

The Poe Phenomenon and Cthulhu Mythos

A Cross-Cultural Genre Comparison in the Japanese Afterlives of Poe and Lovecraft

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Introduction

From May 30th, 2015 until the same time a year later, the main hall of the Japanese Ghibli Museum in Mitaka will be decorated with several illustrated panels, a maze, a scale model castle and an interactive clock tower more than 41 feet tall. Dedicated to the Japanese animation studio Ghibli, this museum often hosts exhibitions on their own creations. However, over the years they have also displayed their adaptations of non-Japanese tales, like Astrid Lindgren's *Pippi Longstocking* (1945) or E.T.A. Hoffmann's *The Nutcracker and the Mouse King* (1816). For the 2015/2016 season, the Ghibli Museum found its exhibition theme a little closer to home. Proposed and created by the studio's co-founder and the recently retired Miyazaki Hayao (1941), the mentioned decorations are all based on the novel *Ghost Tower* (or *Yūreitō* 幽霊塔 (1937)) by the Japanese author Edogawa Rampo/Ranpo 江戸川乱歩, a pseudonym for Hirai Tarō 平井太郎 (1894-1965). In turn, Rampo's *Ghost Tower* can be traced back to *A Woman in Grey* (1898) by the English author Alice Muriel Williamson (1869-1933).

The motivation behind Miyazaki's exhibition is twofold. In a sixteen-page frontispiece attached to the republished version of Rampo's novel, Miyazaki first mentions the impression left by Rampo's original work when he read it as a child. It was "exciting, incredibly interesting and beautifully scary" (i). The impact was so lasting that years later, he incorporated the atmosphere and details of *Ghost Tower* into his first major animation film *Lupin the Third: The Castle of Cagliostro* (1979) (Drazen 249). Besides his interest in Edogawa's story and its characteristics, Miyazaki has a second reason for creating this exhibition on *Ghost Tower*. Added to the exhibition title "Welcome to the Ghost Tower" (幽霊塔へようこそ) is the subtitle "The Noble Road to Popular Culture" (通俗文化の王道). On the final page of his frontispiece and in a PR message published by the newspaper *Asahi Shimbun*, it is mentioned how Miyazaki considers authors like Edgar Allan Poe, William Collins, Arthur Conan Doyle, Maurice Leblanc,

Edogawa Rampo and A.M. Williamson to be worthy of attention through the medium of a popular culture adaptation as well. By keeping it alive in *tsūzoku bunka* 通俗文化 (a term coined by Miyazaki himself, indicating popular or common culture), narratives and ideas by those who are already passed can be continued over centuries (xvi). Miyazaki's exhibition exemplifies this by showing how the combination of popular culture and literature can be one of exchange: an original work is able to inspire its readership to create something themselves (Rampo's tale influenced Miyazaki's work) and those affected can use their own work to return some of the attention to the initial material (Miyazaki brings Rampo's work to a new generation of audiences).

A second example in which literature and another (popular culture) medium become intertwined is the world of gaming. In 2015, the Dutch Foundation for Literature (DFL) and the Dutch Game Fund published a call for game developers to focus their attention on literary or narrative games. The main goal of this appeal was the creation of Dutch "artistic games with a literary approach" (Van Velzen 14) and at the same time, the Dutch Foundation for Literature also wished to contribute to the creation of "a multimedia world" (14). Just like Miyazaki's exhibition, this call for literary games illustrates the possibly strengthening effect of combining literature with another medium or adapting an original into a new form.

This notion of linking literature to popular culture, such as television, film, comics or music has thus far not gone unnoticed by literary and/or cultural critics. Be it in public events like the annual *BookCon* in New York which claims to offer a place "where storytelling and pop culture collide" or through academic studies as can be found in Marcel Cornis-Pope's (ed) *New Literary Hybrids in the Age of Multimedia Expression: Crossing Borders, Crossing Genres* (2014), literary adaptations in whatever form are abundant.

Continuing with the combination literature and popular culture, this research will, as a form of experiment, explore the possibility of popular culture adaptations being of equal value as

adaptations of literature *in* literature. Comparative Literature Studies is welcoming to studies which analyse the translations and adaptations of original works, both within one nation/culture and beyond. Especially the fields of World Literature and transcultural narratives are useful when studying the effects of certain works in different contexts. However, when it comes to researching concrete examples (so not theorisation), many studies focus on the adaptations in literature. When authors abroad try to imitate the original 'source' text, so the text used as a reference point, then it is a fair comparison with valid results. This study would like to agree with Miyazaki and pose that it is also possible for popular culture to contribute to the continuing existence of literary works. It is likely that Popular Culture scholars will whole-heartedly agree. Popular culture expressions have achieved a prominent position within all kinds of academic fields. This research does therefore not claim to be original in its attempt at trying to upgrade the status of literary popular culture adaptations. What it will try to do is the following.

In 2013, Monika Elbert and Bridget M. Marshall published an essay collection on the *Transnational Gothic* (2013). In this collection, several contributors tried to explore how gothic conventions could be the subject of literary and social exchanges worldwide. It was their aim to "deepen [the] understanding of the Gothic as not merely a national but a global aesthetic" (1). The subjects within this book practically all dealt with the continuation of a gothic convention in the literature of another nation/culture. Also, it restricted itself to the nineteenth century. In spirit of this collection, the first objective of this study is also to look at the transnational/transcultural character of the gothic genre, but this time including that of mystery or detective fiction. The ideal candidate who represents both these genres is the nineteenth century American author Edgar Allan Poe (1809-1849). The country providing the new context will be Japan. The second aim of this thesis is the introduction of a similar investigation towards the transnational/transcultural genre, only this time that of the weird fiction genre. Also, the mode of transfer will be changed. Instead of looking at literature adapting literature, the latter portion of

this study will focus on popular culture adaptations of American weird fiction literature. This experiment will show that a study like this can equally prove the transnational/transcultural character of a genre. And since the examples from Japanese popular culture adaptations will be contemporary, the experiment also hopes to open the door for similar types of research, for example, into other types of genre or other authors.

Summarizing the intentions above, this study will illuminate the method of conducting cross-cultural gothic and mystery genre comparisons between literatures and literature and popular culture adaptations and it will show how the evaluation of a genre indeed being cross-cultural can be based equally on both a work's/author's literary adaptations as its popular culture adaptations. To do this, the study has been split up into three chapters.

The first chapter will lay down the theoretical foundation of cross-cultural comparisons. When a scholar wishes to start off such a research, several questions are bound to arise. For example, when an original story is adapted, what is left of the original and what is added to make it relevant for the new context? And do these additions provide the new adaptation with its own representative status or will it remain a poor substitute to the original? It is also important to know how the field of World Literature and the concept of transcultural narratives are filled in and applied. Highlighting that the academic world of cross-cultural genre comparison is indeed a lie one, this first chapter will discuss World Literature, Transnationalism and Transcultural narratives and two common methods of transforming an original text into something new, namely translations and adaptations.

The second chapter will take up the majority of this study since it will illustrate the possibility of cross-cultural genre adaptations through the example of Edgar Allan Poe and the Japanese gothic tradition which he influenced. By looking at seven short stories by Poe and three Japanese authors who were influenced by his work, this chapter will indicate the existence of a Japanese tradition related to the gothic and the detective genre.

The third chapter will contain the thought experiment of not only using literary adaptations to indicate the cross-cultural status of a genre, but instead it will look at contemporary popular culture interpretations of a genre. The genre in question will be the weird literature genre as made famous by the American author H.P. Lovecraft (1890-1937). Not denying the use of weird literature features in Japanese literature, Lovecraft's work is more present in other cultural expressions in Japan, like *manga* 漫画 (Japanese comics) and *anime* アニメ (Japanese animation) and therefore it will much sooner 'live on' in popular culture forms than it will in literature.

The conclusion will return back to the main intention of this study to summarize how it has given evidence for the proposal of not only making genre comparisons within literature, but also between literature and other mediums.

1. Beyond a National Literature

To start of his work on transcultural narratives, lecturer in English Literature Maurizio Ascari refers to an address on “What is a Classic?” (1944) by author T.S. Eliot (1888-1965). This choice is understandable, because Eliot approaches the term literary ‘classic’ in multiple ways including an inter- or transcultural angle. Besides “‘a standard author’ in any language” (8) or “Latin and Greek literature *in toto*, or the greatest authors of those languages” (8), Eliot also mentions the necessity of a classic text to become mature in mind, manners and language (16), achieve a perfected common style (13) and be comprehensive (27) in that it will resonate for every type of readership. By maturity he means the history of literature, in other words the “ordered though unconscious progress of a language to realise its own potentialities within its own framework” (11) and the common style is mainly expressed through the establishment of a “community of taste” (13) which shares writing conventions and language use. However, for a literary work to become an “absolute classic” instead of a “relative classic” (26), the text has to possess universality, it has to be of “significance in relation to a number of foreign literatures” (27) besides only being of importance in its own language. And besides this significance of a work towards other culturally different literatures, a classic author is also encouraged to use foreign writings as a source of inspiration: “to make use of a foreign literature in this way [adapt and use discoveries, traditions and inventions] marks a further stage of civilisation beyond making use only of the earlier stages of one’s own” (19). Eliot’s classic literature has to be the product of constant development, both within the author’s cultural boundaries and outside of it, it has to utilize and display a common style and it has to be understood by the largest group of readership possible.

Eventually, Eliot highlights the Roman Poet Virgil (15/70 BC-19 BC) as *the* classic author when it comes to the European literary scene of his day (31). Also, compared to Latin and Greek literature, Eliot proposes that by his standards there are no other classics “in any modern

language” (28) and that Roman literature has set the standard “once for all: the task does not have to be done again” (32). English may be one of the contemporary top lingua franca’s, but according to Eliot, its literature does not contain classics like those found in Roman literature. However, this denial of the existence of English literary classics appears to be unfair. On the one hand Eliot encourages the use of foreign literary traditions, but at the same time he denies a literature grown from another literary tradition the possibility of becoming classic-like itself. While it is not the intention of this study to identify the works of Edgar Allan Poe and H.P. Lovecraft as literary classics (although especially Poe is often titled as such, based on his mentioning in the *Norton Anthology of American Literature*, an authority within the field of literary studies), it is important to look at their international and intercultural positions (especially in Japan) and how these positions can be seen within literary studies. Two fields of research which surface are *world literature* and (*cultural*) *transnationalism*.

1.1 World Literature

The first person to officially formulate the term world literature (or *Weltliteratur*) was the German scholar and author Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749-1832) in 1827. Contemporary scholarly works never fail to mention Goethe’s original idea and the importance it had in creating “both a literary perspective and a new cultural awareness, a sense of global modernity” (Damrosch 1). Goethe’s world literature was based on his assumption that poetry became more and more a universal language or literary style which spread over mankind as a whole. For poets to keep on improving themselves, Goethe gives his disciple Johann Peter Eckermann the following suggestion: “I ... like to look about me in foreign nations, and advise every one (sic) to do the same. National literature is now rather an unmeaning term; the epoch of World literature is at hand, and every one (sic) must strive to hasten its approach” (Eckermann 351). Goethe took delight in seeing French, English and German authors communicating and called it “the greatest use of world literature” to be able to interact and “correct one another” (432). He

pictured world literature as part of a new era in which authors would no longer work solely with their own ideas and skills. Or, as Maurizio Ascari puts it in his book *Literature of the Global Age* (2011), Goethe's world literature offers authors the opportunity to study "other languages and traditions [as] a means to fight against chauvinism and intellectual isolation" (9). Just like Eliot, Goethe supported the idea of interaction between literary traditions, however, later scholarship has made clear that the idea of one simple term covering worldwide literary exchange could be wishful thinking.

