

The Concept of 'Supernaturalism' in British and American Fiction: A Comparative Study

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Abstract: Supernatural fiction invites the reader to a world of mystery and imagination raising questions and sometimes doubts about the reality of this world. As it tempts the reader to explore the "unknown", it tends to emphasize the possibility of the existence of vague worlds and issues beyond human mind and science. However, this possibility remains a hypothesis because it is always accompanied by a feeling of "uncertainty" which raises our doubts and made us skeptic about the existence and reality of this world.

The same supernatural literary works tackle social, religious, and scientific issues as well as posing questions about its reliability which is another form of skepticism. This research argues that *Skepticism* is not far from the Gothic literary works, it presents various cases of "skepticism" in different supernatural literary works: *The Rime of the ancient Mariner* (1798), *Frankenstein* (1818), *Young Goodman Brown* (1835), *The Fall of the House of Usher* (1839). Each case of skepticism differs from the other in its form, the circumstances that created it, the purpose behind using it, and the conclusion it ends in. So, analyzing "Skepticism" its existence, different forms and contexts, and connection to Gothic fiction is the main motive of this research.

Keywords: Supernaturalism, Fiction, Skepticism, Comparison.

عالم ما وراء الطبيعة في الأدب الإنجليزي والأمريكي: دراسة مقارنة

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المستخلص: يقوم أدب الماورائيات بدعوة القارئ الى عالم من الخيال والغموض طارحا العديد من الأسئلة المحيرة حول حقيقة هذا العالم، إذ يقوم بإغراء القارئ لاكتشاف المجهول مثيرا في الوقت ذاته الشكوك حيال ماهيته. عادة ما يقوم أدب الماورائيات بتأكيد إمكانية وجود أمور غامضة تكون فوق قدرات العلم والعقل البشري إلا ان هذه الإمكانية تظل مجرد افتراض، لأنها دائما ما يقترن بحالة من عدم التأكيد التي قد تجعلنا نشكك بوجود عالم ما وراء الطبيعة. يعد الشك عنصراً أساسياً في كتابة أدب الماورائيات إذ يتخذ شكلين أساسيين يتمثل الأول بالحيرة التي تصيب القراء عند تحليل أحداث العمل الأدبي، والآخر وهو الأكثر تعقيدا يتمثل بنقد بعض الظواهر والاتجاهات والزعات الاجتماعية والعلمية وليدة عصرها التي قد يشكك الكاتب بمصداقيتها ومدى فعاليتها والفائدة المرجوة منها في حال تطبيقها في المجتمع. سواء كان هذا الشك موقفاً شخصياً للكاتب حيال فكره معينة أو شعوراً عابراً يعترى القارئ عند قراءة النص الأدبي، فإنه يعد عنصراً أساسياً لا يكاد يخلو منه أدب الماورائيات. يهدف هذا البحث الى مناقشة نماذج مختلفة لطرح عنصر الشك في أربعة أعمال أدبية مختلفة مصنفة ضمن أدب ما وراء الطبيعة وهي: قصيدة البحار العجوز ١٧٩٨، فرانكشتاين ١٨١٨، السيد براون ١٨٣٥، سقوط منزل اشرف ١٨٣٩ ومن ثم المقارنة بينها من حيث تختلف كل حاله عن الأخرى في أسباب تكوينها والهدف المرجو منها.

الكلمات المفتاحية: ما وراء الطبيعة – أدب – الشك/الحيرة – مقارنة.

Introduction:

The existence of the supernatural element in literature creates different reactions and attitudes. On the one hand we have strong believers of this inexplicable, and unseen world, those who adopt and adhere to such beliefs. On the other hand, we have the total opposite: the fierce attackers, the disbelievers who refuse to believe in such concepts and world. In between these two categories, we have an intermediate reaction in which the reader finds himself swinging between faith and doubt. Between the desire to believe and to know more, and the decision to refuse and deny. This situation of confusion is called incertitude or uncertainty and it is likely to be classified as a form of "skepticism". *Skepticism* is not far from Supernatural fiction where no certainty is found. It takes more than one form and it exists in more than one context. For example, it can be found as an attitude of *doubt* and criticism for certain concepts and phenomena, or a situation of uncertainty, and in some other cases it is an example of ignorance where the person needs to learn and know more about the metaphysical world which does not subject to logic and law of nature.

The quest for truth has always been an essential human concern and demand. The human mind has always been occupied by developing methods to obtain this truth, however, the claim to obtain and know the ultimate truth remains questionable. Throughout history, philosophers have had a fierce debate concerning the potentiality to obtain the ultimate truth, and they have developed numerous methods by which they can gain knowledge and assess *truth*. The most prominent among these methods is "doubt".

The process of searching for truth is usually accompanied by an attitude of doubting the information until it is proved accurate. Doubting an assumption takes more than one form, it is sometimes realized in being "uncertain" about it, or "denying" it, or "searching for logical evidences" to support it. No matter what form of doubt we adopt, the process of doubt exists and has been systemized throughout history, taking a standard form of philosophy called: *Skepticism*.

Objectives of the Study:

- 1- To investigate the nature of "skepticism" in supernatural fiction.
- 2- To compare its different forms in some nineteenth century selected supernatural literary works.

Research Method:

A comparative method which attempts to analyze and compare the treatment of "Skepticism" in selected literary works in the nineteenth century supernatural fiction.

Rationale:

Analyzing supernatural fiction from the point of view of its connection to "Skepticism" is the instrument used to fulfill the objectives of this research. This researcher argues that *Skepticism* is not far from the supernatural fiction. It intends to investigate and compare the existence of "skepticism" in four supernatural literary texts. Each case of skepticism differs from the other in its form, the circumstances that created it, the purpose behind using it, and the conclusion it ends in. Discussing supernatural fiction from this angle differs from the traditional approaches to discuss Supernatural fiction, and it is hopefully considered among the distinct attempts to analyze supernatural fiction differently.

Results:

The results suggest that "Skepticism" is an essential element in forming the structure of nineteenth century supernatural fiction, and it takes various forms and functions decided by the social currents of the age and the writers aims.

What is Skepticism?

