Aesthetic Desire: Edgar Allan Poe, Nikolaos Episkopopoulos and the Death-of-a-Beautiful-Woman Motif

Eleftheria TSIRAKOGLOU*

Abstract
The purpose of the present paper is twofold: firstly, it aims to shed light on the influence Edgar Allan Poe exerted on the work of Nikolaos Episkopopoulos by providing evidence of the Greek writer having read Poe's short fiction. Specific attention is given to the development of the aesthetic tradition in Greece, a tradition to which both Poe and Episkopopoulos are closely tied. Secondly, it explores the possible intertextual relations and parallels between Poe's female ideal and Episkopopoulos' fictional representation of women as this is exemplified in the latter's Ut Dièse Mineur *(1893). The side-by-side examination of the female heroine appearing in* Ut Dièse Mineur *reveals significant links between Episkopopoulos' tales and Poe's, highlighting the similar manner in which both writers develop the image of a sensuous female persona.*

Keywords: Aestheticism, American and Greek short fiction, Greece, intertextuality, femininity

The influence of Edgar Allan Poe (1809–1849) on Nikolaos Episkopopoulos (1874-1944) is quite evident and emerges in several aspects of the latter's work. At a first glance, most readers would easily recognize the similarities in style, setting and atmosphere in the work of both writers, as well as their preference for a pompous language that resonates meaningfully with the gruesome nature of their plots and crooked machinations of their characters. Existent criticism has tended to concentrate on a specific dimension of the Greek author's work: his inclination toward the macabre and the grotesque. While critics continue to explore Episkopopoulos's indebtedness to Poe, my interest lies in making sense of the ways Episkopopoulos's writing speaks back to Poe's in terms of the representation of women. In the following analysis, I will consider Episkopopoulos's *Ut Dièse Mineur* (1893) alongside an array of Poe's tales in an attempt to demonstrate that it incorporates Poe's death-of-a-beautiful-woman motif. The incorporation of this particular motif by Episkopopoulos has special significance as it leads to the development of a literary motif in the Greek writer's work, that of the beautiful, erotic, exotic, less tied to the mundane woman who perishes at the end.

In pursuit of this end, I will first make reference to Episkopopoulos's 1893 article wherein he praises Poe's artistry as a tale-writer, which proves that Episkopopoulos had read Poe's works. Next, I will focus on the development of the Aesthetic movement in Greece in order to provide an appropriate comparative and literary context for the investigation of Poe's influence on the Greek writer

* PhD Candidate, Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, Greece
el.tsirakoglou@gmail.com

and to shed light on the literary and cultural context within which Poe was introduced to Greece. In fact, I argue that Episkopopoulos's works can be considered along the lines of the European Aesthetic movement quite at odds with the literary conventions of the time. This will preface a reading of Episkopopoulos's "Ut Dièse Mineur" (1893) alongside Poe's feminine ideal. The exploration of the female figure appearing in "Ut Dièse Mineur" alongside Poe's fictional ladies will show that the Greek writer's text incorporates Poe's death-of-a-beautiful-woman motif.

Episkopopoulos's Tribute to Edgar Allan Poe's Literary Merits

There is particular appropriateness in beginning an examination of Episkopopoulos' indebtedness to Poe with reference to the former's 1893 article wherein he pays tribute to the American author. In his article entitled "Το Σύγχρονον Διήγημα "The Contemporary Short Story" (my translation), that appeared in the high-profile periodical *To Asty*, Episkopopoulos provides an account of major practitioners of the fantasy genre such as E.T.A. Hoffmann, Edgar Allan Poe and Nathaniel Hawthorne. He then openly acknowledges Poe's brilliance as a tale-writer and praises Poe's unique ability to fuse imagination with mathematical accuracy:

