

**Ambiguous Authorship and the Death of True Meaning: Understanding Gothic in “The
Fall of the House of Usher”**

In the multiplicity of writing, everything is to be
disentangled, nothing *deciphered*...

— Roland Barthes, “The Death of the Author”

Edgar Allan Poe’s 1839 short story “The Fall of the House of Usher” has gained a reputation for perplexing its readers and yielding interesting interpretations at the hands of literary theorists across various lenses. Many analyses of the short story focus on how Gothic is encapsulated in the text through its setting, narrative objects, and characters. Such readings seem “natural,” as the story strongly expresses themes of madness, death, decay, and loss. Once readers are introduced to the Usher estate, we are plunged into the horrors manifesting within the walls of the House that, as the story progresses, increasingly seem to be a physical iteration of Roderick Usher’s deteriorating psyche. Because of the ease at which Poe’s story falls into the Gothic genre, much of the previous scholarship on “The Fall of the House of Usher” doesn’t separate its meaning from this genre. The story’s overwhelming images have led scholars to interpret “The Fall” as a purely Gothic vision. However, I argue that the elements of the text are not organically Gothic, but rather, that Poe’s audience is performing a Gothic *reading* of the text that informs their perception of its meaning.

Such readings of “The Fall” assume a fixed connection between the words on the page that signify objects in the text and the Gothic connotations of them, therefore assuming a fixed, “true” meaning. However, I argue that this logocentric readership is continuously disrupted throughout the text, and “true” meaning cannot be achieved. I argue that Poe complicates readers’ quests for meaning by presenting a parody of structuralist analysis and logocentric

readership within the story's plot itself. This parody is skillfully crafted through the transcendent identities of the narrator, Roderick Usher, and even the physical audience. The unreliable, reader-conscious narrator explicitly acknowledges his role as an author of the narrative, reader of the House and Roderick, and character within the narrative to be read by physical readers. Roderick Usher participates in authorial readership of his environment and belongings, which physically activates them. Additionally, Roderick's sister Madeline operates within the narrative as one of these objects, which I suggest establishes the patriarchal themes of the story.

Through Roderick's role as an author of the narrative, and the events that ensue as his perceptions physically materialize, Poe provides a dramatized reflection of how logocentric readers manifest the "meaning" of a text, and in this case, the Gothicism of the story. By examining Poe's narrative as one that challenges logocentrism through parodying it, the current critique of "The Fall" contrasts with critics that focus on Gothicism in the narrative as achieved through the contents of the House itself, or the idea that Poe "invests things with a mysterious evil power" (Weisheng 288). I draw upon concepts of post-structuralist and feminist literary theory to examine the enigmatic "Fall of the House of Usher" as an androcentric narrative in which Poe refutes logocentrism through repeatedly disrupting the readers' pursuit of fixed meaning. Furthermore, I conclude that Poe's parody of logocentrism depends on structuralism despite its critique of it.

REJECTING LOGOCENTRIC READERSHIP

The opening phrase of Poe's short story is unequivocally Gothic: "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" ("The Fall"; my emphasis). From this introduction of the story, readers are primed to anticipate the narrative's "dreary" and "melancholy" atmosphere ("The Fall"). There is

no doubt that these adjectives possess the power to elicit specific emotions, for that is the power of writing. However, it is the innateness of this “true” meaning that I believe Poe alludes to disputing throughout the story. The meaning of the textual objects themselves is expressed through more than the compelling adjectives that the external audience reads and interprets off the page. In “The Fall,” the quest for meaning is continuously complicated by layer upon layer of readership and interpretation, as the external audience is not the first, or only, reader of the text.

Buried beneath the textual events and elements of “The Fall of the House of Usher” is Poe’s rejection of logocentric readership. Logocentrism is the “assumption” that there is innate truth attached to linguistic signs, and that speech, or written text, is the source of true meaning (“Deconstruction”). Jacques Derrida’s deconstruction theory moves against logocentrism and the traditionally Western idea of a “true,” innate meaning of language as well as draws upon Ferdinand de Saussure’s principle that language is arbitrary (“Deconstruction”). In the context of “The Fall of the House of Usher,” the logocentric reader understands the “mansion of gloom” and the objects within it as innately possessive of the Gothicism they exalt (Poe, “The Fall”).