The difficulty with the term *world literature* lies in its exact definition and the range it claims to have. In her essay collection *Reading World Literature: Theory, History, Practice* (1994), comparative literature professor Sarah Lawall addresses this problem of world literature when it turns out that "the 'world' of world literature turns out to be much smaller than the globe" (1). A concrete example of world literature is visible in a literary canon or a list containing Great Books, meaning those works which are considered to be "anchor point of civilization" (2). Western civilization to be specific. The tendency to evaluate world literature in contrast to "Western literature" is high and for this reason, the creation of a canon or booklist often turns out to be problematic. The scope of the lists and the content of it is ever changing as literary critics and literate cultures all work from their own standpoint (4). According to Lawall, a solution for this idea of world literature being a list of designated writings would be to return to Goethe's original idea of world literature being "an ongoing exchange of perspectives between readers in different countries" (Lawall 2). Based on this basic conception of world literature, literary studies allows for an exploration of the relationship between American authors and the Japanese afterlives they inspired. However, to what extent is it possible to consider Poe and Lovecraft as world literature?

Comparative literature professor David Damrosch's definition of world literature creates an opening for Poe and Lovecraft. He sees world literature not as an "infinite, ungraspable canon

of works but rather [as] a mode of circulation and of reading, a mode that is as applicable to individual works as to bodies of material, available for reading established classics and new discoveries alike” (5). For a work to become part of world literature, Damrosch sees two requirements. First it has to be “read as literature” (6), meaning that it fulfils the requirements of it being ‘literature’ and second, it has to circulate “out into a broader world beyond its linguistic and cultural point of origin” (6). This latter point dealing with circulation will be addressed later on, but what exactly constitutes ‘literature’ will remain unexplored for now. In short, the definition of ‘literature’ in this study will follow the clumsily explained interpretation of English professor Jonathan Culler:

Literature, we might conclude, is a speech act or textual event that elicits certain kinds of attention. It contrasts with other sorts of speech acts, such as imparting information, asking questions, or making promises. Most of the time what leads readers to treat something as literature is that they find it in a context that identifies it as literature: in a book of poems or a section of a magazine, library, or bookstore. (27)

Whether or not the works of Poe and Lovecraft can be seen as world literature, Culler’s definition already enables their works to, unmistakably, qualify as literature in general. Damrosch’s second requirement will be discussed in the second and third section of this chapter.

1.2 Transnationalism and Transcultural Narratives

A second field which deals with the interaction between authors or literary works worldwide is found in the larger realm of cultural studies. Since the early twentieth century, the term transnationalism has been used to identify a (new) way of analysing relationships between cultures and societies, however, its broad applicability and “talk around issues of hybridity and multiculturalism”, it can “easily become an excessively abstract ... exercise” (Giles 45).

However, in hopes of creating a second angle for analysing Poe and Lovecraft and their Japanese afterlives, a practical definition is desirable.

In his work *Transnationalism* (2009), social anthropologist Steven Vertovec contrasts *inter-national* with *transnational* and the main difference he identifies lies in the agent either being a national government (inter-national) or a non-state actor (transnational) (3). However, Vertovec's transnationalism is mainly applicable to migrant communities and diaspora studies. In this case, literature becomes transnational when it is written by "transcultural writers ... who ... experience cultural dislocation, follow transnational life patterns, cultivate bilingual or plurilingual proficiency, physically immerse themselves in multiple cultures, geographies, or territories, expose themselves to diversity, and nurture plural, flexible identities" (Dagnino 1). Since neither Poe nor Lovecraft adheres to this description and because their Japanese afterlives are also not necessarily found in diaspora's, this take on transnationalism and literature is non-applicable. Still, considering this "quite variegated phenomena" (Vertovec 3) which is transnationalism, it is possible to connect a literary study such as this through its sister term *transculturism*.

A basic definition of transculturism is given by global scholar Richard Slimbach when he states that "[t]ransculturism is rooted in the quest to define shared interests and common values across cultural and national borders" (206). Still somewhat broad, transculturism can be expressed in literature through *transcultural narratives*. In his book on *Literature of the Global Age* (2011), English Literature scholar Maurizio Ascari uses the concept of transcultural narratives in two ways. They express both "the conditions that currently preside over the creation and circulation of literature, and the ideological frameworks we utilize to interpret them" (7). In other words, researchers on transcultural narratives should look at the characteristics of literature, their flow across borders and the ways in which the works can be understood. Ascari sees the possibility of (literary) narratives crossing "the fault lines between cultures and

societies, bridging the gaps” (13). Whether it is through the “hybrid identities of their authors” (11) or an increased circulation of imagery due to the globalization process, narratives are not bound to one author, one nation or one culture specifically. They are transcultural in the sense that they are influenced by others and, in return, influence new narratives as well. This perception of transcultural narratives outgrows the sphere of diasporic communities and by indicating the interaction between authors and/or writing styles, it is possible to explore the transcultural nature of practically every text. However, Ascari’s work only focusses on contemporary literature, with Julian Barnes’ *Flaubert’s Parrot* (1984) as his earliest case study. As a sub-aim, this research poses the possibility of analysing older narratives/authors as well by identifying, among other things, similar concepts and/or formal writing styles. The works of Poe and Lovecraft and those of three Japanese authors (Tanizaki, Akutagawa and Edogawa) will be used to exemplify this.

1.3 Transforming the Original

To produce a “mode of circulation” as proposed by Damrosch or to see how a literary work crosses cultures and societies as stated by Ascari, it is necessary to look at the different ways in which an author and his work are transformed for a wider or other audience. Two basic forms of ‘renewing’ the original work is either through *translation* and/or *adaptation*.

1.3.1 Translations

The idea of translations being nothing more than a one-on-one rendition has already been crossed out by several scholars. One of them was philosopher and cultural critic Walter Benjamin. In his 1923 essay “The Task of the Translator”, Benjamin states that the translator is supposed to “release in his own language that pure language which is under the spell of another, to liberate the language imprisoned in a work in his re-creation of that work. ... [A] translation touches the original lightly and only at the infinitely small point of the sense, thereupon pursuing

its own course” (80). The translation of a literary text is never a one-on-one rendition, because an original work consists of more than just its textual meaning. A translator also has to find the “intention” of the first language in order to produce “the echo of the original” (76) in the newly translated version. Therefore translations are always transformations of the original. Instead of solely focussing on authentic material, Benjamin, just like Miyazaki Hayao and his exhibition, emphasizes the “afterlife” (73) status of these translations and their benefit for audiences still to come. In short, Benjamin pointed out how the translator is always challenged by creating a decent translation of another person’s work on the one hand and making the translation (culturally) understandable for the new audience. Also, a “[t]ranslation is not just to do with transmitting texts and communicating across languages, but [it] is a constitutive part of social, political and economic existence” (Gupta 146). However, this does not mean that the position of translation within literary criticism is adamant. To partially answer a sub-question from the introduction, the status of translations can be roughly twofold.

On the one hand there are scholars who believe that translations should be avoided when conducting a comparative literature study. Such an opinion is clearly stated by Stanley Corngold in his contribution to Bermann and Wood’s *Nation, Language, and the Ethics of Translation* (2005). Corngold feels that “[d]oing comparative literature means studying works written in different languages without the benefit of translation. It means not needing to translate ... [W]hat we project as the specific competence of the comparatist is his or her ability to put in immediate relation things conjured by the words of different languages” (141).

A different view on translations is expressed by Ascari when he states that the “wide comparative attitude [analysing the planetary character of contemporary culture] also implies a major consequence, that is to say, renouncing – at least in some cases – the opportunity of experiencing texts in the original language” (10). When comparing narratives from different regions and/or cultures, it might prove too demanding for a scholar to become proficient in all the

languages needed to conduct his or her research. To somewhat solve the risks of reading a translation, Ascari backs Franco Moretti's concept of "distant reading". For Moretti, distant reading is a research method which uses translations and previous studies by others while still making relevant observations. "[L]iterary history," he writes, "will quickly become very different from what it is now: it will become 'second hand': a patchwork of other people's research, *without a single direct textual reading* ... Still ambitious ... but the ambition is now directly proportional *to the distance from the text*" (57). Ascari and Moretti embrace translations for their informative value and the possibility of conducting a larger research despite a lack in language proficiency.

Although this study will not include the translations of Poe and Lovecraft to Japanese, it will use English translations of Japanese authors instead. Juxtaposing these works to Poe and Lovecraft may appear troublesome at first, since the expected similarities and differences in style and subject may be different compared to the Japanese originals. However, the aim of this research is to mainly evaluate comparisons made on the level of genre, which means that Moretti's idea of distant reading can suffice without endangering the credibility of analysing translations.

1.3.2 Adaptations

Besides translations, the exemplifying case study of Poe and Lovecraft in Japan will also feature Japanese adaptations of their works. Compared to translations, adaptations can be seen as even further removed from the original text. Whether it concerns new literary material based on their work (for example, the novel *Longbourn* (2014) by Jo Baker which reimagines Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* (1813)) or a reworking from literature to another medium (say, the exhibition of Miyazaki based on a novel by Edogawa Rampo), adaptations can be found in several degrees of separation from the original work. And although this removal from the primary text gives the

adaptation a different position within literary studies, there are scholars who do not deny the academic usability of these “intermedial retextualizations” (Chanda 472).

In her work *A Theory of Adaptation* (2006), comparative literature professor Linda Hutcheon argues for a status improvement of (popular culture) adaptations. After listing several qualifications such as derivative, simple and inferior (2-4), Hutcheon asks her readers and herself “why then are they [adaptations] so omnipresent in our culture and, indeed, increasing steadily in numbers? ... [T]here must be something particularly appealing about adaptations *as adaptations*” (4). For example, the continuous reproductions of comic book-based superhero films illustrates her point quite clearly. Apparently, adaptations, both popular (e.g. television, film or contemporary music) and traditional (e.g. plays, opera or ballet) are of interest. One of the reasons why adaptations achieve this grasp on their audience is their different modes of engagement. By telling, showing and interacting with existing narratives (27), adaptations manage to keep their audiences interested and at the same time, these characteristics are what makes them academically significant.

The, in fact, *retelling* of a narrative is what makes an adaptation “a derivation that is not derivative – a work that is second without being secondary” (9). Even though a proper adaptation has to be “an acknowledged transposition of a recognizable other work or works, a creative and an interpretive act of appropriation/salvaging and an extended intertextual engagement with the adapted work” (8), the presence of a new angle or focal point makes an adaptation relevant for study. By recognizing the original material, an adaptation will keep away from claiming creative authenticity as a whole, while at the same time it *does* show the ingenuity of its creator.