> Όλους ὅμως τοὺς ὑπερέβη μὲ τὴν πλουσίαν, τὴν ἀνεξάντλητον φαντασίαν του, τὴν ἀκριβῆ, τὴν βαίνουσαν μαθηματικῶς, τὴν ὡς κανόνα ἔχουσα τὴν λογικήν, καὶ μὲ τὴν περιγραφήν του τὴν ἐπιμελημένην ὁ Πόου, ὁ μεγάλος συγγραφεὺς τῶν «Παραδόξων Ἱστοριῶν», ὁ ἀριστοτέχνης τῆς «Βερενίκης», καὶ τοῦ «Μαύρου Γάτου», καὶ τοῦ «Χρυσοκαράνθου», ὁ κατέχων εἰς ὕψιστον βαθμόν τὸ δῶρον τῆς φρίκης καὶ τοῦ φόβου, ὁ ενσπείρων εἰς τόν νοῦν μας τήν ἀμφιβολίαν, μὲ τὴν ἀκρίβειάν του τὴν μαθηματικήν, ὁ καταπλήσσων ἡμᾶς μέ τάς μυστηριώδεις ἀναλογίας καί τάς συγγενείας τάς ὁποίας ἀνευρίσκει μεταξύ τῶν διαφορετικωτέρων ἀντικειμένων. [It is Poe however who exceeds all others with his rich and boundless imagination that is blended with mathematical accuracy as well as with his elaborate descriptive power. It is Poe, the great author of *Tales of the Grotesque and Arabesque*, the master of "Berenice," of "The Black Cat," and of "The Gold-Bug." It is Poe who exceeds all others with his intrinsic capacity to engender terror and fear. It is Poe's skill in endowing his writings with mathematical precision that bewilders us. And it is Poe's skill in drawing mysterious analogies and connections between entirely different things that astounds us] (Episkopopoulos 2011: 102-3) (my translation).

This passage is highly revealing of the specific qualities that Episkopopoulos values in Poe: firstly, for him, Poe's works differ by their exaggerated and detailed imagery as well as the elaborateness of expression. Secondly, the Greek writer is captivated by Poe's writings that offer a disordered and fragmented world where nothing is what it appears to be; the universe in Poe's fiction, according to Episkopopoulos, is one in which mystery and logic merge, creating a reality that confounds Poe's readers. In addition, Poe's way of grounding his literary creations

in reason and mathematical accuracy, which Poe had inherited from the neoclassical period's impulse towards reason and rationality, enthrals Episkopopoulos. Inspired by Poe, Episkopopoulos himself has created stories that yield both fantastic and rational interpretations thus leaving the readers in a state of bewilderment. In his comments on Poe, Episkopopoulos accomplishes two significant things: on the one hand, the Greek writer directs attention to Poe's elegant writing style and, on the other hand, he indicates Poe's writing technique with which he aligns himself. As well as confirming Episkopopoulos's adulation of and admiration for Poe's literary merits, this article suggests that the Greek writer's works must be considered in relation to the nineteenth-century movement of aestheticism and Poe's aesthetic aims.

Episkopopoulos's Aesthetic Philosophy and Edgar Allan Poe's Legacy

With realism in vogue, there was also an alternative set of concepts fermenting in the works of certain Greek men of letters: including refined language, poetic form, musicality and evocation of the deep feelings of the individual's inner world. The attempt to explore the psychological state of the individual as well as the notion of art as a realm separate from the praxis of the outside world are associated with what Apostolos Sahinis and Lena Arampatzidou call the aesthetic movement, that is to say, a particular form of fiction produced from 1892 or 1893 onwards which takes the publication of Episkopopoulos's short stories as its starting point (Arampatzidou 2012: 27; Sahinis 1981: 13).[1] Dallas even sees the movement of aestheticism as an expression of the Greek nation's call for renewal and modernization as the movement emerged alongside a series of unfortunate events such as the financial bankruptcy and the national defeat in the Greco-Turkish war of 1897.[2] Emerging simultaneously with tensions such as the economic crash and the defeat by Turkey, the movement of aestheticism became the repository for everything from which the Greek nation wanted to dissociate itself and it represented a sense of renewal and hope (Arampatzidou 2012: 37).