What underlies logocentrism is structuralism, or the belief that analyzing underlying textual structures, characters, and plot elements leads to general conclusions about a text’s meaning. Therefore, as logocentrism assumes that there is “true” meaning, it also assumes that the internal textual elements, one being the narrator, will provide it. Contrasting from the author, Barthes says that the narrator is the “modern sriptor” that is “born simultaneously with the text” (“Death” 145). Through structuralism, the narrator and characters become authors of the short story. Interestingly, it is the narrator’s dialogue that first provides a critique of logocentric readership through his consciousness and explicit acknowledgement of the external audience. To

understand the multiplicity of Poe's narrative, we must begin by understanding this transcendent role of the narrator.

THE TRANSCENDENT IDENTITY OF THE NARRATOR

In just the introduction of the narrative, Poe implies that uncovering a fixed meaning of the story is unachievable through the narrator's dialogue. The logocentric reader looks to the words on the page to provide the "true" meaning of the story. Therefore, this audience is immediately dependent on who provides those words. In "The Fall," the author is not only Poe, but also his unreliable, first-person narrator. Within the first couple sentences of the story, the authority Poe has over the Truth of his text is instantly given up to the narrator, the "I": "I know not how it was—but, with the first glimpse of the building, a sense of insufferable gloom pervaded my spirit" (Barthes, "Death" 145; "The Fall"). The narrator's first impression of the House builds an inescapable Gothic aesthetic:

I looked upon the scene before me—upon the mere house, and the simple landscape features of the domain—upon the bleak walls—upon the vacant eye-like windows—upon a few rank sedges—and upon a few white trunks of decayed trees—with an utter depression of soul which I can compare to no earthly sensation more properly than to the after-dream of the reveller upon opium—the bitter lapse into every-day life—the hideous dropping off of the veil. There was an iciness, a sinking, a sickening of the heart—an unredeemed dreariness of thought which no goading of the imagination could torture into aught of the sublime. ("The Fall")

This use of intense adjectives and imagery throughout "The Fall" has encouraged scholars to pore over "the great amount of ink Poe has spent on the things" and their "evil power" in the narrative (Weisheng 287). I suggest that analyses of meaning in "The Fall" need to

consider the descriptions of these objects as the narrator's perception, his *reading*, of them, rather than an innate identity. We must understand that the House is a text to be read by the narrator. In this sense, the narrator steps into the role of a reader of the text, and therefore, assumes the role of an author.

Poe's Narrator as a Reader

As he sets the scene for the narrative in the first paragraph, Poe establishes the narrator as conscious of his complex textual identity in which he is both a reader and the one being read. In Barthes' terms, Poe's narrator "recounts fact which he knows perfectly well," which directly exposes his awareness that he is being read, "for there would not be much sense in the narrator's giving himself information" ("Structural Analysis" 260). The narrator expresses this awareness through statements such as "I had been," "I looked upon," and "I reflected" (Poe, "The Fall"). However, Poe's narrator is even more of a trickster, as he directly *questions the reliability* of his own account of the Usher estate: "What was it—I paused to think—what was it that so unnerved me in the contemplation of the House of Usher?" ("The Fall"). The narrator describes the estate as a "mere house" with a "simple landscape," but one that induces a "dreariness of *thought* which no goading of the *imagination*" could alter (Poe, "The Fall"; my emphasis).

While the narrator's expression of the Usher estate dramatizes the effects of material objects, (the windows, walls, hedges, the tarn) he continues to emphasize that the adjective-heavy text is a result of his mind's *conceptualizing* of their "arrangement" and not descriptive of feelings autonomously manifested by the contents of the House themselves (Poe, "The Fall"). The narrator expresses that this Gothic of the atmosphere is not derived from an innate Truth of the scene's purpose, but rather, by the narrator's *activation* of Gothicism through his conceptualization of things: "I had so worked upon my *imagination* as really to *believe* that

about the whole mansion and domain there hung an atmosphere peculiar to themselves and their immediate vicinity” (Poe, “The Fall”; my emphasis).