However, using Hutcheon’s definition, it becomes somewhat problematic to refer to Tanizaki, Akutagawa and Edogawa as authors writing literary adaptations of Poe and perhaps Lovecraft. Although they do admit the influence of American writers such as Poe, their stories do not commonly refer to a specific work. This is why it is better to refer to these three writers as

being *inspired* by authors like Poe, instead of calling their work an adaptation. Still, the indebtedness of their work to Poe is often repeated and analysing their stories on similar usage of themes, characters and plotlines is possible. Just like how *transcultural adaptations* (meaning the adaptation of a text from one culture (in this case American) to another (Japanese)) are “nothing new” (145), this study still considers works *inspired* by literature from abroad to be relevant when exploring the transcultural character of a genre like the gothic, detective or weird literature genre.

To illustrate the possibility of exploring discourses and genre as an indicator of transcultural narratives, the following study by Janet A. Walker is worth reviewing. In her contribution to Lawall’s collection of essays, Walker juxtaposes a genre present in both Western literature and non-Western literature which appear to have several similarities. The results of likewise studies, she states, “suggest that genres long assumed by Western critics to be an inalienable part of the Western literary tradition are found indigenously in non-Western literary traditions as well” (205). Walker then continues her essay by focussing on the example of the autobiography, but her method of analysing a genre present in both literatures can be exemplary for this current research.

Illustrate the possibility of cross-cultural genre adaptations through the example of Edgar Allan Poe and the Japanese gothic tradition which he influenced, the next two chapters will use Walker’s study as an inspiration as it discusses gothic and mystery literature in an English and a Japanese context.

2. Gothic and Mystery Literature in America and Japan

When examining gothic, mystery and weird literature narratives in general, it is difficult to draw clear generic boundaries. Several characteristics can appear in multiple genres and discourses. To use a non-literary example, the FX network's well-received anthology series *American Horror Story* series (2011-) has been qualified as belonging to several genres, like drama, supernatural, an (erotic) thriller and, of course, horror. So even though a title may suggest a clear cut specification, it is still possible to consider other qualifications as well. What, then, do the terms genre and discourse imply and, returning to the focus of this study, how can gothic, mystery and weird literature be defined and recognized in American literature?

When looking for the definition of genre, it is remarkable to find two different outlooks. English professor John Frow gives a basic interpretation in his work *Genre* (2006) when he summarizes it as "a set of conventional and highly organised constraints on the production and interpretation of meaning" (10). The search for a text's genre is essential, because it helps readers to categorise and therefore understand the text better. However, what exactly defines a genre remains fairly vague. Frow sees genre as something which is constructed by the interaction between the reader and that what is read (102). Still, it is impossible to deny genre any content details. Frow therefore does acknowledged the existence of *internal generic cues* "that provide a set of continuing instructions on how to use a text" (109). These cues relate to "the text's generic frame, and they work by either explicit or implicit invocation of the structures and themes that we characteristically associate with the frame" (114). This means that a genre is identifiable by pre-existing notions and expectations.

In his *Introduction to Literary Studies* (2004) Americanologist Mario Klarer expresses a different view on genre. He refers to genre as either being an epic (both in poetry and prose), a drama or poetry (3). Klarer applies the term genre not to the texts content, but to its form. Within these three genres, he uses the term *discourse* as a further specification. As a broad term,

discourse refers to “a variety of written and oral manifestations which share common thematic or structural features” (4). However, as Klarer also points out, discourses are not clearly separate from each other. As will become apparent in the following passages, the definition of discourses may change based on context and at the same time, their features can show signs of overlap.

Although not denying Klarer’s view, this study will use the definition of genre as specified by Frow. This means that the analysis of American gothic and mystery literature as it was written by Poe will try and point out the generic cues considered to belong to the (American) gothic and mystery literature genre. This investigation, together with a discussion of Poe himself and his international status, will make up the first half of this chapter. The second half will explore the presence of a gothic tradition in Japanese literature and how it relates back to characteristics found in Poe’s American gothic style. At the same time there will be an introduction of term *tantei shōsetsu* 探偵小説, literally meaning detective fiction. Concluding the chapter there will be an evaluation of Poe’s transcultural status based on his influence on Japanese literature.

2.1 Edgar Allan Poe (1809-1849)

The importance of Edgar Allan Poe on American Gothic literature is renowned. Posthumously, he is seen as the “recognized creator of the modern genres of horror and mystery fiction” (Connelly viii) and as “a master of the Gothic horror tale” (Fisher 72). And indeed, both Poe’s poetry and short stories are generally seen as some of the first, if not *the* first, within the genres of American gothic, horror and mystery literature. It is therefore not surprising that the amount of literature written on Poe in English is vast, even leading to the following opening sentences by Daniel Hoffman for his book *Poe Poe Poe Poe Poe Poe Poe Poe* (1972): “What, another book on Poe! Who needs it?” (ix). And indeed, the life and creations of Poe have been addressed and repeated so many times, that it almost appears to be overdone to explore him further. However,

in a study such as this, it is necessary to see how Poe and his writings embody American gothic and horror specifically.

Befitting the life of one of the most famous writers of American gothic literature, Poe's biography is a turbulent and mysterious one. Introducing *The Complete Tales and Poems of Edgar Allan Poe* (2006) by Barnes&Noble, Poe specialist Dawn B. Sova confirms this image of Poe as a man who was "[s]elf destructive, melancholic, and usually dressed in black" (ix). Not shying away from gambling and drinking and even marrying his thirteen-year-old cousin, Poe's life seems to be fit for ruin for the contemporary reader. Still, whether or not his literary work benefitted from his lifestyle, Poe's poetry and prose have remained influential up until today.

With regard to Poe's status as a writer, English professor Kevin J. Hayes distinguishes three main attitudes towards Poe's work during his own lifetime: "popular acclaim, measured scepticism, and ardent enthusiasm" (2). Contemporary readership, as said before, generally celebrates Poe as one of the kick-starter of gothic, horror and detective literature. Besides this significance of Poe as a gothic and mystery writer, Hayes also describes Poe as a "one-man modernist" (225). Compared to many other Nineteenth-Century American authors, "Poe, synthesizing the thought of European philosophers before him, set forth the idea of art for art's sake" (225). In return, Poe's writings influenced, for example, the famous European writer Charles Baudelaire (1821-1867) (226) and, as this study will show later on, Poe also resonated with modernist writers outside the conventional 'Western world'.

Poe's literature, both in poetry and prose, has "instigated generations of others in a variety of creative disciplines to advance their art and their aesthetic" (238) and at the same time Poe himself was influenced by writers, like the English Lord Byron (1788-1824) (Sova xi) or the German explorer Alexander von Humboldt (1769-1859) (Hoffman 280). Characteristics like these make him a likely candidate for the label of a transcultural narrator. However, what exactly characterises Poe's short story prose and which elements can be found in Japanese 'afterlives'?

2.1.1 Gothic Tradition in Poe's Short Stories

To determine the gothic elements in Poe's short stories, it is useful to first explore the general features of (American) gothic. This may prove to be a difficult task. As was mentioned before, there are no clear boundaries separating gothic from, for example, horror or supernatural genres. As Connelly and Fisher already showed, the blurring of terminology is already visible in the characterisation of Poe's literary significance. Another example of the interchangeability of the terms gothic and horror is seen in the description of Horace Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto* (1764). Generally considered to be the first of 'the genre', it is seen as both "the first horror novel" (Dixon 1) and an outline of "the roots of the Gothic" (Smith 19). To steer away from the murky waters of what is gothic and what is not, this study will not differentiate between what might be typically one or the other. In general, the works of Poe (and Lovecraft for that matter) contain elements of all three genres (gothic, horror and supernatural) and perhaps even others. Not claiming to be a study of which conventions belong to which genre, the following analysis of Poe will use *A Glossary of Literary Gothic Terms* compiled by philosophy and literature scholar Douglas H. Thomson.

Considering the limited scope of this study and the large body of Poe's works, it is necessary to make a selection. This is why the following analysis will focus on five short stories characterised as gothic. These are "Ligeia" (1838), "The Fall of the House of Usher" (1839), onwards referred to as "Usher", "The Tell-Tale Heart" (1843), "The Black Cat" (1843) and "The Facts in the Case of M. Valdemar" (1845), onwards referred to as "The Facts". The motivation behind this selection is based on the spread of publication dates, their general popularity and their variety in structural features. According to Klarer, these structural features determine the discourse type of a text. They can mainly be found by looking at four text elements, namely *plot*, *characters*, *narrative perspective* and *setting*. By comparing these four elements with the earlier mentioned general features of the American gothic, how exactly does Poe's work exemplify or

deviate from what is considered general American gothic? And although it is to be expected that the features will show considerable overlap, a second use of this analysis will become apparent when juxtaposing Poe's work with that of three Japanese authors.

The plot of these five stories are very diverse. Starting with "Ligeia", Poe wrote a story which begins as a romance with a mysterious edge. The impression of Ligeia on the narrator is described in detail, but besides the wonderful appearance and graceful disposition, the reader cannot escape the feeling of an upcoming twist. Indeed, Ligeia becomes ill and dies. In an apathetic fashion, the narrator remarries, but his love for Ligeia never fades. A new complication is introduced when Rowena, the second wife, grows ill as well. Only this time her death is not final. Similar to Thomson's gothic element "revenant" (22), the body of Rowena transforms before the narrator's eyes into his "lost love ... the lady Ligeia" (268). The experience of this resurrection is one of horror and awe and Poe saves the climax for the very end of his story, leaving a feeling of amazement and uncertainty of what is to happen next.

The end of "Usher" leaves a comparable feeling of surprise. Based on the description of the house, the story could be categorised as one about a Haunted House (Thomson 13), but eventually it turns into one of ancestral curse (1). The narrator visits an old friend, Usher, who lives in the House. The reason for the visit is a certain illness of Usher, which is described by the narrator as something caused by "a constitutional and a family evil" ("Usher" 303). Both Usher and his sister, Madeline, are struck by a certain nervous affection and eventually she dies of it. When the narrator shares this last bit of information, he does so as follows: "the glimpse I had obtained of her person would thus probably be the last I should obtain – that the lady, at least while living, would be seen by me no more" (304). Here, the reader gets a foreshadowing of a likely encounter with Madeline after she has passed away. And indeed, after burying Madeline and the continuing spread of Usher's illness, he does see her again, standing with "blood upon her emaciated frame" (313). While the House is shaking, she and her brother die together and the

narrator flees the house just in time before it crumbles and disappears into the ground completely.

“The Tell-Tale Heart” and “The Black Cat” are both a type of confession of the narrator’s crime. In the first the reader listens to the story of a man who became obsessed with an old man’s eye which he describes as “that of a vulture ... whenever it fell upon me, my blood ran cold” (498). To get rid of this terrible eye, the narrator decides to kill him, but before he does this, he first observes the man for several nights. Eventually, his caution is insufficient and the old man realizes his presence. The narrator takes delight in the old man’s feelings of terror (Thomson 15), but he is at the same time bothered by the increase in volume of his victim’s heartbeat, indicating such a level of stress that the old man might already succumb to it before he is killed by the narrator. To end it, he leaps out and smothers him, dismembers the corpse (“The Tell-Tale Heart” 500) and buries him beneath the chamber’s flooring. However, despite the pleasure of killing the old man, the narrator is riddled with guilt. When the police eventually does come, his initial cool crumbles fast and paranoid with sounds of the dead man’s beating heart, he confesses the deed.