When it comes to subject matter, the desire for renewal, the emphasis on sensual pleasure and the attempt to explore the inner workings of the human mind appear in the works of the Greek aesthetes (Arampatzidou 2012: 37).[3] As regards Episkopopoulos in particular, the essential drama inherent in the heroes of his short fiction is that of the individual mind orchestrated and ordered by the life of the senses (Arampatzidou 2012: 20-21). Episkopopoulos's adherence to the dissident Aesthetic tradition is essential because it sets the Greek author apart from his fellow contemporaries, reveals his cosmopolitan way of thinking and writing, and provides a rationale for reading him parallel with Poe whose name has long been associated with aestheticism and the *l'art pour l'art* (art for art's sake).

In his 1848 lecture entitled "The Poetic Principle," Poe touches upon the idea of *l'art pour l'art* asserting that literature's aim is not to mirror external reality but to generate pleasure. Speaking about poems, in particular, Poe advocates that they should be written "solely for the poem's sake," a statement that places Poe at the

heart of the aesthetic tradition. For Poe, art is not an end in itself and should not be assessed on the basis of its function to instruct, elevate readers and mirror external reality. Poe's articulation of art as being impossible to dissociate from the sphere of external reality constitutes an essential characteristic of Episkopopoulos's aesthetic philosophy too. Episkopopoulos's most explicit remarks on the relation between art and external reality are made in his 1901 article, entitled "To Dendron tis Gnoseos [The Tree of Knowledge]" (my translation) where he denounces any didactic or moral incursion from the sphere of art. Episkopopoulos reconsiders the relationship between art and life which "is the key concern of all Aesthetic criticism" (Small 1979: xii). The Greek writer offers a series of incidents to demonstrate that novels, and art by implication, can have a tremendous and in some cases devastating, impact on the readers. In so doing, Episkopopoulos contends that the experiences of life imitate art. Episkopopoulos's perspective that literature, despite being detached from the realm of everyday life, is superior to life is important for two reasons: firstly, Episkopopoulos denounces any didactic or moral implication from the sphere of art. Secondly, he points towards the language of Aestheticism and Poe who, as mentioned earlier, laid emphasis on the aesthetic values of art. Like Poe's, Episkopopoulos's aestheticism is designed to clear a theoretical space for art to function free from accountability to morality, didacticism or social uplift.

Episkopopoulos's Vision of the Feminine Ideal and Poe's Fictional Ladies

Episkopopoulos's vision of the feminine ideal is apparent throughout his longer narratives as well as his short fiction. A remarkable proliferation of feminine figures inhabits Episkopopoulos's narratives; these figures weave a spell over male protagonists, gaze intently at their lovers, perish unexpectedly or mysteriously, seduce the male characters and muse their way through Episkopopoulos's pages. Some of Episkopopoulos's stories feature delicately beautiful and erotically desirable women, while others represent emaciated and prone-to-death heroines. Some of Episkopopoulos's fictional females lack individual development and pass silently away, rarely expressing their sentiments; yet, the whole story revolves around them as they become the object of fear and desire of the male protagonists. Others have a mind of their own; suffer doubtful deaths and ensuing resurrections returning from the dead as active agents to inspire fear and terror. In either case, upon a close reading of the texts in which such female characters appear, one can come to the following conclusion: Episkopopoulos's male protagonists may idealize, be obsessed with, sublimate, disfigure or objectify women, often deny voice to women and eventually kill them. To illustrate Episkopopoulos's vision of female ideal, I will focus on Episkopopoulos's most celebrated female character, i.e., Myrrha in "Ut Dièse Mineur", as it bears a close resemblance to Poe's female ideal and represents the aesthetic female ideal that views women as an object of desire. My contention is that representations of femininity in "Ut Dièse Mineur" embody the aesthetic ideal of an erotically desirable woman who allures the narrator with some kind of