Through the narrator, Poe alludes to the Derridean concept that written expression cannot be understood as a “‘natural’ representation” of things (Derrida 8). The narrator expresses more uncertainty about the intrinsic nature of the dreary objects he encounters as he questions *why* he is “unnerved,” and expresses that “there *are* combinations of very simple natural objects which have the power of thus affecting us” (Poe, “The Fall”). The narrator first acknowledges the “power” of objects that represents a logocentric reading of them. However, he follows it with: “It was possible [...] that a mere *different arrangement* of the particulars of the scene [...] would be sufficient [...] to annihilate its capacity for sorrowful impression” (“The Fall”; my emphasis). Through these statements, the narrator nearly explicitly tells the physical audience that his telling of the story does not assign True meaning to its elements, but rather, express his individual interpretation of their impressions.

Furthermore, this sequence of narration implies the narrator’s awareness of his dramatization of the scene, “that the effect of the house is all the narrator's doing,” through his “participatory reading” of it and, therefore, disrupts readers’ logocentric process of obtaining meaning (Hustis 6). Ironically, Poe, or perhaps the narrator himself, depends on readers’ adherence to structuralist readership, the idea that a narrative’s structure and elements of the plot work together to create a fixed meaning, to present his deconstructive purpose. The narrator’s statement that doubts his interpretation of the House disputes his former statement that the objects of the scene naturally hold the power to affect him. The narrator’s choice to open “The Fall” this way encourages the audience to guide their reading of the story in the same way that

the narrator guides his reading of the estate he encounters, by questioning the truth and origins of its Gothic appearance.

Therefore, the “meaning” of the “Gothic” objects in the text is unstable. They are only Gothic due to the narrator’s expression of their “arrangement” (“The Fall”). A small lake outside an old house can be simply that, or it can be the narrator’s “black and lurid tarn” with “sullen waters” and a “rank miasma” (“The Fall”). This understanding of the Gothic of “The Fall” draws upon the Derridean concept that “from the moment there is meaning there are nothing but signs” (Derrida 12). Derrida theorized that “meanings can be adequately understood only with reference to the specific contrasts and differences they display with other, related meanings” (“Deconstruction”). Therefore, Derridean theory suggests that meaning can never be “fully present” as it is “endlessly deferred in an infinitely long chain of meanings” interpreted through contrast (“Deconstruction”).

Reading the Text of Roderick Usher

After challenging his own credibility and establishing the instability of the Gothic atmosphere in “The Fall,” the narrator offers readers some seemingly concrete information, his purpose for visiting the Usher estate: Roderick’s letter. Roderick Usher is introduced as a past companion of the narrator that has fallen physically and mentally ill. The narrator provides that the letter boasted “evidence of a nervous agitation” about Roderick’s physical and mental illness, as well as his desire to see his friend (Poe, “The Fall”). He also speaks of Roderick’s “excessive and habitual” reserve as well as his incestuous family descendance (“The Fall”). However, Poe quickly diminishes the narrator’s credibility again as he claims, “I really knew little of my friend,” before continuing the introduction of Roderick to the narrative space by outlining his family history and the illness that led to the narrator’s visit (“The Fall”).

The narrator's explicit uncertainty of Roderick's identity expresses to readers that any further accounts of Roderick's behavior originate from the narrator's "phantasmagoric conceptions" of him rather than a fixed Truth of his identity or actions (Poe, "The Fall"). The narrator rejects logocentrism, positioning himself as *reader* of Roderick and the House. As a reader, the narrator activates the meaning of the text, naturally becoming an *author* of Roderick's identity and the setting of the House. His description of the setting, characters, and events may not reflect True meaning, but rather, only his individual interpretation of the "arrangement" of such things (Poe, "The Fall"). The narrator's transcendent identity unsettles readers that were depending on him to tell them the True meaning of the story. His self-deconstructive nature pushes readers to turn their attention toward the Ushers and the events that ensue as the narrative progresses to try to piece together its meaning.

Poe's unique construction of the narrator is the first example of how "The Fall of the House of Usher" is "made up of multiple writings, drawn from many cultures," as its meaning depends on internal and external readership (Barthes, "Death" 148). Furthermore, Barthes explains that written works cannot release "a single 'theological' meaning," but rather, that texts are "multi-dimensional space[s] in which a variety of writings, none of them original, blend and clash" ("Death" 146). As Roderick Usher's presence grows in the narrative, we are also exposed to his identity as an authorial reader of a multi-dimensional, textual space.