“The Black Cat” is a similar confession, only this time not of a thought out murder, but of animal cruelty and an accidental murder. Once an animal lover, the narrator is pulled down by his increasing alcoholism and he ultimately gives in to already existing feelings of perverseness (532). He has a desire to hurt the black cat Pluto which he cared for deeply and he cuts “one of its eyes from the socket” (532). Later he expands his cruelty and hangs the cat in the garden. Poe insinuates that this last act causes a fire to the home of the narrator, leaving nothing behind but one wall displaying “the figure of a gigantic cat” (533). The narrator shrugs of his uncanny feeling (Thomson 16) and after a while he meets a second black cat. Missing the same I, the animal is almost identical except for one white blotch of fur on its chest. The narrator’s wife, quite understanding of her husband’s actions so far, points out the strange shape of the spot and

in the end the narrator too sees its shape, “the image of a hideous – of a ghastly thing – of the gallows” (535). Dreading the animal again, the narrator attempts to kill it too, but this time, his wife does intervene. However, this costs her her life. The narrator tries to hide her body inside the wall of the cellar and appears to be successful at first. The only worry he might have, is the cat which had gone missing. And indeed, the cat eventually becomes the man’s downfall. While answering the questions of officers investigating the wife’s disappearance, her body is detected when from within the walls the muffled sound of a howling voice is heard. As if an act of revenge (Thomson 23), the black cat got walled up together with the wife’s body and this causes the narrator the ultimately loose his own life as well.

The last story, that of “The Facts in the Case of M. Valdemar” has the feel of a necromancy (Thomson 18). At a certain point in time, the narrator, who is a skilled mesmerist, wonders about what would happen if he were to mesmerise a person who is dying. He soon gets the opportunity to try it out on his friend M. Ernest Valdemar who is already dying of phthisis, tuberculosis. On Valdemar’s deathbed, the narrator is indeed able to hypnotise the dying man, leading to a remarkable outcome. At first, Valdemar responds to the mesmerist indicating that he is still dying, but at a certain point his countenance and his ‘voice’ changes for the worst and he responds by saying “I have been sleeping – and now – now – I am dead” (“The Facts” 726). Unable to release Valdemar from his mesmeric bonds, the ‘living dead man’ continues to be between life and death for nearly seven months. He only responds to the narrator’s questions and even though he still talks, his body is already decaying: “[the] lowering of the pupil was accompanied by the profuse outflowing of a yellowish ichor ... of a pungent and highly offensive odor. Finally, the narrator is able to break the hypnosis of M. Valdemar and no sooner as the spell is lifted, Valdemar’s “whole frame at once ... shrunk, crumbled, absolutely rotted away beneath my [the narrator’s] hands” (728). “The Facts” is a report on an surreal event

(talking with the dead) and is filled with foul descriptions of Valdemar's bodily state, making it a good example of a dark, unlikely and gothic narrative.

When it comes to characters within these five stories, they too embody certain gothic traits as put forward by Thomson. Besides the narrators, who will receive more explanation in the next paragraph, the other (side) characters are equally gothic. For example, Ligeia performs a transformation (Thomson 36) when she (or her spirit?) takes over the body of Rowena. In "Usher" the narrator meets two cursed family members and "The Black Cat" contains the appearance of a doppelgänger (Thomson 6). With only a slight difference, the second black cat is a striking counterpart of the original Pluto. Seen through the horrific descriptions provided by the narrators, the actions and appearances of the other characters are fittingly gothic and memorable elements of the stories.

As in many of Poe's short stories, all five narratives are written from a first person perspective. All the actions, thoughts and assumptions are perceived through the person telling the story. However, the implications of this narrative style and the objective of the narrators differ. First of all, three of the five narrators appear to be defending themselves against the accusation of madness. In "Ligeia", the narrator knows that what he is describing is generally considered to be absurd, for he ponders "What inexpressible madness seized me with that thought?" (268). The narrator in "The Tell-Tale Heart" tries to persuade his listeners to see him as sane instead of as a madman ("How then, am I mad? Harken! And observe how healthily – how calmly I can tell you the whole story" (498)) and in "The Black Cat" too, the narrator wants his audience to believe what he is saying ("mad am I not – and very surely do I not dream" (531)). The narrators in "Usher" and "The Facts" are less concerned with whether or not their experiences are those of a madman, instead, they care more about sharing their unexplainable encounter. Connected to the idea of the narrators being mad or crazy is the degree of the narrators' reliability. Since Poe uses a first person narration, the reader only hears one source.

Thomson mentions the element of an unreliable narrator as a gothic characteristic (36) and indeed, the supposed madness of the narrators lowers their credibility. There is the use of opium (“Ligeia” 262) and alcohol (“The Black Cat” 532) which undermines the likelihood of the events and the complete disappearance of the House of Usher (313) makes it impossible to confirm the narrator’s story.

A second gothic feature of the narrative perspective is the form of what is told. The five stories can be split into three narrators who are having an interior monologue and two who are shifting between action, internal thoughts and the expression of what other characters said. Especially those who appear to be speaking to themselves heighten the gothic character of the story. They express emotions of obsession (“Ligeia” and “The Tell-Tale Heart”) and perverseness (“The Black Cat”) by repeating minute details and thought patterns. Together with the narrators’ unreliable nature, this element of first person narration gives the five stories an unbelievable character. The events described are unique and except for “The Facts”, the only people who know what truly happened are those who tell it.

The settings of these short stories can be easily identified as belonging to the gothic genre. Filled with mysterious locations, Poe describes his locations as perfect gothic sites. Also, the temporal settings of his stories make sure that the dark atmosphere of the event is strengthened. To start with the geographical locations, the reappearance of Ligeia takes place in a redecorated abbey, bought by the narrator. Before he adjusted it by adding grotesque ornaments and other oddly shaped decorations, the location and appearance of the abbey resembled his state-of-mind. It was located “in one of the wildest and least frequented portions off fair England” (262) and the building itself is gloomy, dreary, melancholic and savage. The conclusion of “The Black Cat” takes place in “the cellar of [an] old building” (536) and the opening scene of “Usher” is famous for its gloom setting. The house is seen as melancholic, the

surrounding nature is desolate and even the cloudy weather seems to bode the terrible events that are to come.

Less focussed on its location, the events in “The Tell-Tale Heart” take place primarily at midnight (498). The room of the victim is “black as pitch with the thick darkness” (499) and when the police officers come to check the situation “it was four o’clock – still dark as midnight” (500). Similarly, the majority of events in “The Facts” also take place during the evening and night and the appearance of Ligeia is also during a “fearful night” (267). The impairment of sight and the ability of darkness to hide what is going on gives these stories an added sense of mystery and suspense.

By briefly looking at plot, characters, narrative perspective and setting it becomes clear how Poe was a master of applying gothic elements. As will become clear later on, several of the features mentioned above will also turn up in the works of Japanese writers inspired by Poe, albeit in a different story setting. However, the continuation of gothic conventions such as shown in Poe’s short stories will be indicative for the transcultural character of both the gothic genre and Poe’s usage of it.

2.1.2 Poe as a Mystery Author

The Poe Museum in Richmond, Virginia is very clear on Poe’s status as the publisher of “the first modern detective story” when he wrote “The Murders in the Rue Morgue” in 1841. And as seen near the beginning of this sub-chapter, scholars like Michael Connelly agree. To see which structural features Poe uses in his mystery or detective fiction, the same four elements as before will be analysed, only this time in the following two short stories: “The Man of the Crowd” (1840) and the first modern detective story “The Murders in the Rue Morgue”, onwards referred to as “Rue Morgue”.

It is expected that, just like the previous exploration, Poe’s mystery or detective stories should be measured on what elements constitute the genre. However, as George Grella and John

M. Reilly point out, Poe is considered to be one of the first, if not the first, to introduce stories about puzzling crimes, investigators who solve them and the existence of a second character as an observant of the investigators activities. So instead of identifying existing conventions of a genre in Poe's work, the following exploration will highlight features which ultimately became part of mystery and detective genre. Using the contributions of Grella, Reilly and H.R.F. Keating to *The Oxford Companion to Crime and Mystery Writing* (1999), it will be made clear how Poe's detective stories resemble his gothic work on the one hand and how they are able to become their own type of literature at the same time.

The plot of "The Man of the Crowd" is very basic and contains very little complication or conflict. Also, there is no murder or crime and the protagonist, in this case the narrator, is not involved with solving a puzzle per se. However, it is a fine example of a story which, already before "Rue Morgue", busied itself with observation, trailing and analysing other characters and their surroundings. The narrator is enjoying his cigar while he is looking at the crowds that pass him by. He examines them and categorises them based on his findings: "I descended to details, and regarded with minute interest the innumerable varieties of figure, dress, air, gait, visage, and expressions of countenance" (358). Suddenly, his attention is drawn to "a countenance which at once arrested and absorbed [his] whole attention, on account of the absolute idiosyncrasy of its expression" (360). The narrator decides to follow this strange figure and the remainder of the story describes the several locations they visit and the effect they have on the old man who is pursued.

This lack of crime and suspects changes completely in Poe's "Rue Morgue". After the introduction of the main character C. Auguste Dupin and his friend, the narrator of the story, the main plotline comes to the fore. The Parisian newspapers report on two "extraordinary murders" which left those who found the crime scene "not less with horror than with astonishment" (375). The police are having difficulties figuring out the events that happened and eventually Dupin and

the narrator are allowed to see the crime scene and the bodies of the two female victims, Madame L'Españaye and her daughter. As the climax of the plotline, Dupin, a gifted observer and interpreter of details considered to be insignificant, is able to solve the crime by thinking outside the box. Not a man, but an escaped orang-utan committed the bloody crime (393). "Rue Morgue" has become the first detective story, because of its elements of crime, victims, investigation, evidence and the use of logic to solve the mystery (Keating).

In "The Man of the Crowd" there are many characters who pass by and are described by the narrator, however, only one is of particular importance. The old man, "some sixty-five or seventy years of age" (360) stands out and is described as invoking "[i]deas ... of caution, of penuriousness [destitute], of avarice [desire for wealth]... of malice, of blood-thirstiness ... of excessive terror, of intense – of supreme despair" (360). This still somewhat gothic-like portrayal explains the appeal of the man and why the observer is compelled to follow him. The old man remains, however, a flat character of whom the reader knows nothing more than what the observer mentions. The only typification given, is near the end when the observer categorises the old man as "the type and the genius of deep crime" (363), but even the narrator is not able to learn more about the man or his deeds.

With considerably more fleshed-out characters, "Rue Morgue" is a fine example of a whodunit. There is the protagonist of the story, Dupin and his friend the narrator. There are witnesses, suspects, police officer and even an orang-utan to top off a decent character list. However, the most remarkable descriptions are those of Dupin and the two victims. In the depiction of Dupin, his eye for detail and ability to think profoundly about what he found, makes sure that "Rue Morgue" is a detective story. Even though Dupin is not the detective in charge, he is the one interpreting the evidence. At the same time, Poe infuses his whodunit story with horrific imagery. The crime scene is partially described thusly: "[o]n a chair lay a razor, besmeared with blood. On the hearth were two or three long and thick tresses of grey human

hair, also dabbled with blood, and seeming to have been pulled out by the roots” (375). The state of the victims is appalling. As for the daughter “a search was made in the chimney, and (horrible to relate!) the corpse of the daughter, head downward, was dragged therefrom” (375). Her mother appears even more gruesome. Poe paints the picture of a “corpse of the old lady, with her throat so entirely cut that, upon an attempt to raise her, the head fell off. The body, as well as the head, was fearfully mutilated – the former so much so as scarcely to retain any semblance of humanity” (376). Poe’s combination of a terrible, unexplainable murder and the deducing skills of a sleuth proved to be a successful and inspired many other detective characters, like the famous Sherlock Holmes by Doyle or the tales of inspector Jules Maigret by Georges Simenon.