Western Philosophy defines skepticism as the attitude of doubting claims of having knowledge in various areas. It may have more than one definition, but all the different definitions share two main elements which are: a-Doubt b- Contiguous inquiry

The Function of Skepticism:

The word *Skeptic* comes from the Greek root "Spektikos" and also from the Latin "Skeptikus" which both mean to seek, search and test. This helps to make the word defined as the person who questions the validity and authenticity of any claim supposed to be true, and who challenges the reliability of this claim by questioning the principles it is based upon.

A skeptic is a person who also questions if any claim, theory, or assumption is true as it is alleged to be. He/she is not a denier nor a disbeliever, but a seeker for the ultimate truth which he thinks cannot be found in any dogmas, theories, or assumptions, especially those which society or education force us to accept. He challenges the customary ideas showing their limitations, and he does not see any system or belief as reliable. Usually, skeptics maintain a doubting attitude towards values and theories where they put everything related to these values in question. Their main goal is to prevent people including themselves from resting in certainty and keep searching for the truth.

The function of skepticism differed throughout history. In the ancient world, it was recommended as a way of life because there was a general claim that living with an attitude of skeptical doubt is superior to living with an attitude of dogmatic certainty. In a later period (1600: 1800) skepticism was regarded as a practical problem and skeptical doubt was considered a state of mind to be avoided or overcome, and a considerable philosophical energy was put into strategies for doing so. Nowadays, Modern skeptics regard doubt as a necessary feature of the pursuit for knowledge. They depend on perceptions and willingness to doubt everything.

Varieties of Skepticism:

Skepticism has come to mean religious disbelief since the Enlightenment but this is not the only kind and form of it. Skepticism has many kinds which are defined according to the motivation of the skeptic. There are various kinds of skepticism which exist in areas in which doubts can be aroused. It can be practiced about any knowledge claims but it is mainly connected to three main fields.

- a. Religion
- b. Philosophy
- c. Science

a. Religion:

Skeptics of religion have questioned the doctrines of different traditions and their religious claims. Some skeptics are agnostics and atheists, but this is not the case all the time because there are a number of religious people who are skeptical about religion. These skeptics doubt beliefs which seem to be in conflict with the expected role and/or essence of religion.

b. Philosophy:

Philosophical skeptics question whether anything can be actually known with complete certainty. Most of them believe that there is no knowledge at all.

c. Science:

In ancient times scientific skepticism questioned whether one could know with certainty either the cause or the cure of diseases. As science developed in modern times, doubts were aroused about various widely accepted scientific beliefs and theories. For example, the aliens theory which states that aliens exist and that they have visited the earth in the past. Another example of theories which arouse doubts is the flat earth story.

Apart from these three main types, other sub- types exist such as:

a. Metaphysical Skepticism:

It is the type of skepticism which is related to metaphysical issues. It doubts the validity of paranormal claims and questions whether we can gain any certain knowledge in metaphysics. For example, belief in ghosts, astrology in a sense that the celestial bodies affect people, Bermuda Triangle with its weird occurrences, and the belief that full moon and other planets affect human behavior and actions.

b. Moral Skepticism:

It doubts what behavior is right from wrong and it claims that no one can know what is right from wrong.

Connection Between skepticism and Gothic Literature:

The connection between Skepticism and literature takes Four forms. First it is related to the interpretation of the meaning of a literary work. Readers always ask themselves “what does this literary work mean? “. Skepticism takes place when we have doubts whether we are really sure about the meaning of it especially that interpretations do not always succeed in reaching the meaning of the literary work because it is conceivable that interpretations produced in even ideal circumstances can err.

Second, some literary works use skepticism as a tool to criticize certain idea or attitude. This happens when the writer questions a cultural, political or religious idea or practice. Third, skepticism is found taking the form of “doubt” as a main theme of the literary work. Fourth, in other different cases we find that the philosophical ideas of famous skeptics have a direct influence on the authors and that these ideas penetrate their literary works. Regarding Gothic literature, the connection between it and skepticism is stronger. Skepticism in gothic literature is represented in doubts and a lack of certainty which is a fundamental component and important element in the texture of most of horror stories and Gothic novels.

Gothic literature prompts us to search for truth more than any other genre of writing, and it depends on analysis and introspection more than the other genres because it tackles supernatural themes and issues. Analysis and skepticism go hand in hand in the Gothic literary work because analysis involves breaking the literary work into elements as concepts, ideas, and abstract principles. The skeptic whether he is a character or a reader for the gothic literature does the same thing when he breaks any claim searching for the truth.

It is important to mention that the type of skepticism in Gothic literature is not mainly a philosophical one, the form of skepticism in Gothic literature takes the form of *ambiguity* and *suspense*. Three important psychologists: Andrew Ortony, Gerald L. Clore, and Allan Collins developed the standard account theory of suspense which holds that suspense is made up of three main elements: fear, hope, and the cognitive state of uncertainty. (Matta 275).

The theory states that suspense arises in two main positions: The first is when individuals have fears of a bad outcome, and the second is when individuals hope for a good outcome. In both cases, suspense is connected to the unknown, and it is a level of uncertainty which determines the level of suspense. (Matta 276). Suspense is always linked to mystery and mystery is associated with the *unknown*, irrational, inexplicable and incomprehensible which equals the supernatural and at the same time it forms the main element of Gothic fiction. The use of the *unknown* is to arouse mystery and mystery creates doubt and therefore creates an attitude of skepticism.

1- Skepticism in The Rime of the Ancient Mariner:

I. Religious discussion of “Original Sin”:

Samuel Taylor Coleridge is one of the significant figures of the early nineteenth century England. He is a controversial character whose poetic talent is equal to his critical sense and radical thought. Coleridge’s radicalism is realized in criticizing the political and religious norms of his age and his attempts to speak up and correct things which he thinks that they are wrong.

His resentment with the religious institutions of his time was obvious, he was not satisfied with the Corruption of the Church of England and with the explanation of some inherited Christian notions which he suspects. His main objection and discontent with the church was with the way they adopt and explain the notion of “Original sin”. He disagrees with the notion, and his disagreement with the general situation, developed and made him retreat and change his religious sect searching for the truth which can satisfy his mind and soul in an attitude that can be labeled as “skeptic” since it expressed his doubts and resentment about certain notions of the actual religious tendency at that time.

Coleridge’s discontent with the church is reflected in his poem: *The Rime of The Ancient Mariner*. The poem that may appear for the first sight as a creepy tale based on horror and fantasy, is more complicated because it obtains spiritual and philosophical dimensions. It indicates Coleridge’s interest in philosophy and states his religious views within a symbolic journey which can be

paralleled to Coleridge's spiritual life in a time when he suffered a faith crisis which led him to sin and which fortunately ended in faith recovery and repentance.