supernatural attraction; as such, in this story Myrrha plays no major part and appears as simple object of desire, but also of fear lacking specific individuality; she is only there in order to serve the representation of the narrator's emotional excesses, as object of ultimate fear and suppressed desire at once. Instead of simply fulfilling male desires, the heroine also stands for mystery and strangeness as she poses a riddle to the narrator. It is here that I find a strong connection with Poe who, as it is well known, has been very consistent in his exploration of woman as a figure of death and desire.[4] Poe's Ligeia, Morella, Madeline and Berenice all sicken, suffer doubtful deaths and eventually perish[4]. In the context of Episkopopoulos's short fiction, Myrrha, like Ligeia, who is of "gorgeous yet fantastic beauty!" (Poe 1965: 130), is beautiful but gets brutally murdered at the end of the tale.

The death-of-a-beautiful-woman motif in Episkopopoulos's short stories, especially when we recall Myrrha, not only exemplifies his philosophy of beauty, but it also relates closely to Poe's notion of female beauty. In "Philosophy of Composition" (1846), Poe's own philosophy of beauty is expressed in the following way: "When, indeed, men speak of Beauty, they mean, precisely not a quality, as is supposed, but an effect—they refer, in short, just to that intense and pure elevation of soul —*not* of intellect, or of heart —upon which I have commented, and which is experienced in consequence of contemplating 'the beautiful'" (Poe 1984: 16). In other words, for Poe, Beauty is "an effect," and an "intense and pure" one. Poe here implies that Beauty concerns the readers' or listeners' reaction to a specific work of art. When it comes to Poe's fictional ladies, his theory of Beauty interpolating with sorrow and death becomes evident. More specifically, Poe's assessment in "The Philosophy of Composition" (1846) is that "[b]eauty of whatever kind, in its supreme development, invariably excites the sensitive soul to tears. Melancholy is thus the most legitimate of all the poetical tones" (1984: 17). And Poe adds up to this melancholic sensibility by arguing that the death of a beautiful woman is "unquestionably, the most poetical topic in the world" (1984: 19). What makes the death of a beautiful woman "the most poetical" of topics is the fact that it is related to the element of desire: irresistible loveliness and the impossibility of its recovery. In designating the death of a woman in such terms, Poe makes reference to the poet and to the state he finds himself in when he loses a lover. The death of a woman certainly generates grief but it also makes the poet experience a supreme sense of self-awareness. Each time the poet reflects with sadness upon his lost love, then, another type of beauty, a sorrowful one, is created (Magistrale 2001: 10). Karen Weekes's observation is particularly instructive on this point: "[t]he woman must die in order to enlarge the experience of the narrator, her viewer" (2009: 148). Consider, for example, Berenice who ironically becomes increasingly beautiful, and her lips redden and become more desirable as her skin pales and she perishes. Poe here suggests that, through the physical transformation, women attain an eternal beauty and theoretically at least the corpse of the dead woman briefly incarnates ideality. Given, however, that death presupposes physical decay, beauty is intertwined with terror.

The conflation of beauty with misery and disease, in my opinion, supplies Episkopopoulos with an aesthetic rationale for his fascination with dying women and provides links with Poe's own theory on beauty. By killing off his ethereal ladies, Episkopopoulos establishes a close relationship between beauty and misery and illness that is firmly entrenched in the aesthetic philosophy: for the proponents of the aesthetic movement and, of course for Episkopopoulos, beauty is aligned with sorrow, decay and even infirmity (Arampatzidou 2012: 19). The character of Myrrha in "Ut Dièse Mineur" is unparalleled in demonstrating the conjunction between death, aesthetics and Poe's female ideal: she presents a spectacle at once irresistible and unbearable for the male protagonist. She also becomes a receptacle for the narrator's angst and guilt, a tabula rasa on which the narrator inscribes his needs and emotional excesses. The conjunction of death, aesthetics and Poe's female ideal functions as an essential encounter between Poe and Episkopopoulos, as will be shown in the following section.