Whereas “The Man of the Crowd” employs a first-person narration following the structure of an interior monologue, “Rue Morgue” is written from the perspective of a side character. The nameless friend of Dupin has written everything down and describes the actions and conversations which ultimately lead to the solving of the murder case. This narrative perspective gives the story more credibility and since it is done by a close friend of the protagonist, the reader is able to read both the intimate thoughts of Dupin and the general events taking place. This form is later on duplicated in the already mentioned stories of Sherlock Holmes, although in these narratives the narrator does have a name, being John Watson. Still, whether Poe uses a first-person perspective to illuminate the thoughts of the observer or a close side character, the requirement of detective and mystery narratives appears to be a detailed expression of what is seen and thought by the protagonist solving the puzzle.

The settings of both stories are within large cities, namely London (“The Man of the Crowd”) and Paris (“Rue Morgue”). The streets, buildings and rooms are described in fair detail and also the temporal setting is important to be mentioned. In “The Man of the Crowd”, the narrator follows the old man at night while there is a thick, humid fog (361). They cross deserted bye-streets and poor, dirty neighbourhoods (362) which increase the mysterious act of the old

man's behaviour. "Rue Morgue" has a similar attraction to darkness. Dupin is "enamoured of the night" and together with the narrator he darkens the rooms during the day and goes out to roam the streets in the evening. So even in his mysterious detective fiction, Poe continues this emphasize of dark, gloomy settings, both temporal and location wise.

As shown, Poe adheres to the conventions of the gothic genre as formed by writers before him and his 'original' detective fiction has become an inspiration for authors after him. His work itself is already a cross-cultural result of texts written in Europe and in turn, as will be shown next, Poe's short stories continued this spread of the two genres worldwide.

2.1.3 The Poe Phenomenon

As mentioned before, the works of Poe have influenced several artists both in America and abroad. The next section will elaborate on this by focusing on Poe's presence in Japan. However, to stress the international range of Poe, it might be interesting to first briefly look at why Poe is considered relevant for a worldwide audience.

In her introduction to the essay collection *Poe's Pervasive Influence* (2012), Barbara Cantalupo presents the contributors and the reason why they wrote their essays. The source for her collection was the Third International Edgar Allan Poe Conference held on October 2009. The aim of her collection and that of the Poe Studies Association is to demonstrate "Poe's continuing influence on authors from China, England, Japan, Portugal, and Russia ... No other American writer has had such a profound impact on the arts as well as on the popular imagination in the United States and abroad as Edgar Allan Poe" (1). One of the reasons Cantalupo mentions for Poe's continuous popularity is because "his work reflects important aspects of the American psyche: the will to challenge convention in all its demands, the ability to innovate, and the audacity to attempt originality" (2). Besides them being wonderful words of praise, Cantalupo also seems to emphasize the American character of Poe's work based on the

three aspects which she considers to be particularly American. Denying the American character of Poe's work is not desirable, but it would mean that his style cannot be considered universal.

In contrast to Cantalupo's suggestion of Poe's attraction being its quintessentially American nature, Chinese scholars Zhu Zhenwu 朱振武 and Deng Nana 邓娜娜 introduce another angle. According to them, Poe's influence on literature and other cultural expressions has developed into a cultural phenomenon they call *Ài lún · Pō xiànxàng* 爱伦·坡现象, the Poe Phenomenon. Besides representing a specifically American style of gothic literature, Poe's work is able to "satisfy the modern reader" (23) because it discusses universal values, like "the difficulties of human existence (*rénlèi shēngcún zhuàngtài wèntí* 人类生存状态问题)" (23) and because the work has "an artistic charm (*yìshù mèlì* 艺术魅力)" (23). Zhu and Deng emphasize the universal attraction of Poe's work, therefore strengthening the assumption that a research studying the cross-cultural genre as represented by Poe is a valid one.

2.3 Gothic and Mystery Literature in Japan

When it comes to horrific imagery in films, Japan has produced several films which became successful within Japan itself and abroad. Especially films like *Ringu* リング (The Ring, 1998) and *Juon* 呪怨 (The Grudge, 2000) have earned worldwide fame and American reinterpretations. However, the existence of 'scary' and grotesque stories was "not new in Japan" (Richie 218). In film, but also definitely in writing, Japan knows many horror fables and folk tales with a gothic feel to it. The following section will address the presence of these stories and that of modern Japanese *literature* which together solidify the idea of Japan having its own gothic tradition.

2.3.1 Japan's Gothic Tradition

An important study relating to Japan and its stories with gothic-like conventions was conducted by Henry J. Hughes in his *Familiarity of the Strange: Japan's Gothic Tradition* (2000). Just like Elbert and Marshall, Hughes argues for the consideration of the gothic being a universal human quality, instead of it belonging to only one culture (60). Even without a Western influence on Japanese writers, Japan's literary activities already included "subversion(s) of religious and social norms ... obsession(s) with sex and death, and a fear of the supernatural or unknown" (60). The 'gothic' writings Hughes hints at appear in several forms. He mentions supernatural tales with a Chinese origin (61), famous Japanese medieval chronicles which contain ghost references, exaggerated jealousy and violence (64-66) or early modern Japanese authors, like Ueda Akinari 上田秋成 (1734-1809) who wrote a 'gothic work' called *Ugetsu Monogatari* 雨月物語 (Tales of Moonlight and Rain, 1776). Written during the late Edo period (1603-1868), a time during which there was a large interest in grotesque and supernatural tales (66), the *Tales of Moonlight and Rain* can be seen as gothic because of its "gloomy medieval setting, the sweep of ghosts and demons, and the forces of sorcery and sex that disturb social and religious norms" (66-67). Hughes restricts his research mainly to texts created up until the Taishō period (1912-1923) while placing a large emphasis on works created before 1900. This approach strengthens his notion of Japan already having a gothic tradition before Western literary influences began to increase. By highlighting literary conventions like ghosts, violence, sinister laughter, tombs, obsessions, psychological exploration, doppelgängers and a desire for destruction, Hughes supports his idea of a Japanese gothic tradition and at the same time, he exemplifies how "[c]omparative cross-cultural genre studies allow us an opportunity to understand literature as a *human* rather than a purely *cultural* mode of expression" (85).

Also after 1900, the presence of 'Japanese gothic conventions' remained, only this time in modern Japanese *literature*. Just like concepts such as *art* or the development of modern

technology, the identification of writings as literature only began during the Meiji period (1868-1912). Generally considered as the historical period in which foreign influence in Japan increased rapidly, the Meiji period also saw the introduction of foreign or Western literature and the conventions that came with it. Japanologist Donald Keene mentions this expansion of Western literature when he writes that after a period during which “Japanese literature had dropped to one of its lowest levels” (“Modern Japanese Literature” 13), the Meiji period and its new inspiration material offered modern Japanese authors “the means of expressing their new ideas and their consciousness of being men of the enlightened Meiji Era” (16). One of the authors who enjoyed “something of a vogue at the time” (“Dawn to the West” 532) was Edgar Allan Poe. The first two works of Poe, which were translated to Japanese by Kōson Aeba 饗庭篁村, were *The Black Cat* and *The Murders in the Rue Morgue* in 1888 (Mizuta Lippit 221). As will become apparent in a later section, several late Meiji and Taishō authors used these and other of Poe’s works as an inspiration.

Still, the political changes in Japan did not mean a complete drawback from what had once been. In fact, “[t]he passion for European literature [and American literature one might add] continued, but to it was added a growing interest in the old Japan” (“Modern Japanese Literature” 25). A scholar who elaborates on this combination of modern Japanese literature and traditional Japanese fables and folk tales is Gerald Figal. In his book *Civilization and Monsters: Spirits of Modernity in Meiji Japan* (1999), Figal argues that “a *fushigiron* [a discourse on what is *fushigi* 不思議, meaning mysterious, supernatural or fantastic] existed as a constitutive force in Japanese modernity” (16). Attaching the connotation of a homogeneous Japanese identity to these traditional characters (spirits, monsters or any other mysterious creature) helped the Meiji government in bringing a, up until that point in time, fairly scattered population together. Traditional tales had not lost their appeal or function just yet.

Although somewhat brief, the previous discussion of a Japanese gothic tradition has tried to show how both before and after 1900, Japanese writings display a variety of gothic-like conventions and motifs. However, just like a slogan coined by Edo politician Sakuma Shōzan 佐久間象山 (1811-1864) which calls for “Eastern ethics, Western technical learning”, modern Japanese authors dealt with a tension between using the new foreign/Western literature and also falling back on old traditional Japanese tales (Yamanouchi 3). This interaction between a new gothic form from abroad and an already existing type of Japanese gothic as argued by Hughes enhances the feeling of gothic discourse being a cross-cultural phenomenon.

2.3.2 Japanese Mysteries and *Tantei Shōsetsu* 探偵小説

Besides the existence of a gothic tradition in Japan, there are also several examples of crime-like literature in Japan’s literary history. Mark Silver and Rosemary Herbert point out that “seventeenth-century trial narratives such as Ihara Saikaku’s *Honchō ooin hiji* (1689; Tales of Japanese Justice)” (n.p.) already paved the way for a Japanese crime genre. Characteristic of these narratives was not the use of a witty detective, but a wise judge instead. During the nineteenth century *kabuki* theatre dramatist Kawatake Mokuami 河竹黙阿弥 (1816-1893) was successful “with his plays about thieves and outlaws” (n.p.) and with the arrival of newspapers, “serialized and freely embroidered biographies of criminals” (n.p.) became readily available for Japanese readership.

However, as Silver and Herbert strongly emphasize, “[i]t was ... only with the influx of Western literature in the 1880s and 1890s that the classic detective story began to take hold in Japan” (n.p.). Translated works included Poe’s *The Murders in the Rue Morgue* in 1887 and Conan Doyle’s *Sherlock Holmes* in 1899. The circulation of these *tantei shōsetsu* 探偵小説 (detective fictions) was increased by journalist, novelist and translator Kuroiwa Ruikō 黒岩涙香 when he contributed translations and adaptations of more than sixty works by Western authors. It

was also Kuroiwa who is generally seen as having written the “earliest example ... of a story written in Japanese using the structure of the classic whodunit” (n.p.) called *Muzan* 無残 (cruelty or atrocity) in 1899.

Later examples of detective literature include Taishō writers like Tanizaki Junichiro and Akutagawa Ryūnosuke and Silver and Herbert pinpoint Edogawa Rampo as the “first full-time professional crime writer” (n.p.). This very short exploration of the mystery/detective tradition in Japan stops at this point, since these three authors highlight the perfect combination of Poe’s gothic writings and his detective fiction. To see how they incorporated gothic and mystery elements and references to Poe, the following section will briefly introduce and examine some of the works by Tanizaki Junichirō, Akutagawa Ryūnosuke and Edogawa Rampo.