"As Coleridge himself came to realize much later, the shape of this story was to be the shape of his own life. With an uncanny clarity, image, and event after event in the poem became emblems of what Coleridge was later to suffer and discover." (Guit, 2018, p. 4).

His attitude towards the notion of "Original sin" can be analyzed within two frames religious and philosophical and in each one he presented his unorthodox thoughts and explanation of this concept.

a. Coleridge's Christian Upbringing and belief:

Coleridge was born in 1772, into an Anglican⁽¹⁾ family, his father is reverend John Coleridge, the vicar of St Mary's Church and the headmaster of King's school, a free grammar school established by king Henry the eighth. After the father's death, he attended Christ's Hospital Charity school whose lodging and education was provided free to the sons of clergy and there he could obtain a sufficient grounding in Latin, Greek and Literature. He then joined Jesus College, Cambridge in 1791 which had strong links with Christ's hospital. His family expected him to fulfill their expectations and enter The Anglican ministry, but he met there Robert Southey who caused him drop college and encouraged him pursue his poetic and political ambitions.

Cambridge at that time was following the wave of idealism generated in the early days of the French revolution. This had a great impact on Coleridge who was an enthusiastic radical. As most of people at that period of time, Coleridge's religious views were affected by the general political climate of the country, and that was reflected negatively on his attitude and feelings towards his university. As an intellectually rebellious youth, Coleridge was against the university political and religious climate because he was not comfortable with the contradiction of the university policy which claimed liberty and human rights in the distant islands but at the same time prosecuted its students for expressing the same liberal views in England. Things were not better in the religious side where no real freedom was given. One of the incidents which affected Coleridge religious belief was when his tutor at Jesus College, William Frend, was placed on trial in 1793 by the fellows of Jesus College for being a unitarian⁽²⁾ (a unitarian who also opposes the war against republican France) and no longer supporting Anglicanism.

He was tried in the senate House in May 1793 on the double charges of sedition and defamation of the Church of England. The focus of the trial was the "Rationalist Deism", so as an expected result, Frend was banished from the university, but he remained in touch with Coleridge who was strongly moved by his trial that he thought to reconsider his religious views, especially that at that period of time most of the Radicals and Jacobians who stand against the British government and its established church were dissenters in religion, and most of those who want liberal England were Unitarians. All these factors attracted Coleridge towards Unitarianism and even though he was a son of a church of England vicar, his religious views were moving to a Unitarian church direction.

The trial of William Frend influenced Coleridge and made him change his religious belief and eventually work as a Unitarian preacher after leaving Jesus College. In 1795, Coleridge moved to Bristol where he lectured at Unitarian chapels and wrote over fifty articles for *The Morning Chronicle* that gave him the opportunity to explain the ideas of Joseph Priestly and William Godwin who also affected his thoughts and beliefs. He spent a time in his life as a Unitarian preacher but he finally returned to the church of England in 1814.

It is hard to identify and give one quality for Coleridge's thinking and beliefs. He was influenced by different philosophical and religious schools such as radical politics, German idealism, Unitarianism, Anglican Theology, Neoplatonism⁽³⁾, and pantheism⁽⁴⁾. All these different intellectual methods affected his beliefs regarding life, politics, and religion and this resulted in a constant shift in his religious beliefs. He suffered a constant shift from Unitarianism to pantheism to orthodox Christianity till his final return to the church

(1) Anglicanism is a western Christian tradition that has developed from the practices, liturgy, and identity of the church of England following the English Reformation. It is one of the largest branches of Christianity, with around 110 million adherents.

(2) Unitarianism is a nontrinitarian branch of Christianity; it believes that Jesus was inspired by God in his moral teachings and that he is a savior but not divine.

(3) Neo Platonism : A strand of Platonic philosophy that emerged in the 3rd century AD against the background of Hellenistic philosophy and religion.

(4) Pantheism: a doctrine which identifies God with the universe, or regards the universe as a manifestation of God. It is also a worship that admits or tolerates all gods.

of England, and this signifies his hesitation and dissatisfaction with the actual notions and practices of Christianity at that time and perhaps his hidden desires to correct the religious situation at that time. Coleridge was disappointed with the failure of Christianity to meet his religious needs and he sought to be a reformer and a renovator of Christian religion and teaching at that time.

He attempts to make some innovations in theology, and to renovate the Christian religion according to his own beliefs and thoughts and according to the most distinguished theological representation of the period which was theology based on evidence. He was influenced by William Paley⁽⁵⁾ who founded religion upon intellectual evidences which depend on mathematical method and demonstration to approach God and know him by evidence. All these ideas affected Coleridge and created a factor or a motivation for him to be a reformer of theology, he thought that it was his duty to follow the steps of Martin Luther whom he regarded his model as a reformer and a theologian. Coleridge finds that the church is not a symbol of divinity but also a reminder of human race that they have a duty towards intellectual life, he explained this in his book: *On a constitution of the church and state* 1830 where he argues that the churches' function is to enrich the intellectual lives of people.

b. "Sin" in The Rime of the Ancient Mariner:

To begin with, *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* has a sacramental dimension which helps make it analyzed from a religious perspective. The poem is an example of Coleridge's concerns about religious issues, and it reveals his own interpretation of some Christian notions which reflect his unorthodox opinions about the explanation of some religious notions at that time. Coleridge's discussion of his religious concerns in the poem centers around Christian confessions issues such as: *sin* and *redemption* which he thought that they were not explained properly. The religious explanation given by the church of these notions confused Coleridge and made him doubt their rightness.

The poem is a symbolic representation of a voyage of an old mariner which may represent the life of Coleridge's himself or even the life of anyone of us. Coleridge uses a symbolic language to dramatize the Christian sentiments of: sin, punishment, repentance, and redemption within a religious frame. The religious atmosphere is felt from the very beginning of the poem when the journey is portrayed in a manner similar to the prayer which starts at sunset and is called "vespers" prayer. The same spiritual atmosphere continues through the rest of the poem, and it is enhanced when the albatross appears. The albatross carries a spiritual significance and is treated as a religious symbol. It is presented by a Christian aura when it is hailed in a holy way, and referred to as: a Christian soul. Coleridge endows it with a religious value to strengthen the spiritual connotation it has especially when he compares it to Jesus Christ. As Jesus Christ was sent to save and guide the mankind, the albatross is sent to guide and save the ship. Both the mariner and the crew treat the albatross in the same glorification especially that its appearance adds a cheerful atmosphere to the trip when it guides the crew to the right direction, and this proves that so far, the mariner is a religious person.

