encodes loss and denial into the very form of the text. Lenore becomes a signifier of both purity and absence, allowing the speaker to displace personal grief into poetic transcendence. In this way, the poem illustrates Lacan’s assertion that language both structures and distorts emotional truth, especially around trauma and desire. Ultimately, the psychoanalytic readings demonstrate that *Lenore* is not merely an elegy for a lost beloved, but a dramatization of the psyche’s struggle with mortality, repression, and desire. Through its symbolic language and emotional complexity, the poem offers profound insight into how the human subject copes with loss—not only through mourning, but through the transformation of grief into idealized language, unconscious projection, and the eternal pursuit of what can never be fully recovered thus it unveils the true essence of death and desire. While Freud and Lacan provide powerful psychoanalytic frameworks for understanding Lenore, they ultimately overlook a deeper, more intimate truth. Perhaps the poem was not about lost loved ones or the projection of sadness into feminine ideals, but rather about Poe himself. Lenore may not be a lament for the dead, but rather a cry for the living — for a life Poe believed was unfairly denied to him. It was more than just an artistic response to the deaths of his mother, wife, and father, or a challenge to social mourning standards. Rather, Lenore reads as Poe’s intimate act of self-mourning: a reflection of his own emotional exile, a desperate yearning to be seen, to be understood, to be acknowledged as a person shaped by tragedy but still crying out for meaning. In this interpretation, Lenore is more than just a woman- Lenore represents Poe's idealized self, the pure soul that the world never permitted him to be. Her death, then, represents the end of Poe's hopes, the burial of his innocence, and the funeral of the life he may have enjoyed. His refusal to mourn Lenore with a dirge, and his insistence on glorifying her as celestial, suggest that Poe is romanticizing his own death, changing it into something honorable — not a defeat, but a release. In this way, Lenore becomes his ultimate act of agency, his last hurrah, in which the poem no longer needs to be committed to others but instead serves as a shelter for his own soul. It is both his comfort song and his battle cry, fashioned not by obligation to others, but by a primal desire to be heard before fading into silence. Lenore may have been Poe's only chance for redemption, not via the salvation of others, but by the act of writing himself into eternity. *Lenore* was Poe’s winning piece over life, desire and death.

**AI Disclaimer**

This study was made possible by the application of artificial intelligence techniques, notably OpenAI's ChatGPT and Consensus. These tools were used to find relevant scholarly literature, improve conceptual clarity, and facilitate the synthesis, organization, and expression of psychoanalytic ideas. While the theoretical foundation and interpretative framework are based on Sigmund Freud and Jacques Lacan's recognized psychoanalytic theories, artificial intelligence was employed purely to supplement human-led research and writing processes. The author remains solely responsible for any critical analysis and final interpretations.

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