Morbid Attraction and Immorality in Episkopopoulos's "Ut Dièse Mineur"

Read in relation to Episkopopoulos's aesthetic ideal, "Ut Dièse Mineur" prefigures by several years the writing of his critical principles, but offers an aesthetic of synaesthesia with the merging of multiple senses. "Ut Dièse Mineur," as he titled this story, is most probably linked to Beethoven's sonata inspired by the composer's unshared love for his pupil Giulietta Guicciard. The plot developing along the lines of Beethoven's music perfectly complements the plot in "Ut Dièse Mineur" thus creating a remarkable aesthetic effect. However, beyond its aesthetic import, Episkopopoulos's story depicts a world of gross distortion, of violent and immoral behaviour. In fact, it is a tale of homicide that owes much to Poe's "The Tell-Tale Heart." Similarly to Poe's story, "Ut Dièse Mineur" represents an immoral male-protagonist who commits a murder in cold-blood. In the narrator's distorted moral world, the heroine's eyes are the cause of his obsession and hatred as well as the justification of his revulsion, as is the case in "The Tell-Tale Heart." The description of the female protagonist's eyes and her physical appearance in general is a defining feature in the story for it allows Episkopopoulos to relate a gripping story of terror under the guise of aestheticism.

In addition to providing an insider's view of the murderer's mind, "Ut Dièse Mineur" also revolves around the character of Myrrha, a beautiful, sustaining, illuminating, yet voiceless presence. Through the character of Myrrha, Episkopopoulos is reiterating a connection both with the Aesthetic movement as well as with Poe's feminine ideal [5][5]. Typical to other fated ladies in Poe's fiction, Myrrha is an admixture of beauty and awe, an object of desire and fear. For nearly the first page and a half of this tale, the male protagonist describes in detail Myrrha, the female protagonist with whom presumably the narrator has a love obsession. Like several of Poe's heroines and much like Berenice who is described as being a woman of "gorgeous yet fantastic beauty!" (Poe 1965: 643), Myrrha is also of outstanding beauty:

> Ἔβλεπον ὡς ἐκαθήμην δεξιόθεν τὸν λεπτὸν καταφώτιστον χνοῦν περιστρέφοντα λαμπρῶς διὰ χρυσῆς αἴγλης τήν φευγαλέαν κατανομὴν τοῦ παιδικοῦ της προσώπου. Τοὺς ὀφθαλμούς της τόσον μεγάλους καὶ ὑγρούς σύμβολον τῆς θελήσεως καὶ τῆς ἰσχύος τῆς καλλονῆς της, καὶ τὰ χείλη της ἐρυθρά, ἐρυθρά, προτεταμένα ὀλίγον, σύμβολον τῆς ἡδονῆς. [Sitting on the right, I was staring at the thin, luminous hair that gloriously revealed the evanescent quality of her youthful face. I was staring at her huge and lustrous eyes, symbolic of her volition and overwhelming beauty, as well as at her slightly parted, scarlet, scarlet lips, symbolic of pleasure] (Episkopopoulos 2002: 246) (my translation).

Further on in the narrative, the male protagonist also refers to Myrrha's "λεπτοί καὶ ἐπιμήκεις δάκτυλοι [slim and long fingers]" (Episkopopoulos 2002: 246) (my translation). By using particular language conventions — large eyes, round mouth, delicate postures — conventions that, according to Psomiades, pertain to the aesthetic movement (1997: 7), Episkopopoulos manages to represent Myrrha as a seductive object of adoration. The presentation of Myrrha's ethereal beauty is not coincidental, but it is a rather succinct expression of Episkopopoulos' aesthetic philosophy. Myrrha represents the Aesthetic female ideal that perceives woman as an "irresistible object of desire" (Psomiades 1997: 4).