Yet, in spite of this blessing appearance and help of the albatross, and without any motive, the mariner commits a horrible crime and kills the same holy albatross. It is by this arbitrary deed, Killing the albatross by the *religious* mariner, that Coleridge begins his discussion of the notion of: "sin" and "redemption" in the poem. Killing the albatross is a turning point in the poem because it marks a clear distinction between the events before and after its appearance. It is used as a symbol of the philosophy Coleridge adopts in his analysis of religious concepts, and it is full of religious connotations. Coleridge uses it as a symbol of the mysterious nature of "evil" which originates without reason, and which cannot be justified in anyway. Coleridge intended to have an innocent character be killed in a non-justified crime to assert the concept of: "Free will". He tends to believe that we sin "Voluntarily" which means we do what we desire and that we have the ability to choose our actions. He did not present any excuse for the mariner nor he justifies his deed attempting to challenge the notion of "inherited sin" which he is totally against. He refuses the idea of heredity of sin, and he asserts that any sin is committed by a free will person who is not responsible of his ancestors' deeds and whose sins and mistakes are not the extension of "Original sin" as the church says.

On the other hand, attacking this religious symbol has a religious significance. The albatross is regarded as a symbol of spiritual divinity, so offending it is not only offending the animal role in nature, but it is offending the divinity which animals and nature in general represent. It is also compared to Jesus Christ when it was hailed as "Christian soul" and when the mariner hangs it around his neck, which reminds us of the crucifixion of the Christ.

(5) William Paley is an English clergyman, philosopher, and a unitarian well known for his natural theology and exposition of the theological argument for the existence of god in his work *Natural Theology or Evidence of the Existence and Attributes of the deity*.

One may wonder why the crew participated in this crime; the answer is given by Coleridge who wants to say that human beings are evil by nature. The human being always obtains the possibility to be morally good, but he chooses to act evil deliberately especially when he is guided by his self-pride. Sometimes the evil thing happens out of ignorance, but even if the human being is ignorant of the evilness of his deed. It is when the human being believes that he does something he perceives to be virtuous but the truth is it is not. Both of the crew and the mariner can be considered an example of this kind of evil because both of them look at the albatross from the angle of his usefulness and its role in nature.

If the bird is useful then they agree with protecting it, but if it happens to create a barrier or trouble, then they will not hesitate to kill it. This exactly happens with the crew when the fog clears and the sun rises the second day of the albatross murder. They consider him a bad omen and the reason of the bad weather of the previous days, so getting rid of him is a right decision. They evaluate good actions and bad actions according to their own materialist thinking.

As committing any sin, killing the albatross has its impact and consequences. The crew hangs the dead albatross to his neck in clear sign of his guilt, and they soon fall down dead. The mariner remains alone with his bitter feelings of isolation and regret, but perhaps the most important part of his punishment is losing his sacramental view. After committing his crime, the mariner receives his punishment which includes both physical and mental sides. Physically, when he is deprived of food and water, and mentally when he suffers from alienation and isolation. Both of the crew and the mariner feel thirsty and lose their power of speaking, and they soon fell dead and their souls pass him like the whiz of his cross bow.

He suffers for seven days and seven nights without being able to sleep nor to pray. He is trapped in a condition similar to a living -dead, and even after his repentance, he is condemned to wander the land telling his story to everyone. It is a tale of retribution and since the victim symbolizes the spiritual world, the same spiritual world took revenge for the albatross by damaging not only his ship but also his life because he has to endure an eternal torment as a curse.

II. Mystery and Ambiguity:

The Rime of The Ancient Mariner is a poem well known for its mystery. The ambiguous poem takes us to an imaginary world of mystery and wonder. The mariner tells us his weird experience which leaves us confused and full of questions with no satisfying answers. The poem leaves us in doubt because it does not give a clear explanation for its confusing events. Many points in the poem need justification and remain vague and unexplained. So, the reader feels that he is tasked with solving the ambiguous questions which penetrate the poem.

The most mysterious points which needs clarification in the poem are:

A. The destination of the journey:

The poem describes a vague sea voyage to an unknown destination. Neither the mariner, nor the readers have any clue about the destination nor the motive behind this voyage. We only know that the ship departs, and then it is blown south by a storm to icy water of the Antarctic where the ship is finally stuck.

B. The Mariner's mysterious power to control the wedding guest:

The mariner randomly chose one of the wedding guests to tell him his story. The wedding guest was in a hurry having no time to talk and hear stories. However, he was captured by the mariner's glittering eyes which is compared to an irresistible magic spell. The wedding guest stood still and listened as an obedient child that we wonder what kind of power kidnapped the wedding guests will and made him has no choice but to listen. Something compelling detained the guest and prevented him from going his way to attend the ceremony. The readers wonder what made the wedding guest appear as hypnotized. Neither the poet nor the reader knows what power the mariner used to hypnotize the wedding guest, how he acquired it, and what role have his glittering eyes in it.

C. The Albatross:

a. The motive behind the shooting of the albatross:

It is the main cause for ambiguity and mystery in the poem. We helplessly attempt to figure out the motive behind shooting the albatross. Even a deep reading for the poem cannot explain why the albatross was shoot. We cannot decide whether it is a reflection of man's bad nature or not, and we are not sure if it is an act of necessity or a mere whim. We fail to find an answer to whether the mariner is predestined or a freed will person. The fact that the mariner frees the boat after killing the albatross adds to our confusion because we cannot decide whether killing it is a sin or a bless.

b. The significance of the albatross:

The albatross is a prominent symbol in the poem but it is hard to tell what it really means. It is a vague symbol which has more than one representation:

- a. It can serve as a religious sign because it is compared to Christ and is endowed with a religious aura.
- b. It is an anti-slavery symbol. Coleridge was an abolitionist who stands against the horror of slavery. He was aware of the guilt of the Europeans including the British government in the racial and violent actions of slavery. He feared the divine retribution for these crimes and portrayed them in the remarkable injustice of shooting the albatross for no reason.
- c. It is a symbol of nature and all the creatures living in it. The crime of killing the albatross is a crime against nature because it means disrespect for nature in general. Killing the albatross is due to the ignorance of the unity in this universe and the machinery which maintains its stability. We live in a universe made of an organic unity, any harm to any part of this universe will affect its unity and cause disorder. The mariner fails to understand this, so the result was that he was expelled from this unity. This is clear in the punishment that the mariner has which is realized in disconnection from the visible world.