RODERICK USHER'S ROLE AS READER

As the narrator of "The Fall of the House of Usher" conquers the spaces of both author and reader, Poe cleverly mirrors this transcendent identity through the cadaverous Roderick Usher. Roderick's readership contrasts with the narrator's self-conscious unreliability; he demonstrates the purely logocentric reader that Poe parodies. In the most literal sense, Poe

features Roderick as a reader by naming the *Vigiliae Mortuorum Secundum Chorum Ecclesiae Maguntinae* his “chief delight,” and it becomes yet another intertextual mystery woven into the foundations of the story (“The Fall”). This minor detail, not often examined further by scholars, is one of the most important parallels Poe makes between Roderick and the physical audience.

Through an in-depth explanation of the origins of the *Vigil*, Diane Hoeveler provides that Roderick’s “chief delight” serves as Poe’s critique of the layered religious ideology that the *Vigil* itself implies (385; Poe, “The Fall”). Through Roderick’s reading of the *Vigil*, Poe alludes to theories of religion and history, such as Julia Kristeva’s claim that religion is a “phantasmic necessity [...] to provide [oneself] with a representation” and a “symbolization” (“Women’s Time,” 32). By choosing a purely religious text for Roderick to derive his identity from, Poe presents an extreme representation of a logocentric reader. As expressed through the narrator’s consciousness of his bias, Poe implies that ultimate truth in history and through religion “can only be understood primarily as discourse” or “dialogical constructs” (Hoeveler 387). In a search for identity induced by inherited turmoil, Roderick reads, theorizes, and applies literature such as the *Vigil* to himself. By constructing Roderick as a product of the literature he reads, ancient notions of history and religious ideology, Poe insinuates once again that True identity of textual elements is unattainable, further dismantling the ability for a True meaning in “The Fall of the House of Usher.”

Roderick’s readership transcends his projection of mystical religious ideals onto himself as his physical sickness and mental degradation act as catalysts for the decay of his surroundings. Like the narrator, Roderick also conquers the space of a reader by reading non-literary objects. The narrator alludes to this by describing Roderick’s condition:

He suffered much from a morbid acuteness of the senses; the most insipid food was alone endurable; he could wear only garments of certain texture; the odors of all flowers were oppressive; his eyes were tortured by even a faint light; and there were but peculiar sounds, and these from stringed instruments, which did not inspire him with horror.

(Poe, "The Fall")

Roderick's intense sensitivities mirror the logocentric reader's focus on every minute detail to obtain meaning. Roderick, like the narrator, expresses readership through his individual interpretation of signs, or what Poe calls his "sentience of all vegetable things" ("The Fall"). Additionally, the narrator provides that Roderick's "mental condition" is derived from "superstitious impressions" of the family mansion (Poe, "The Fall"). These "impressions" are results of Roderick's *reading* of the House, his activation of its objects, rather than the innate meaning of the setting.

Ultimately, Roderick's identity as a logocentric reader, despite also occupying the space of character and author serves as a vehicle for Poe's scheme: a parody of logocentric readers' quests for meaning. Poe succeeds in presenting a narrative that rejects logocentric readership while simultaneously depending on the reader's adherence to logocentrism to deliver it. Roderick accepts the objects he reads, the House and its environment, as possessing absolute Truth, just as the logocentric reader attributes the fixed meaning of the text to the structure of the words on the page. Roderick's illness is a "constitutional" and "family evil" at the hands of which he "*must* perish" (Poe, "The Fall"). He has accepted the decay of the House and his family line as a Truth of his own identity, leading to the rapid and unstoppable progression of his illness. The narrator acknowledges this attitude:

He was enchained by certain superstitious impressions in regard to the dwelling which he tenanted ... an influence which some peculiarities in the mere form and substance of his family mansion had, by dint of long sufferance, he said, obtained over his spirit—an effect which the *physique* of the gray walls and turrets, and of the dim tarn into which they all looked down, had, at length, brought about upon the *morale* of his existence. (Poe, “The Fall”)

In this area of “The Fall,” the narrator acknowledges that Roderick, like himself, reads the House as a text. As a logocentric reader, Roderick applies his interpretation of the deteriorating House to himself and his identity within the text. Furthermore, we learn that Roderick attributes his suffering to his sister Madeline’s illness. Roderick understands Madeline’s illness as a catalyst for his own destruction as Madeline’s death will leave Roderick without an Usher family heir.