Myrrha is as remarkable for her beauty as for her ability to allure the narrator. Indeed, she maintains a remarkable power over the narrator who cannot resist her, even though he wishes to: "Ἠσθανόμην ὅτι ἡ δύναμις, ἡ γοητεία, ἥτις μὲ συνεκράτει ἀρρήκτως συνηκωμένον μετά τοῦ πλάσματος ἐκείνου ἦτο ἀκατανόητος, καὶ ἤθελα νὰ σωθῶ, καὶ ἤξευρα ὅτι δὲν ἐδυνάμην. [I felt that her power and charm, that held me inextricably bound up with this creature, was unfathomable and I wanted to save myself, and I knew I could not]" (Episkopopoulos 2002: 250) (my translation). As a result, the hero claims that, because of her eyes' allurement, he was "μὲ ἔκαμνε νὰ μή βλέπω τίποτε, τίποτε νὰ μη ἀκούω, καὶ νὰ μεθύω αἰωνίως καὶ νὰ διψῶ τόν ἔρωτά της [unable to see anything, unable to listen to anything else but only be eternally inebriated by and lust for her love]" (Episkopopoulos 2002: 245) (my translation). The narrator becomes a powerless victim of the beautiful Myrrha who is more of an aestheticist object of adoration than an active participant in the story. As such, Myrrha lacks a basic quality: a voice. Much like many of Poe's heroines, Ligeia, Madeleine, Berenice to name only a few, Myrrha remains voiceless throughout "Ut Dièse Mineur"; in his tendency to objectify Myrrha as a composition of aesthetic attributes and associations, Episkopopoulos also endows her with an air of mystery and enchantment.

This atmosphere of strangeness is evident in the description of Myrrha's eyes, a description reminiscent of Poe's descriptions of "Ligeia." Lady Ligeia is depicted as having large and extraordinary dark eyes, expressive eyes that chiefly fascinate the narrator who devotes a lengthy description to them: "Those eyes! Those large, those shining, those divine orbs!" (Poe 1965: 656). Apparently, Ligeia's eyes assume an exceptional size and, as Lopes notes, "constitute indeed the uncanny body part that triggers the suspicion that Ligeia stands for more than what is shown. Thereby, the expression of Ligeia's eyes becomes a riddle to be

deciphered, a challenge that persists obsessively in the narrator's thoughts" (2010: 41-42). Ligeia's expression then is what chiefly fascinates the narrator and requires him to decipher. The reason is that Ligeia's eyes are endowed with an uncanny quality that cannot be easily explained by the male hero in his quest to interpret the mystery that they evoke, so the narrator equates the eyes with the well of Democritus: "What was it — that something more profound than the well of Democritus — which lay far within the pupils of my beloved" (Poe 1965: 656). Thus, the narrator is figuratively talking about death that entails an absence, an abyss (Lopes 2010: 42). In this respect, the mystery surrounding the heroine's eyes stands for death, a recurrent theme in Poe's work. The atmosphere of death and strangeness that Ligeia's eyes trigger can be aligned with that in Episkopopoulos's "Ut Dièse Mineur". As is the case in "Ligeia," Myrrha's eyes epitomize not only her beauty, but again evoke an air of strangeness. Episkopopoulos endows his fictional Myrrha with strangeness for the readers are told about "Τοὺς ὀφθαλμούς της τόσον μεγάλους καὶ ὑγρούς, σύμβολον τῆς θελήσεως καὶ τῆς ισχύος τῆς καλλονῆς της [her huge and lustrous eyes, symbolic of her volition and overwhelming beauty]" (Episkopopoulos 2002: 246) (my translation). Ineffable and inscrutable, Myrrha's large and expressive eyes reflect her strong will that underpins Myrrha's dynamic presence in the story. Throughout the story, Myrrha stares intently at the narrator who cannot realize why he feels so attracted to her. The way Myrrha's eyes challenge the narrator with their reiterated strangeness suggests a connection to Poe's Ligeia; the physical consistency of both Ligeia and Myrrha creates an aura of strangeness when the texts are read in succession. It is as if Episkopopoulos is trying to textually represent the image of Myrrha as a figure of beauty, desire and mystery, an object inspiring desire and fear at the same time, a figure emblematic of most Poe's heroines.