2.3.3 Three Japanese Authors: Combining Gothic and Mystery Features

During the 1920s, Japanese crime literature could roughly be split into two varieties of writers.

As also mentioned by Silver and Herbert, there were those writing in a *honkaku-ha* 本格派探偵小説 (orthodox school or those adhering to the original form) fashion and those who can be referred to as *henkaku-ha* 変格派探偵小説 (unorthodox). The initial school aimed to write true puzzle and whodunit literature, while the latter “abandoned pure detection to focus on the fantastic, the macabre, the psychotic, and the erotic, often for their own sake” (n.p.). Especially the this *henkaku-ha* group is iconic for Japanese literature by Tanizaki, Akutagawa and, later in his life, Edogawa. Filled with elements resembling Poe (and of course other Western authors) and references to authentic Japanese folk tales and settings, this *henkaku-ha* is a fine example of a Western and Japanese combination.

2.3.3.1 Tanizaki Junichirō 谷崎潤一郎 (1886-1965)

As the early Japanese translator of Oscar Wilde’s *Portrait of Dorian Gray* (1891), Tanizaki’s connection to Western literature is apparent. He briefly attended the Literature Department of

Tokyo Imperial University, but due to insufficient funds he quit before completing the programme. This, however, did not stop him from getting engaged with literature. As for Tanizaki's indebtedness to Western literature, Donald Keene mentions in his anthology how "his early productions dealt mainly with themes which might have been suggested by the writings of Edgar Allan Poe" (25).

And indeed, his first famous short story *Shisei* 刺青 ("The Tattooer", 1910) already contains several characteristics of the gothic style used by Poe. The tattooer Seikichi is described as a talented professional, but he has "a secret pleasure, and a secret desire. His pleasure lay in the agony men felt as he drove his needles into them, torturing their swollen, blood-red flesh" ("Shisei" 161-162). Just like the narrator in "The Black Cat", Seikichi has a strange perverseness. When his other desire, namely the tattooing of a female body, becomes a reality, the element of darkness comes into play. He works on the tattoo "by candlelight" (167) and when it is finished, his drugged victim undergoing the tattoo session experiences a form of transformation. Instead of being the innocent young woman she was before she made her delivery to Seikichi, she has now become fearless and aggressive. On her back, Seikichi had tattooed a large black spider. As if possessed by the demonic image, she turns to Seikichi and says "[a]ll my old fears have been swept away – and you are my first victim" (169).

Different from the omniscient narrator in "Shisei", Tanizaki's *Kyōfu* 恐怖 ("Terror", 1913) is written from the first person perspective. Resembling the narrator of "The Tell-Tale Heart", the reader gets to experience what goes on inside the head of the protagonist. In "Kyōfu" the narrator is ill in such a way that he experiences "the agony of pure terror" ("Kyōfu" 86) whenever he boards a train like vehicle. Resembling the gothic element of confinement (Thomson 4), the narrator in "Kyōfu" fears he'll die if he were to enter the train to Ōsaka. Filled with feelings of dread, fear and, unsurprisingly, terror, Tanizaki's short story ends rather positively with the narrator boarding the train and thinking that "a tiny bud of confidence began

to unfold within me” (94). However, based on the motivation behind his travel, the reader knows that he is on his way for a military test, which, if he indeed were to pass, would surely endanger his life for real.

In this short illustration of works by Tanizaki, two other stories are worth mentioning. The first is *Bishoku Kurabu* 美食倶楽部 (“The Gourmet Club”, 1919). As the title suggests, this short story illuminates the activities of a small group who wish to try out as many culinary delights as possible. Their desire for food is obsessive and over the top, so when the leader of this group, Count G., stumbles upon a secretive Chinese restaurant his desire of dining there is immeasurable: “Count G. licked his lips several times and swallowed the saliva that had accumulated in his mouth, but the need to eat that surged up from the pit of his stomach became quite unbearable” (109). Near the end, the reader finds out that the exquisite menu of this restaurant is not filled with standard Chinese dishes, but with meals like “Bok Choi Fingers” (136) and “Deep-fried Woman, Korean Style” (138). Although it is also revealed that these do not truly refer to body parts, but to a sensation evoked by opium, the eating experience as described by Tanizaki is fairly revolting. Instead of using a plate, one of the restaurant’s guests, mister A, receives a massage in the dark when suddenly

the woman’s fingertips, which had been toying with his lips, were ... inserted inside.

After rummaging about in the space between the inside of his lips and his gums, they gradually moved in the direction of his tongue. His saliva stickily enveloped those five fingers, transforming them into vicious things – fingers, or something else ... It ought to have been quite distressing to have five fingers thrust into one’s mouth, yet A. felt no such distress. (134)

Evoking cannibalistic imagery and the sensation of bodily fluids, “Bishoku Kurabu” is exemplary for Tanizaki’s bizarre and perverse literature, one of the literary types he has become famous for.

A fourth example of Tanizaki’s work is his novel *Chijin no Ai* 痴人の愛 (*Naomi*, 1924). Leaving aside the plot of this satirical novel which revolves around a man’s obsessive love, the beginning of this narrative strongly resembles Poe’s “Ligeia”. The narrator in “Ligeia” is unable to remember where he met his first wife, but he does describe her mesmerizing with a strange beauty and her looks conjure up the image of “the slumbering souls of the daughters of Delos” (Poe 257). In *Chijin no Ai*, Tanizaki describes a highly identical scene: “[i]t was about seven years ago that I first met the woman who is now my wife, though I don’t remember the exact date ... Naomi resembled the motion-picture actress Mary Pickford: there was definitely something Western about her appearance” (Tanizaki 3-4). “Ligeia” and *Chijin no Ai*, are both narratives of a love obsession for women with foreign looks, reaffirming the connection between Poe and Tanizaki.

2.3.3.2 Akutagawa Ryūnosuke 芥川龍之介 (1892-1927)

Just like Tanizaki, Akutagawa Ryūnosuke was “a voracious reader, [who] discovered in many Western writers a rich source of literary inspiration both in form and subject-matter. Prosper Mérimée, Anatole France, Oscar Wilde, Edgar Allan Poe, to mention a few, exerted a considerable influence upon Akutagawa, and he is credited with introducing Ambrose Bierce to Japan.” (Tsuruta 14). And indeed, Akutagawa has written both ‘scary’ narratives and those resembling mystery or detective fiction. The manner in which he did so is described by Keene as a beginning with a “framework of events of an ancient tale” to which Akutagawa then “added modern psychological insights” (26). Through this method, Akutagawa demonstrates the before mentioned Japanese gothic tradition quite well.

One famous short story which shows this combination is *Yabu no Naka* 藪の中 (“In a Bamboo Grove”, 1921). Keeping in mind that Japanese literary history already had a tradition in which a judge had to decide what exactly took place at a crime scene, “Yabu no Naka” does have some affinity with Poe’s “The Murders in the Rue Morgue”. Relating to a murder in the bamboo grove, Akutagawa presents the reader with four witness reports and three testimonies concerning the death of a samurai. Although the witness reports of the woodcutter, the travelling priest, the policeman and the old woman are pretty similar, the testimonies each tell a completely different story. In short, a husband (Kanazawa no Takehiro) and wife (Masago) were tricked into following the criminal Tajōmaru. While promising them treasure, the intention of Tajōmaru is in fact the violation of Masago. After he has his way with her, however, it becomes unclear who eventually wound up killing Kanazawa no Takehiro. Tajōmaru claims that the violated Masago asks him to kill her husband, Masago says she saw the contempt in her husband’s eyes after her rape and that she therefore killed him and intended suicide. The third and final testimony is then given by the dead man’s spirit as told through a medium. This time it was indeed Tajōmaru who killed him without a particular reason, but the truth is never revealed. This detective like story is missing the detective, but in a way, the reader has to make a decision or not.

More gothic-like is Akutagawa’s *Hina* 雛 (“The Dolls”, 1923). This somewhat under exposed story is about a family of four who lost the majority of their wealth due to fall of the Tokugawa Shogunate (between 1853 and 1867). People who owed them money did not pay their debts and to make ends meet, the family has to sell “*the dolls* to a certain American in Yokohama” (154). The narrator, the daughter of the family called O-Tsuru, then describes how the intention of selling the boxed dolls leads to confusion within the family. Whereas none of the family members particularly cared for the dolls at first, there develops an obsession for them when the date of their selling gets closer. The mother becomes ill (“[t]he swelling on her lower lip – had it not become puffed up just like a red sweet potato? ... Needless to say, I was

horrified” (159)) and O-Tsuru keeps on asking to see the dolls just one more time. And even though O-Tsuru’s father denies her access to the dolls, it is eventually he himself who sees them for the last time. At night, O-Tsuru sees her father in the ill-lit storehouse quietly sitting in front of the unpacked dolls. It is unclear if he took them out himself or is perhaps the dolls were capable of getting out themselves, but the surprise of O-Tsuru does confirm the uncanny sight of the dolls outside of their boxes. Adding to the possibility of the dolls’ supernatural capabilities is the following sentences, uttered by O-Tsuru as if it was unimportant information: “Later, even when our parents died, my brother shed no tears. For a long time afterwards while he was taking an active interest in politics – until the time he was admitted to a mental asylum – he did not show any weakness” (164). Did her brother grow mad because of what happened later in his life or was he, as the only one unaffected by the dolls’ selling, still led to insanity after several years by the dolls? Akutagawa does not say and the possible further downfall of the family members remains unexplored.

2.3.3.3 Edogawa Rampo 江戸川乱歩 (1894-1965)

The connection between Edogawa Rampo and Edgar Allan Poe is easily visible. The pen name ‘Edogawa Rampo’ was taken on by Hirai Taro as a “phonetic play on Edgar Allan Poe, whom he helped to popularize in Asia” (Marling and Monguchi 27). Indeed, when reading the name slowly in its Japanese form (*edogāw-aranpō*) it is possible to detect Edgar Allan Poe. Taking over both Poe’s gothic style and his detective work, Edogawa Rampo has become one of the most famous (if not *the* most famous) Poe-inspired Japanese authors. Two Edogawa stories which were translated to English relatively early on (in 1956 by James B. Harris) were *Ningen Isu* 人間椅子 (“The Human Chair”, 1925) and *Shinri Shiken* 心理試験 (“The Psychological Test”, 1925).

“Ningen Isu” is perhaps Edogawa’s most famous short story. The female writer Yoshiko is looking over several manuscripts by amateur writers until a letter catches her eye. The author

of the letter wants to make a confession, but before doing so he has to make clear how he came to do what he will later on confess. The writer describes himself as a victim of “torture ... brought on by [his] ugliness” (5) and that he is nothing more than a “humble workman” making chairs (5). In between his work, he fantasizes about the beautiful women who will sit on his chairs until one day he is commissioned to make “a huge, leather covered armchair, of a type [he] had never before conceived” (7). While he is testing the chair “a weird idea suddenly leaped to [his] mind. Assuredly, it was the whispering of the devil himself” (8). The chair maker carries out his strange idea and within no time, the huge armchair contains a “cavity, one could remain perfectly concealed” (9) in. He rids himself of his clothes and takes a seat *within* the chair, completely hiding his presence and providing himself with a satisfactory sensation never felt before. Together with the chair, the chair maker moves to several locations and everywhere he enjoys the “maddening pleasure” of women sitting on his chair and indirectly, on his lap. The letter ends with the ultimate confession, namely that the chair now belongs to a female writer with whom the chair maker is very much in love. Indeed, it is Yoshiko herself. She grows pale, flees from the chair and gets chills all over her body thinking about the horrific experience. Edogawa ends his story with the arrival of a second letter which reveals the story to be untrue. One of the amateur writers had imagined the story including her chair.