Roderick’s Construction of Madeline

Roderick’s readership extends from dramatizing the contents of the House to confining his sister Madeline to Otherness, as Poe expresses her identity as equal to that of an object in the text. As Roderick represents a reader pursuing the innate “truth” and meaning, and mirrors the perceived physical audience, his sister Madeline Usher is withheld from possessing any sense of individual identity separate from an external reading of her. Madeline lacks all autonomy in “The Fall,” and like the other “Gothic” objects of the text, her appearance and actions are purely activated by readers. Madeline’s first appearance is invoked only by the conclusion of Roderick’s introduction, and as he doesn’t acknowledge her, she performs no action: “While he spoke, the lady Madeline (for so was she called) passed slowly through a remote portion of the apartment, and, without having noticed my presence, disappeared (Poe, “The Fall”).

The narrator provides that Madeline is simply a textual absence unless activated by Roderick: “For several days ensuing, her name was unmentioned by either Usher or myself; and during this period I was busied in earnest endeavors to alleviate the melancholy of my friend” (Poe, “The Fall”). She is an intertextual symbol in the same way the *Vigil* is. She is an object to be “read” and therefore activated by her brother Roderick. The narrator’s reception of Madeline as a melancholy object mirrors the way external readers receive the Usher estate — its “bleak walls,” “vacant eye-like windows,” “black and lurid tarn,” and “ghastly tree-stems,” — as *representative* of a Gothic atmosphere, but not innately Gothic. Just as the narrator is responsible for the Gothic identity of the House, he is responsible for the identity of Madeline as he narrates Roderick’s expressions of her.

Hoeveler describes Madeline’s emptiness as Poe’s expression of “the dream of a purely masculine universe” (388). She also mentions the literature in Roderick’s library as “radically masculine” which is important considering Roderick is written to be a mere reflection of what he reads (Hoeveler 393). Specifically, the *Vigil*, a book of Roman Catholic burial rites. Madeline’s character embodies Roderick’s patriarchal universe, and the space in which she exists, by equating women to objects in the narrative. Simone de Beauvoir articulates the woman bound by the patriarch as “lacking her own history” and “always secondary or nonexistent” (Dobie 105). She claims that a woman is always defined in relation to men and never “regarded as an autonomous being” (de Beauvoir 3). Of his sister’s death, Roderick expresses only that it “would leave him [...] the last of the ancient race of the Ushers” (Poe, “The Fall”). Given that the “entire [Usher] family lay in the direct line of descent,” Roderick conceptualizes Madeline as merely an instrument of reproduction and not much else (Poe, “The Fall”).

As she is defined only in relation to her brother and his activation of her, Madeline's emptiness, her inability to carry a child, becomes a physical manifestation within the text. Since she is of no use to Roderick if she cannot contribute to the Usher bloodline, Madeline becomes a "textual absence" (Hoeveler 389). It can even be said that Madeline's rapid progression of her illness and act of succumbing to "the prostrating power of the destroyer" was facilitated by Roderick as he creates her reality (Poe, "The Fall"). Her textual presence became nonessential as soon as she was deemed unable to fulfill the demands of the patriarch. Through Madeline, femininity in the text is expressed as empty, silent, and nearly a figment of Roderick's and the narrator's imagination. Furthermore, while Roderick embodies a sorrowful man on a quest for identity through his adherence to logocentrism and reading of the *Vigil*, Madeline lacks this freedom. She is simply an absence of character, representational of no archetype, and, therefore, an object. The strictly textual identity of Madeline, as compared to the transcendent identity achieved by Roderick, underlines the inequality of men and women in the narrative space.

Roderick's Manifestation of Decay

In addition to Roderick's role in authoring Madeline's identity and presence in the narrative, his power to activate objects within the text leads to the great deterioration of the physical structure of the House. Furthermore, the continuous decay of the House and its collapse works as a parallel to the collapse of the narrative itself. In the narrator's first impressions of the House, he mentions that although the House gave little impressions of "instability," the most "scrutinizing observer" may point out the "barely perceptible fissure" that made its way down vertically down the building (Poe, "The Fall"). This minor "fissure" becomes important during the climax of "The Fall of the House of Usher," and further implies the abilities Roderick holds as a reader.