III. The Unreliable Narrator:

The *unreliable narrator* is a phrase first used by the critic "Wayne Booth" in the early 1960s. It means the character who tells the readers a story which cannot be taken for granted. The existence of the unreliable narrator is important in supernatural fiction because it questions the line between fantasy and reality.

A great deal of the uncertainty in the poem is due to the narrator himself. The mariner appears unreliable from the beginning of the poem where we met a weird narrator whose appearance and behaviors are frightening and suspicious. The glittering eyes, the ghostly appearance, the disturbed attitude all these elements aroused the fears and doubts for not only the wedding guest, but also for us as readers. It is difficult to believe a person who seems to be tense, confused, and even possessed. We have all the reasons to make us suspect the mariner's reliability and to hesitate to take his story for granted.

Most of the poem's events reveal that the narrator shows no volition. He is either unconscious, unaware of his own actions or, he is controlled by a powerful force which dictates his actions. One of the most common interpretations of the poem is that the mariner's tale is only "Hallucinations", and they see the hallucinations as reflections of Coleridge use of opium. All the suspicious events narrated by the mariner and referred to as "Hallucinations" appear in the part when the mariner starts to receive his punishment with no other witness to support his testimony. This leads to a psychological reading of the poem which suggests that the traumatic experiences are usually repressed in the unconscious but they find their way back to the surface taking the form of body signs and Hallucinations. This is what exactly happens to the mariner. The mariner suffers from his guilt and his condition worsened as he saw all sailors dying in front of him. Being both "guilty" and the "only survivor" can trigger irrational thinking which can culminate into delusions.

This is on the one hand, on the other hand, most of the poem has a dream-like quality. The poem states clearly that the mariner has been cast into a trance in which he heard two voices and saw visions. So, he is likely to be unconscious and we cannot decide whether he was awake or not. The mariner cannot be taken as a reliable source of the story because of his state of consciousness. The Hallucinations can be analyzed in a third way, they might be originated because of the severe situation of heat, thirst, and drought. No matter what causes these hallucinations, there is an important element which also influences our judgement on what the narrator saw and said which is the fact that there was no witness to confirm his narrative.

IV. Type of skepticism:

Religious Skepticism questions religious beliefs and practices and this what Coleridge intended to do. Being a prominent apologist of the liberal Angelic point of view, he is against the doctrine of the "original sin". A religious reading of the poem reveals that Coleridge expresses his doubts regarding the "original sin". He is against this idea and believes that the human being has his "free will" to act or to sin. He used the event of shooting the albatross unsolved till the end of the poem. He did not give any explanation for this motiveless crime to assert the point of view that human beings sin voluntarily.

2- Skepticism in Frankenstein:

I. Playing God:

During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, Europe valued scientific enquires and questioning of traditional institutions, customs and morals. The main tendency was to favor scientific research over superstitions and supernatural issues including religion. *Frankenstein* is a novel which was written in this period, and it gives a real image about the power of science and technology and their ability to consume a society. It describes a period of time when a western society was suffering a social, moral, and religious crisis.

Skepticism in the novel lies in one of the consequences of applying science which is the emergence of "secularization" and driving the society to be rational and materialistic. The novel gives an example of the secular thought and behaviors of the age represented in the actions of Victor Frankenstein, the intelligent scientist who was totally consumed to follow his dreams and achieve his scientific ambitions regardless of any moral or religious standard.

Mary Shelley was born in sophisticated and educated environment. She comes from a liberal cultured family whose ideas and behaviors affected her mind and thinking. Being raised by free thinkers and married to an atheist must have affected her ideas and made her as the rest of her family a social radical at her time. The 1818 preface to the novel was written by her husband Percy Bysshe Shelley, and the same preface was also included in the 1831 edition in a sign that his ideas had some effect in writing this novel. He said that the events which occur in the novel are not impossible according to Dr. Darwin and other physiological authors of Germany, and he also added that the idea of re-animating the dead is physically impossible but it shows the imagination of medical practitioner which is created by their passions and ambitions.

He concluded by saying that the opinions expressed by the characters and the hero should not be interpreted as the writer's own belief, and this what exactly happened because Shelley held firmly to her faith, even in the face of the atheists' views of her husband in upholding scientific ethics. Although the novel she wrote appeared to be irreligious and favors Enlightenment thinking over the religious dogma, her purpose behind writing it was to criticize the other face of science and to warn humankind not to cross the limit and violate God's instructions.

Even if the novel appears to be counter- religious, Mary Shelley remained faithful to her Christian beliefs and did not agree with what her main character, Victor did. She was warning us not to be like Victor who transgressed law of nature. Her dissatisfaction with the secular attitude which the main character adopts is clear in many places in the novel, perhaps the clearest example was when she described him in performing his experiment as an unnatural act implying that a creation without God, and without a woman should not be done.

Victor's intention to seek immortality is a clear example of his secularization. Giving himself the right to approach this area is a preparation to put himself in a position he should not be in. His project to create a human being places him outside the traditional Christian faith and ethical standards of the society. He exploits his intelligence and scientific background to achieve his project in playing the role of God. Even thinking about such plans indicates that Victor is not a normal person, a normal person would hesitate to deal in these issues, but Victor narcissism encourages him to put himself in a position higher than his human nature and to assign himself a role which is only confined to Gods. His narcissism and his belief that he is an exceptional person push forward and give him the right to challenge God and be another progenitor of life.