This story by Edogawa contains a perfect build-up which causes suspense (Thomson 30). He used the element of obsession and the affection for Yoshiko resembles the gothic convention of pursuit of the heroine (22). Even though the chair does not truly house a man, the weird allusion of a person within the chair and the satisfaction he derives from it are enough to provide the reader with an unsettling and perhaps even scared feeling.

Edogawa’s “Shinri Shiken” is a fine example of a Japanese *tantei shōsetsu*. Part of a series surrounding Edogawa’s private detective Akechi Kogorō 明智 小五郎, this short story resembles Poe’s “The Tell-Tale Heart” as well. The omniscient narrator tells the story of the

university student Fukiya. Just like the narrator in “The Tell-Tale Heart”, Fukiya imagines himself the executioner of the perfect crime. Looking for an intellectual challenge, Fukiya decides to kill the landlady of one of his friends and steal her money. After visiting her several times, he kills her and afterwards he plants fake evidence. Also, he does not take all the money, but only half in order to throw of the police. Fukiya succeeds, but his friend become the main suspect instead. In fear of being exposed by his dim-witted friend who told him about the landlady’s wealth, Fukiya does everything in his power to avoid suspicion. And again he succeeds. However, the local police officer who stays suspicious of Fukiya eventually receives the help of Akechi Kogorō, “a sleuth with a mind keen as a razor and a unique technique for solving knotty problems” (50). And as expected, this detective is capable of solving the crime by paying attention to minute details and every word that comes out of Fukiya’s mouth. A small slip of the tongue ensures Fukiya’s arrest.

Edogawa’s “Shinri Shiken” takes place during the end of the Taishō period and employs modern techniques like a lie detector and there are several references to famous psychologists of the time like Hugo Münsterberg (1863-1916) and even earlier like Bernaldo de Quiros (1763-1837). At the same time, Edogawa appears to fall back on the Japanese tradition of wise judges, protagonists found in traditional Japanese crime narratives. At the end of “Shinri Shiken”, Akechi states that “[i]n conducting a psychological test, there is no need for strange charts, machines, or word games. As discovered by the famous Judge Ooka ... it’s not difficult to catch criminals in psychological traps. But of course, you have to ask the right questions” (63). Again, within one short story, modern references and gothic/detective conventions are combined with a Japanese context and a Japanese reflection on what is necessary to catch the culprit.

What the analyses of Poe, Tanizaki, Akutagawa and Edogawa tried to achieve was to show how conventions belonging to the genre of gothic and detective fiction can be seen in both American and Japanese literature. Poe elaborated on and played with conventions coming from

Europe and Tanizaki, Akutagawa and Edogawa picked up Poe's style and made it their own. The next chapter will try and see if the same can be done for another genre, namely that of weird literature, and what would happen if the comparison was not contained within literature, but also conducted outside of the box, meaning in the area of more contemporary popular culture adaptations.

3. Weird Fiction: a Cross-Cultural Genre Expressed in Popular Culture

Since it is very similar to the gothic genre, it is possible to see *weird fiction literature* or *weird tales* (from here onwards reduced to *weird literature*) as either a genre on its own or a subgenre under the wider gothic/horror umbrella genre. An important figure in the definition and the execution of weird literature was the American author Howard Philips Lovecraft. The magazine *Weird Tales* was the magazine which published many of Lovecraft's works. In *The Encyclopedia of Fantasy* (1997), John Clute and John Grant characterise this magazine as “the legendary pulp fantasy magazine” (1000) catering to genre-fantasy and horror writers and readers alike. *Weird Tales* magazine published writings which combined fantasy- and horror-like pieces and, as Clute and Grant also point out, “the most influential contributor at this time was undoubtedly Lovecraft” (1001). Regarding him as the best representative of the weird tale, or weird fiction genre, this chapter will first give an illustration of his work in general and then move on to how his work was used and elaborated upon in a Japanese popular culture context.

3.1 H.P. (Howard Phillips) Lovecraft (1890-1937) and his Weird Fiction

Born more than eighty years after Poe, Lovecraft made great use of the gothic/horror master's oeuvre. In an interview, Lovecraft himself mentioned Poe: “My ideal weird author would be a kind of synthesis of the atmospheric tensivity of Poe, the cosmic range and luxuriant invention of Dunsany, the bottom-touching implications of Machen, and the breathlessly convincing unrealism of Algernon Blackwood” (“H.P. Lovecraft's Favorite Authors” n.p.). And indeed, when describing the literature he creates, Lovecraft again includes gothic conventions as found in Poe's work, but he also adds to it. His own understanding of weird literature is as follows:

The true weird tale has something more than secret murder, bloody bones, or a sheeted form clanking chains according to rule. A certain atmosphere of breathless and unexplainable dread of outer unknown forces must be present, and there must be a hint ...

of that terrible conception of the human brain – a malign and particular suspension or defeat of those fixed laws of Nature which are our only safeguard against the assaults of chaos and the daemons of unplumbed space. (“Supernatural Horror in Literature” n.p.)

Besides the existence of something *unknown* and outside of Nature’s laws, Lovecraft also emphasizes the importance of *cosmic fear* in his writings. According to Lovecraft, true weird tale literature or weird fiction needs to contain a dark and maleficent form of cosmic mystery which is “naturally enhanced by the fact that uncertainty and danger are always closely allied; thus making any kind of an unknown world a world of peril and evil possibilities” (n.p.). The characters in weird fiction create a fear for what they do not know.

In an earlier discussion of Lovecraft’s work, the author of this current study also discussed two other characteristics. First is the *opposition between the monster* (the antagonist) *and the human* (the protagonist). The relationship between the two is not rigid or unbridgeable. In fact, there is often a form of recognition of the protagonist with the monster. A second feature mentioned was the *open-endedness* of many stories. Near the conclusion of several of Lovecraft’s stories, it often happens that the situation remains unresolved. A similar ending is when characters think they have escaped, but in reality, they have not. Often the ending of the story hints at the continuation of the confusion or the reappearance of the monster which is troubling the protagonist. Another variation is the absence of a “proper” explanation for what has happened or simply the absorption of the protagonist into the realm of the antagonists.

3.1.1 Lovecraft’s Cosmism and The Cthulhu Mythos

Lovecraft has written many short stories, but the most famous ones are almost all related to the Lovecraft’s *cosmism* and his famous monster *Cthulhu* (pronounce like khlûl-hloo). The majority of Japanese adaptations of Lovecraft discuss these two concepts, so an introduction of both is useful.

Even though Lovecraft may never have intended to create a proper theory or philosophy, the returning themes of his short stories did this for him. In his work *The New Annotated H.P. Lovecraft* (2014), attorney and literary editor Leslie S. Klinger describes Lovecraft's cosmism as follows: "Lovecraft's essential view was that much of the cosmos is in fact without rules, at least rules intelligible to humans, and that it is not only inaccurate but inartistic to depict alien beings and worlds in human terms" (lxi). As said, Lovecraft never anticipated the formulation of such a world view, but over the years, Lovecraft fans began to see this idea on the cosmos as a fundamental Lovecraft trademark. And indeed, many of Lovecraft's stories contain a reference to alien races or unknown world beyond the comprehension of humans.

The Cthulhu Mythos is part of this Lovecraftian cosmic view. Currently the terms is primarily used to indicate the fandom of Lovecraft and the many works which have been created based on his influence. The word Cthulhu refers to, perhaps, Lovecraft's most famous short story, *The Call of Cthulhu* (1928). In this story, all of the mentioned weird literature elements come together. The narrator Francis Thurston tells his audience that he found some weird notes and a small bas-relief sculpture amongst the inheritance left by his granduncle. The notes often mention the words *Cthulhu* and *R'lyeh* and the bas-relief showed the image of a strange being: "[i]t seemed to be a sort of monster, or symbol representing a monster, or a form which only a diseased fancy could conceive ... my somewhat extravagant imagination yielded simultaneous pictures of an octopus, a dragon, and a human caricature" (Lovecraft, 126-127). Not before long, Thurston also finds a document titled "Cthulhu Cult" (127) which tells a rather disturbing story. His granduncle was visited by a man with weird dreams in which he saw hieroglyphics, walls and pillars and heard a constant repetition of *Cthulhu* and *R'lyeh*. Thurston's granduncle is able to connect the dreams of this man to some reports on groups worldwide which had experienced collective folly while performing some sort of ancient ritual. One such gathering included the sacrifice of human bodies and the chanted phrase: "Ph'nglui mglw'nafh Cthulhu R'lyeh

wgah'nagl fhtagn", which translated to "In his house at R'lyeh dead Cthulhu waits dreaming" (137). The cult which was eventually arrested claimed to be worshipping the Great Old Ones "who lived ages before there were any men, and who came to the young world out of the sky" (140-141). Cthulhu was one of these Great Old Ones and in the final part of *The Call of Cthulhu*, Lovecraft describes a meeting between a shipwrecked sailor Gustaf Johansen and the alien deity. Thurston receives a handwritten report of Johansen's experiences and learns that the man was on the island where, apparently, Cthulhu laid in slumber for over "vigintillions of years" (155). The unlucky sailor unleashed the monstrous 'thing' and what he saw was the following:

The Thing cannot be described – there is no language for such abysses of shrieking and immemorial lunacy, such eldritch contradictions of all matter, force, and cosmic order. A mountain walked or stumbled. God! ... The Thing of the idols, the green, sticky spawn of the stars, had awaked to claim his own. (155)

At this point in time, Thurston is convinced of the existence of Cthulhu and he quickly tries to cover up his findings. Just like those who came into contact with the cult before him, he too fears for his life, since he knows too much "and the cult still lives" (157).

The Call of Cthulhu is not the only short story which deals with the existence of the Great Ones. Other stories are *The Dunwich Horror* (1929), *At the Mountains of Madness* (1936) and *The Shadow Over Innsmouth* (1936). The Cthulhu mythos in Japan is quite prominent and the figures of Cthulhu and the other Great Ones are often used when a new addition to the mythos is created.

3.2 Lovecraft's Weird Literature in Japanese Literature

Before moving on to Lovecraftian styles and references in Japanese popular culture, it might still worth repeating that Japanese literature is not free from weird or fantasy-like features. Just like

traditional folk tales with its monsters and ghost may belong to gothic literature, so too they may function as exemplifying weird literature. However, the amount of literature using the style of weird literature as developed by Lovecraft at the beginning of the twentieth century is scarce.