The widening of the formerly “barely perceptible fissure” takes place after the narrator’s reading of Sir Lancelot Canning’s “The Mad Trist” (Poe, “The Fall”). As Roderick appears to the narrator in the middle of the night, seven or eight days after the burial of Madeline, he is noticeably shaken. The narrator announces his reading of the romance, the “Mad Trist,” to calm Roderick. As the narrator of “The Fall,” and now narrator of Sir Lancelot Cannings “Mad Trist,” describes the protagonist Ethelred’s actions in his battle against the dragon, he begins to perceive sounds that mirrored the events in the story: “No sooner had these syllables passed my lips, than—as if a shield of brass had indeed, at the moment, fallen heavily upon a floor of silver—I became aware of a distinct, hollow, metallic, and clangorous, yet apparently muffled, reverberation.” (Poe, “Fall” 10).

As he reads one of Roderick’s favored stories to him, the narrator projects its events onto the reality experienced by the characters in “The Fall.” The narrator’s reading of this actual, external text physically manifests in the narrator and Roderick’s reality. This is yet another example of how readership is authorial in nature and that the “text is eternally written here and now” (Barthes, “Death” 145). Furthermore, this reading directly reflects Roderick’s reading of Madeline that manifests her reality and the narrator’s reading of the House and Roderick that establishes the narrative reality of the short story. It establishes Madline, Roderick, and the House as equivalent to external literary texts, aka, things to be *read*. As the narrator reads the “Mad Trist,” its events manifests through audible commotion and more triggered actions by Madeline. Has she finally gained autonomy after death? Not entirely. Once again, Madeline’s actions result from another’s activation of her. However, after Madeline emerges into the room, stumbles onto her brother, and leads him to his death, the narrator experiences something that didn’t manifest from the “Mad Trist.” A bright line shines through the previously “barely-

discernable fissure” reaching from the floor of the House to its ceiling (Poe, “The Fall”). “The Fall of the House of Usher” ends with the narrator witnessing the glowing fissure rapidly expand into a great burst of light and wind that destroys the entire structure of the House. As Roderick Usher, the author of the House, dies, the physical building instantly crumbles.

By positioning his most transparent metaphor at the end of the story, Poe taunts readers by mimicking the logocentric reading process through his organized sequence of events. Even though Poe endlessly hints at leading readers away from the concept of fixed meaning throughout the entire narrative, he expresses this most directly at the end of the story, knowing that readers will understand the ending as crucial to its True purpose. Furthermore, the narrator activates these events through his readership, rather than Roderick. Poe relies on the idea that logocentric readers are still looking more toward the narrator to provide ultimate meaning than the characters. Poe offers readers endless clues that allude to a fixed meaning of the story, but as we follow those clues, succumbing to our desire for Truth, we come face to face with “our own mirror image staring back at us in mockery” (Hoeveler 385).

PARODYING STRUCTURALISM AND LOGOCENTRISM

Roland Barthes proposes that “writing is the destruction of every voice [...] where all identity is lost” (“Death” 142). Similarly, I propose that when considering “The Fall of the House of Usher,” the audience must look past the author’s and even the narrator’s voice in search of meaning. I propose that the identity of the text is gained through multiple layers of both internal and external readership. Through the narrator’s rejection of presenting his interpretation of things as fixed to the narrative’s meaning, Poe interrupts readers on their quest for ultimate meaning in the narrative. Wherever readers turn in hopes of attaining the Truth of the story, Poe leads them

astray through ambiguous metaphors. He emphasizes readership as possessing “the potency of a spell” by alluding to it as instrumental to the identity and meaning of the text (Poe, “The Fall”).

Poe constructs Roderick as reflective of readers of “The Fall” and uses his character to parody this readership. Therefore, he depends on readers’ “passion to discover meaning [and] a higher order of relation” to deliver his message that this “meaning” is unachievable in “The Fall of the House of Usher” (Barthes, “Structural Analysis” 271). Furthermore, Poe outlines “the dream of a purely masculine universe” through his encrypted objectification of Madeline Usher. Ultimately, he provides a story packed with ambiguous symbols that beg to be interpreted while instantaneously coupling them with an encrypted argument against the concept of literature as representative of a fixed meaning. Therefore, I suggest that Edgar Allan Poe’s “The Fall of the House of Usher” is a narrative that emphasizes the influence of structure on the physical audience, as Poe’s messages are cleverly buried beneath it, and uses this influence to critique structuralist and logocentric readings.

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