Final Remarks

This paper has attempted to place Poe's work in a Greek context by shedding light on the American writer's influence on Nikolaos Episkopopoulos. To this effect, special emphasis has been given on the Aesthetic movement and the ways both writers are associated with it. Both writers' association with the aesthetic movement's principles is discussed in terms of the fictional representation of femininity and the concept of beauty being interpolated with death. Representations of femininity, for Poe, embody the aesthetic ideal of an erotically desirable woman who allures the narrator with some kind of supernatural attraction. Pointing to Poe's female ideal, the paper analyses how Myrrha, the female figure inhabiting Episkopopoulos's "Ut Dièse Mineur," is very much like Poe's fictional ladies in appearance and in character. Myrrha epitomizes Poe's vision of the female ideal, thus perpetuating Poe's death-of-a-beautiful-woman motif: she plays no significant part in the story, appears as mere mechanisms of the plot, without character or individuality, and as a simple object of desire, she permeates an atmosphere of strangeness and eventually dies. In addition to demonstrating Episkopopoulos's indebtedness to Poe, "Ut Dièse Mineur" is

important from a literary perspective because it provides the first specimen of Aesthetic style as manoeuvred through the final decade of the nineteenth century in Greece.

Notes

[1] For a more thorough analysis of Aestheticism, see M.A.R. Habib, *A History of Literary Criticism: From Plato to the Present*.

[2] For additional information on the social and financial conditions of the time, see Roderick Beaton, 1999: 66-127.

[3] Other Greek authors who embraced the principles of Aestheticism are Konstantinos Christomanos (1867-1911), Pavlos Nirvanas (1866-1919), Pericles Yiannopoulos (1869-1910) and Platon Rodokanakes (1883-1919). See Arampatzidou 2012: 37; Dallas 1997: 13; Sahinis 1981: 170; Xefloudas 1957: 12. For additional information on these specific writers and their works, see Stelios Xefloudas, *Nirvanas, Christomanos, Rodokanakis and Others*.

[4] In order to understand Poe's obsession with female characters one ought to consider his own biography: Poe lost his mother, Eliza Poe; his foster mother, Fanny Allan; the mother of one of his friends, Jane Stanard; and his own spouse, Virginia Clemm. The bibliography on Poe's life is immense; some recent sources include: Fisher, B. *The Cambridge Introduction to Edgar Allan Poe*; Hayes, K. *Edgar Allan Poe*; Hutchisson, J., *Poe*.

[5] Myrrha's name is subject to varying interpretations. Arampatzidou and Kalliopi Ploumistaki suggest that it could either evoke the Greek word myrra meaning "perfumes" or the Greek word moira meaning "fate." In the first case Myrrha's name connotes lust and feminine vanity, whilst in the second Myrrha's name is indicative of the impending fatal event of the story (Arampatzidou 2012: 189; Ploumistaki 2008: 184). In my view, Myrrha's name is a fine example of Episkopopoulos's carrying over into his prose fiction the lyrical effects that are associated with poetry. As I mentioned earlier, Episkopopoulos's fictional writings are more like rhythmical prose poems rather than rigid prose narratives. In this story, Episkopopoulos develops his philosophy that the artifact's literary form and its idea or, as he says, its lyrics should be in perfect harmony. In choosing a name that alludes to a sensory output, the Greek author probably wishes to endow his heroine with certain characteristics, i.e., make her sensual, pleasing, beautiful and erotic; these attributes are closely aligned with both the story's central theme and its aesthetic implications. Whatever the case, the Greek transcription of the heroine's name —Myrrha— is closer to the word "perfume."

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