He creates a creature so that he can be a god like figure and be worshiped by his creature, a position which satisfies his ego. He is motivated by his self -love to be the first person who creates a new species, and is concerned with the glory and fame he expects. He ignores the fact that doing this, he violates the sacred, and this indicates his fragile connection to his religion. He prefers the scientific interest to religious teaching. Victor never states his religious views but it is clear that he is not a religious person, his belonging to Cornelius Agrippa, philosophy and science is much stronger than his belief in the gospel. His scientific and philosophic ideals are much stronger than his religious views. This is the reason why he did not hesitate to cross the limit and attempt to play God. Yet, despite this, Victor passed by moments of conflict due to his hesitation about challenging the bible and usurped God's role and to attempt to be higher than him. He writes a letter to his friend, Walton:

"Learn from me, if not by prespects, at least by example, how dangerous is the acquirement of knowledge and how much happier that man is who believes his native town to be world, than who aspires to become greater than his nature will allow." (Shelley,1818 p. 31).

Victor's ambition wins and he achieves his mission and creates his creature, but the question is: does he succeed in playing the role of God? The answer is certainly no. There is no way to compare Victor's creation to God's almighty power and glory. Victor is a lousy selfish creator who cannot handle his responsibility. He assembles the stolen human organs and attempts to assemble them in a shape similar to the normal human being and re-animate it with the use of the electricity. He is only focusing on perfecting the process and becoming the God of his creature, and unlike the normal human being created by God, he creates his creature for one purpose which is only creation. He attempts to create a creature of his own, but he does not seem to understand what the creator's responsibilities towards his creatures are. His main concern during the process of making the creature is how to perfect his creation and how to make it look good. He waits for the perfect result but all what he has is a hideous creature which does not match his expectations, and here his ugly selfish face appears. He reacts to the ugliness of the creature -which he made- in a harsh way.

Unlike the image of the compassionate, benevolent God, he dismisses the creature and ignores all his duties and responsibilities towards it. He refuses to accept it in way and does not make any sacrifices for him. He does not even provide him with a shelter or food, and keeps hiding from it not bothering himself to even think about what will happen to him. His short-sighted view does not let him consider the consequences of his deed, and does not expect that the roles of the creator and slave will be switched and that he will be threatened by his own creature to obey him and do what he wanted him to do, otherwise violence will be the only choice, and this is another evidence that Victor is helpless creator turns to be threatened by his own creation, the idea which strongly contradicts the image of the powerful unconquered God.

He is totally weak that he is unable to control the consequences of his deeds and even unable to protect innocent souls from a tragic end they are not responsible for. Shelley asserts during the course of the novel especially the end, that a human being cannot be God. Victor's project failed, not because of the ugliness of the creature, but because any activity which aims to challenge the role of God and transgress the social and ethical norms in a society must fail.

II. **Mystery and Ambiguity in Frankenstein:**

Gothicism in Frankenstein is not confined to horror and supernatural events in the plot, but it takes the form of suspense and mystery. Although most of the novel is written in a clear way, the reader finds himself uncertain about some events. The main point of mystery in the novel centers around the monster's creation. The lack of a detailed analysis of the process of the monster's creation is capable of arousing our doubts. Mary Shelley did not really explain the "science" used in the monster's creation. Her lack of "professional" knowledge in medical sciences, prevented her from giving details about the process.

Before explaining the process of creating the monster, we should ask about the factors which motivate Victor to think of creating a living human being which is also unclear. Victor vaguely refers to the motive as a "misfortune" which had tainted his mind. There was no clue about this misfortune so we wonder if it is his mother's death which mirrors Shelley's preoccupation with death and her wish to bring back dead people whom she lost in her life, but again we are not sure. There are two main points which raised our doubts regarding the validity of the process of creating the monster. First: Victor's description of the process of assembling different body parts and trying to animate them with electricity is not sufficient and seems suspicious. How did these stolen parts fit together since they are taken from different bodies, How did he manage to circulate blood in this new body, and what about the brain functions? How did Victor manage to succeed in all this.

Second: the idea of having such project in one's house seems fanciful in itself. Victor claimed that he created the monster in his house. How come that his friend "Clerval" did not find any physical evidence of such a process when he came to visit Victor. How did not he notice that there was no evidence that Victor is dealing with dead and decaying bodies in his house. In the same direction, we have another point which arouse our doubts which is the supernatural powers which the monster obtains. We do not know how and why the monster obtains such powers. Victor did not want to create a superhuman, he just dreamed of giving life to a dead body. The novel did not explain how the monster identify Victor's location precisely and appear for him in a perfect timing? Another point is his unexplained power which enables him to climb a mountain in a few seconds. There are also some points throughout a novel which are unlikely to happen and make us doubt its occurrence. For example, the monster claims that he left Victor's house and headed towards a forest. How can a creature of two meters with frightening monstrous features

Walk unnoticed in the city. Another example is when Victor aimed to create a female copy for the monster during a trip with his friend Clerval. The question is how he can handle the process without clever realizing it. How did he transport dead body pieces and mysterious chemicals and work on resembling a body without Clerval being noticed?

Victor also described a way which only requires few chemicals, the second process was described as required nothing sophisticated or difficult.

III. The Unreliable Narrator:

Frankenstein is special in its narrative technique. Unlike most of the Gothic literary works, the novel has three different narrators: Victor, Walton, The creature. So, the reader is lost in three different plots, narratives, and perspectives for the same story and more specifically for the most prominent event in it which is the creation of the monster. The novel is purposely designed to have three different narrators to compare between them trying to find the truth.

a. Walton's narrative:

The novel starts with a set of four letters written by the first narrator, Walton. He writes for his sister explaining all the events of the novel from his own perspective. Walton's narrative functions as an introduction to Victor's narrative which follows his, and it shares the same attitude with Victor. He thinks that Victor made a great scientific achievement in creating the monster perhaps because he shares the same interest in science and making new discoveries. Even if Walton did not sympathize with monster for most of the novel, He appeared to be the most reliable and objective narrative.

b. Victor's narrative:

Among the three different narratives, Victor's narrative seems to be unreliable. Victor is supposed to explain his motivation behind the project of creating the monster and its consequences. The problem is that he is neither subjective nor neutral in his narrative. He narrates and analyzes the events from his personal point of view and here lies unreliability. We have doubts about Victor's credibility for many reasons. First, he is not honest in explaining the causes and consequences of his experiment. He plays victim and blames science for creating the monster and consider it the reason of his malignity and all his mischievous deeds are the result of medical science which can turn to be dangerous. Second, he gives incomplete description for the process of the creation claiming that he does not want other people to know these secrets and repeat the same mistake and create another monster. The reader however feels that Victor is hiding much information deliberately. Third, most of we know about the creature is told by Victor himself. He describes the creature as a horrible creature who frightens people with his hideous appearance and cause them to treat him in cruel way, and as a criminal who murderess many innocent people reflecting his own personal opinion and assessment. Finally, Victor is too proud to admit that he makes mistakes. His narcissism made him put the blame on others. All these reasons prove that Victor is prejudiced against the monster and that he needs to be more neutral.