One of the short novels that comes close is *Kappa* 河童 (1927) by Akutagawa Ryūnosuke. Although a real link between Akutagawa and Lovecraft is so far unknown, it might prove to be even more interesting that Akutagawa used several ‘weird literature’ conventions without knowing of Lovecraft doing the same. In *Kappa*, the reader follows the life of a psychiatric patient who falls into a hole when he chases a kappa, an animal/monster from Japanese folklore Tales. This Lewis Carroll-like beginning results in the patient’s arrival in Kappaland. Once he is there, he encounters a civilisation not very different from the human world, but gradually the details of Kappaland appear to be quite gruesome: the solution for unemployment is killing the unemployed and the courting rituals of the kappa are also pretty violent. However, despite these weird characteristics, the patient ultimately prefers Kappaland over the human world.

Explaining the background and meaning of *Kappa*, G.H. Healy states in his introduction to the translation by Geoffrey Bownas’ that “Not only his love of literature but also that taste for the weird and grotesque that reveals itself in his writings was acquired in childhood. The kusazōshi [Japanese woodblock-printed picture books] that were his earliest reading were often illustrated with lurid pictures of goblins and monsters” (17). As for meaning, the general interpretation of the story is that Akutagawa’s work is a “macro-satire of an entire country, the Japan of the Taishō period” (Napier 182). But even though *Kappa* at times defies natural laws (for example, when baby Kappa can choose whether or not they want to be born), contains monsters, weird events and horrible ideas, the story is not a very convincing Lovecraft-like weird fiction. It lacks a cosmic fear and the presence of a clear antagonistic evil.

A more contemporary example of Japanese Lovecraftian literature is the *Lairs of the Hidden Gods* series (2005-200). Split into four volumes, this collection of Japanese short stories truly is the afterlife of Lovecraft and his weird literature in Japan. In the introduction to the first volume *Night Voices, Night Journeys* (2005), theologian and Lovecraft enthusiast Robert M. Price identifies the collection as “Japanese Lovecraftian fiction” (n.p.). The series was started by the Japanese author and Lovecraft fan Asamatsu Ken 朝松健 and it contains both essays on Lovecraft in Japan and original short stories written in a Lovecraftian fashion. In his review of the second volume *Inverted Kingdom* (2005), contributor to the horror entertainment website *Fright Site* Adam Groves describes the stories as “first rate” and he is particularly fond of being able to experience “the H.P. Lovecraft created mythos through Japanese sensibilities” (n.p.). The short stories combine traditional Japanese features like Kabuki theatre with Lovecraft’s style and content and as such, the *Lairs of the Hidden God* series perfectly supports the qualification of Lovecraft’s weird literature being a cross-cultural genre.

3.2 Lovecraft’s Weird Literature in Japanese Popular Culture

Whether it is through a song called *Danuicchi no Kai* ダンウィッチの怪 (The Dunwich Horror, 1998) by the Japanese metal band *Ningen Isu* (The Human Chair, a band name referring back to Edogawa Rampo’s short story) or in an eighties Dungeons and Dragons-like role playing game called *Kuturufu no Yobigoe* クトゥルフの呼び声 (1986), post-war and contemporary Japanese popular culture is definitely not free from references to Lovecraft. To illustrate the potential of popular culture in the preservation and continuation of Lovecraft’s weird literature, the following passage will discuss several examples of how both his stories/characters and his style have been converted to suit typical Japanese popular culture phenomena, namely *manga* and *anime*.

An artist famous for his weird and Lovecraftian manga is Itō Junji 伊藤 潤二 (1963). Himself categorized as a “Japanese horror maestro” by the San Diego art periodical *78 magazine*

and his work *Uzumaki* うずまき (*Spiral*, 1998-1999) described as “a masterpiece of weird horror” (18:49 min.) by Jonathan Ross in his documentary series *Japanorama* (2002-2007). Itō Junji is an important artist in the creation of unique horror stories and weird manga settings. He not only employs a Lovecraftian style and content, but he also falls back on Japanese classics, like the earlier discussed *Ningen Isu* by Edogawa Rampo. However, the inspiration of Lovecraft is apparent. In his interview with 78 magazine, Itō states his inspiration for *Uzumaki* when he says that “[t]he different stages of the spiral were definitely inspired from the mysterious novels of H.P. Lovecraft. His expressionism with regard to atmosphere greatly inspires my creative impulse” (Bai Winsby n.p.). In the English translation of *Uzumaki* by Viz Media, Itō is also described as being influenced by Lovecraft. And indeed, *Uzumaki* is a suitable addition to the Cthulhu mythos. A small town called Kurōzu is plagued by unexplainably weird events: the father of the protagonist’s boyfriend deforms his body to become a spiral (40-41), people turn into snails with a spiral on their shell (246) and a hurricane with a mind of its own destroys the village (376). *Uzumaki* ends with a Lovecraftian kind of revelation, since the village was apparently built on top of an ancient city of spirals (600-601). So even though *Uzumaki* does not refer to one of the Great Ones, it is filled with terrifying imagery and impossible events. Also, the repeated indebtedness of Itō to Lovecraft makes it a work inspired by Lovecraft’s weird fiction genre which could possibly lead to more people picking up one of Lovecraft’s original works.

More obvious Japanese adaptations are the puppet television programme *H.P.*

Rawukurafuto no Danicchi Horā Sono Hokano Monogatari H・P・ラヴクラフトのダニッ

チ・ホラーその他の物語 (H.P. Lovecraft’s Dunwich Horror and Other Stories Like It, 2007)

or the light novel *Haiyore! Nyaruko-san* 這いよれ! ニャル子さん (literally meaning Crawl Up!

Nyaruko-san, but known under the title *Nyaruko: Crawling with Love*). The first show tries to

stay true to the original Lovecraft stories as much as possible, but the latter underwent a totally

Japanese style transformation. Instead of a horrifying monster, the protagonist Nyaruko is a “formless Cthulhu deity of chaos (Nyarlathotep) who can take on the shape of a seemingly ordinary silver-haired girl” (“Crunchyroll to Stream Haiyore! Nyaruko-san TV Anime” n.p). Filled with character names referring to Lovecraft’s stories, this series appears to be miles away from the original text, but it is still one of the afterlives of Lovecraft in Japan. Belonging to the Cthulhu Mythos, *Haiyore! Nyaruko-san* is an unexpected Lovecraft interpretation. However, appearing as a light novel, manga, anime series and game, *Haiyore! Nyaruko-san* reaches a wide audience and by using Lovecraftian terminology, it can contribute, at least partially, to the spreading of Lovecraft’s’ weird literature universe.

Having mentioned several famous expressions of Lovecraft’s work in Japanese popular culture, this research would also like to mention three interesting blogs which discuss even more examples of Japanese contributions to the Cthulhu Mythos. Written by Jason Thompson in 2010, the blog entry *The Long Tentacle of H.P. Lovecraft in Manga* lists and discusses a variety of Japanese interpretations of Lovecraft. Despite the announced focus on manga, Thompson also discusses books, (animated) films and games which all share either plotlines, characters, visual references, settings or a combination of these elements with Lovecraft’s weird literature and his Cthulhu Mythos. The second blog titled *Lovecraft’s Descent Into Insanity (Or is it Inanity?)* (2011) contains a timeline of Lovecraft related books and expressions of popular culture. Starting with none other than Edogawa Rampo in the 1940s up until the 2000s, a blogger with the username DrSenbei gives a long list of all kinds of Lovecraft inspired reworking. From literature to computer games, Dr Senbei shuns practically none. A third and final blog entry appeared on The Lovecraft eZine and is an essay by Justin Mullis, an alumni from the University of North Caroline at Charlotte. Discussing *The Cthulhu Mythos in Japan* (2013), Mullis introduces several literary works based on Lovecraft, including the already mentioned *Lairs of the Hidden Gods* by Asamatsu Ken. Although this study does not claim to know all the blog

entries written on Lovecraft in Japan, the mentioning of these three entries is to indicate the large quantities of Japanese adaptations of Lovecraft and his weird literature and the different forms of popular culture in which they can appear. Whereas reading the blogs is recommended for those interested, a simple glance at the blog's length will point out the popularity of Lovecraft among Japanese artists and writers.

Conclusion

The intention of this study was twofold. On the one hand, it wanted to show how a cross-cultural genre comparison could be done and how the genre of gothic literature and mystery/detective literature is very suitable for this kind of research. On the other hand, the aim was to stretch the methodology of cross-cultural genre comparisons. Unlike the common practice of analysing a genre within literature only, this study wanted to try and include other textual expressions like those found in contemporary popular culture. So not only an exploration of a genre or source text in another country's literature, but also some other ways in which literature can increase its influence circle and name recognition. The first objective employed the gothic and detective stories of Edgar Allan Poe and the second focused on the weird literature by H.P. Lovecraft.

The initial exploration of World Literature and transcultural narratives indicated the possibility, and indeed, an existing academic practice of studying literature across borders. The ways in which these types of studies are conducted can vary. It is, for example, possible to look at translations of a classic author (even though the term classic should not be given out too easily according to Eliot) or at adaptations of a certain narratives in other contexts and cultures. Both translations and adaptations are considered as valid texts on their own and both have a status besides the original they were derived from. Another method which allows for the comparison between works of different cultures is based on the concept of genre. Cross-cultural genre comparisons as done by Walker tries to look at the relationship between two cultures using a similar genre. In this study, these genres were gothic, mystery/detective and weird literature. And indeed, both America and Japan possessed their own literary traditions which could be seen as falling in either of these three categories.

At the same time it also became visible how conventions are shared by several genres. The generic cues as mentioned by Frow can be applied to multiple genres and therefore it can become problematic when wanting to categorise one author in one generic field. This is

impossible and Edgar Allan Poe exemplifies this. Not only was he fundamental in the formation of the American gothic, he also holds the title of the writer of the first detective story. A third accomplishment of Poe, albeit posthumous, is that of providing inspiration for a new type of literature in a different nation than his own. Modern Japanese literature used many Western works and Poe is one of the most influential within this group of writers. Combining his style with an already existing Japanese gothic tradition, authors like Tanizaki, Akutagawa and Edogawa were able to express their sentiments towards modernity and the changing social and political landscape of their time. Although this latter element is left somewhat neglected, the ability of the gothic and mystery/detective genre to cross the borders and smoothly connect to Japanese writing and genre styles *is* established.

This leads to the third chapter of this study in which another approach towards cross-cultural genre comparison is tried out. Already indicated as an experiment, an attempt was made to connect the literary conventions of weird tale literature as written by H.P. Lovecraft to a similar Japanese practice. One of the Japanese literary traditions which comes close to Lovecraft's weird fiction is that of fables and folktales, but it is not comparable with the resemblance of gothic and detective literature in America and Japan. However, Lovecraft's influence and usage by Japanese artists and storytellers *is* present. If the comparison would not only cross the cultural, but also the medial divide, a large presence of Lovecraftian stories in Japan will become visible. And even though the absence of a comparable Japanese genre remains, the inclusion of popular culture expressions does show that there is a Japanese audience for Lovecraft's early twentieth century weird tales. Therefore, the proposal of not only making genre comparisons within literature, but also between literature and other mediums still stands and this study also invites other scholars to explore the cross-cultural and cross-medial possibilities within genre studies. Because, to conclude with the somewhat changed wording of

Miyazaki Hayao, the road of popular culture could turn out to be an interesting, valuable and rewarding one.

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