c. The creature's narrative:

The creature's narrative is totally different from Victor's. He narrates the story from a different and more human perspective. The creature's narrative makes him appear as a human, a sensitive sole not a wicked criminal as Victor insists. He describes his feelings, thoughts and suffering. His narrative highlights his experience of being abandoned by Victor and the bad treatment he had from humans in general. The Monster convinced the reader that his malignity does not result from medical sciences as Victor claims, but rather from Victor's and his society merciless treatment and succeeded in making the reader sympathize with him. This narrative technique which implies the strategy of contrasting narratives is useful to prove Victor's unreliability. The order of the three narratives is very important because we would not be able to evaluate Victor's views and perspective unless we received information about him and hear his narrative. If the creature's narrative appeared before Victor's narrative thinking that he is the unreliable narrator. However, at the same time this technique may mislead because it may raise doubts and make you wonder which real narrative is.

IV. Type of Skepticism:

Frankenstein is considered one of the most important examples of science fiction in English literature. Science is an important element in forming in the plot and themes of the novel. It is also the reason beyond making it a clear example of scientific skepticism. Speaking of the scientific skepticism in the novel, one must mention that the novel has scientific origins. Electricity was the main scientific mystery of Shelley's time where there were discussions about electricity role in the process of life. the discussions also

include the project of reviving corpses with electricity and some experiments were performed in the same field. The novel's main event is the process of creating the monster and it is the same point which aroused doubts. The novel did not really explain the process. No specific details are given, the only reference to the mechanism by which the monster is created was by referring to electricity as "infuse a spark of being" which does not really explain anything and which creates an attitude of "scientific skepticism". Scientific skepticism by definition means applying critical thinking skills, knowledge of science and its methods to any claim. It questions the veracity of claims lacking empirical evidence and this is what we feel towards the process of the creation. The experiment and method of bringing the creature to life cannot be explained in certainty. After all, how can lifelessly body parts be put together and re- animated. Such process leaves room for doubt and is seen and categorized among "pseudo- scientific" claims.

3- Skepticism in Young Goodman Brown:

I. Religious Hypocrisy in the Puritan Society:

Nathaniel Hawthorne is adhered to Puritanism more than any other American writer. His knowledge of the puritan heritage is due to the fact that he is a descendent of a puritan family. Hawthorne's attitude toward his Puritan heritage seems to be negative. He appears as he is ashamed of his ancestor's mentality and deeds because Hawthorne's great grandfather "John Hathorne" was a judge who participated in the Salem Witch trials in 1692 and his participation resulted in wrong convictions of many innocent people. This fact appalled Hawthorne and made him add the letter "w" to his surname trying to dissociate himself from his ancestor's deeds. Hawthorne became occupied with this heritage which is always presented in his literary works. He has great contribution in writing about the era of Puritanism. Several of his literary works are set in seventeenth century Puritan New England as *The Scarlet Letter* and *Young Goodman Brown*. These works are based on historical facts related the Puritan beliefs and issues. They reflect the Puritan history and legacy which Hawthorne's imagination feeds on.

Hawthorne's themes usually center around sin, guilt, witchcraft, and the devil. He also tackles an important theme related to Puritan doctrine, which is the lack of the freedom of worship, the point of the following discussion.

The Puritan community is a repressive intolerant one which lacks freedom. It is based on the Calvinists beliefs of innate depravity and original sin. Such beliefs are shaped within a frame of severe discipline and strict religious instructions and practices. Hawthorne's Knowledge about the Puritan history allows him to use *Young Goodman Brown* as a satire of Puritanism which is described as a prejudiced and intolerable system of belief. A satire by which Hawthorne can express his skepticism towards the strictness of "Puritanism" the doctrine of his ancestors.

Hawthorne views Puritanism with a skeptical eye, he is against the severe Puritans beliefs which regard other Christian sets as sinners and which struggles to manifest a pious image of people which does not really confirm with their inner reality. He expresses his doubts about people's integrity and righteousness in this hypocrite community, and questions the worth of such strict doctrine. *Young Goodman Brown* is a story about "Puritans hypocrisy" and "faith" which is gained by blind inheritance not self- satisfaction and approval.

Here, Hawthorne is not against religion or the church, but he is trying to make the reader aware of the dangers of strict moral teaching which can ultimately turn worshippers into hypocrites. He is as well highlighting the effect of the lack of freedom worship and blind inherited beliefs. *Young Goodman Brown* tells a story about a religious person who experiences a mysterious journey which ends in affecting his faith. Goodman Brown is a typical Puritan Person who is deeply rooted to religion. He is a dutiful person who is a part of an honest and good Christian community and who respects his town people mainly because they are religious.

One night, he undertakes a mysterious journey to the forest in an unknown mission which seems to be evil. He ignores his wife's attempts to prevent him from going, and goes on in his plan. Since the beginning of the journey, strong signs appear to indicate that something wrong is happening. First his wife, Faith, expresses her fear trying to prevent him from going, then suspense and fear continue when we know that his main companion in this journey appears with a snake like staff which strongly associates him with the devil. While they are walking in their arranged plan, we surprisingly know that good, decent, Brown is tempted to join a devil worshipping ceremony in the forest. His decision to join such a ceremony reflects his fragility of belief which is granted by blind inheritance not real faith, and which contradict his apparent image as a faithful Christian.

This ambivalence between Brown's behaviors and inner belief proves his hypocrisy and blind religious practices which are manifested through the course of the story. He is on his way to attend a devilish ceremony to convert but he asks his wife to pray and read the holy book to avoid any harm!

"Say your prayers dear Faith and go to bed at dusk and no harm will come to thee" (Hawthorne, 1835, p.1) While walking, his companion who turns to be the devil, tells him that all his ancestors have done the same thing and that Brown is no exception. He also narrates their crimes and atrocities. Brown's reaction was a confident denial, he blindly replied:

"We are people of prayer and good works to boot and abide no such wickedness" (Hawthorne, 1835, p.4).

He refuses to accept the fact that his parents and grandparents are sinners! Goodman Brown should have asked himself, if he really were a good person of prayer, then: why is he going to this ceremony? how can a real believer accept to convert and renounce his faith. He is not the only hypocrite though, as he presumes his journey, other members appear to join the same event. For Brown's big surprise, the other converts are: the lady who taught him catechism, his spiritual advisor, the governor, and other important religious figures in the village.

The fact that these people who seem to be good Christians are among the wicked, witches, and wizards and devil worshipers gives him sickness in his heart and disappoints him. They are examples of purity and goodness, he felt betrayed by them because he considers them people whose role was to represent 'Religion' in the Puritan community. However, he is not in a better situation, when he sees them in the forest, he hides himself behind a nearby tree because he is ashamed to be seen in this place. His main concern is the social disgrace not his crime of intended blasphemy. Brown's trust on others is being diminished as he reaches the beginning of the rites of the conversion when he finds that almost everyone is attending the ceremony! All the village people: the good pious ones, and the dissolute ones. He cannot believe what he hears when their sins and secret wicked deeds are revealed in front of everyone. He realizes how he is deceived by their decent appearance, but his biggest shock is when he finds that his wife "Faith" is among the converts and is ready to start the conversion rites. Here he screams: "My Faith has gone" (Hawthorne, 1835, p.6).

Knowing that his pure wife is among the converts destroys the last amount of trust he has in his heart, so in a moment of despair he raises his hands and asks for God's mercy ... immediately everything vanishes and he finds himself alone in the dark forest. That was the end of the Goodman Brown's journey which was not easy at all. It was not easy for Goodman brown to handle this conflict. He hesitated and wished to return home because he knew that he should not do that horrible deed, but his desire to sin won and made him go to the forest. His acceptance to attend a witches' Sabbath, proves his wicked part which does not care to betray the morals of his society and the teaching of his religion and his hesitance and asking God for help indicates that he might still have some goodness which ultimately disappeared.

Whether it was "dream" or "reality", this bewildering experience caused Brown to lose his faith. His Willingness' to participate in that Sabbath raises the question whether his faith ever existed or not. This experience was a turning point in his life because when he is back to his village, he becomes a new different person. He completely loses his faith, and this lack of faith affects him till the rest of his life. For him, the village is inhabited with hypocrite sinners, and there is no good in this life. He receives the minister religious lecturing with irony, he isolates all his friends and neighbors, and becomes a cold husband till the last die in his life. He becomes a doubtful cynical person till he dies. The doubt that Brown had after his return from the forest reflects Hawthorne's attitude toward Puritanism. It reveals his skepticism towards a religious community which focuses on pretending goodness rather than really achieving it. The community which is based on strictness and lack of freedom.

II. Ambiguity and Mystery:

Reading *Young Goodman Brown* is an adventurous journey which takes the reader to the unknown. Whenever we read this story, we find ourselves in the same maze of confusion and uncertainty. The tale's atmosphere of bewilderment which perfectly blurred the line between reality and imagination makes it hard to decide whether all the events really happened or not. The story can be read and interpreted as both "real" and "fanciful", but there are many evidences which make us tend to regard it as a dream, daydream, message from God, an omen or hallucinations. Goodman Brown seems to be "uncertain" throughout the story and he made us see the story through his uncertain eyes too. The reader prefers to believe that Brown's disturbed mind would lead him to imagine bizarre things which did not really happen. The ambiguity in this story is realized in the following points:

a. The purpose of the journey:

Mystery prevails from the beginning of the story regarding the purpose of his journey. The purpose was not stated directly in the beginning of the story when we find him leaving for some unknown purpose. Possibilities and expectations appeared later when we learned that he is participating in a devilish ceremony to give up his religion. Even if we know this information. We are still unsure whether he converted or not, and further whether he really wanted to convert or he was merely motivated by his curiosity to join and observe the ceremony.

b. The setting:

The use of the forest as a setting adds to the mystery of the plot because it gives the impression that Brown was going to the unknown. The forest is a metaphor for doubt and anxiety and its mystery makes us feel that the danger awaits and this establishes an atmosphere of suspense and fear throughout the story. The dusk and darkness make it an eerie setting where Brown was lost in darkness and uncertainty.

c. Characters:

Uncertainty was enhanced by the appearance of the characters who are questionable as well. Goodman Brown was accompanied with some travelers in his journey. They appeared suddenly and vanish suddenly which gives the impression that they only exist in Brown's imagination. It seems that Brown did not really see them, he himself emphasized on *hearing* their voices which raise the possibility that he was only hallucinating.

1. Goody Cloys and the minister:

We are not sure whether Goodman Brown really meet them or only heard their voices. He swore that he recognized their voices and that he saw only shadows. Goodman Brown seems to be Hallucinating because even when said that the old man (the devil) was speaking to Goody Cloys, he touched her with his staff and then, she just vanished! when this happened, Goodman Brown cast up his eyes in astonishment. He looked down again and for his big surprise he found neither Goody Cloys nor the staff. He only saw the old man who was waiting for him calmly as nothing happened. How did she just vanish ??? this cannot be explained unless she did not really come at all. The theory of hallucinations proved itself to be true in many events in the story. Brown heard voices again, when he was covered by a mysterious Black cloud from which he heard the voices of the people of his village including his wife "Faith". Speaking of "Faith", It is confusing to see her pink ribbon falling down from the same cloud. We do not know if Faith was there in the forest, and most importantly we do not know which "Faith" Goodman lost when he ambiguously screamed that his Faith has gone.

2. The devil:

The devil's appearance was perplexing and it creates one of the main sources of the ambiguity in the story. Brown is confused by his sudden emergence and his astonishing resemblance to his own father which remains unexplained by the author. The devil appears with the staff which was also confusing. His staff looked like a snake which might be seen to wriggle like a living one! Did the devil really appear? and if he did, did he take the form of a living character? or is he an unseen apparition which conjured the rest of apparitions and ghosts of him and the other of the characters. (Humma, 1971, P. 3).

3. The Ending:

Ambiguities remain unresolved until the end of the story because we do not know whether good or evil wins. What is the result of Goodman's inner conflict? Did he renounce his faith and converted to worship the devil? Or did he resist the devil temptation and remain an honest believer till the end? And the most important question, was he right in his condemnation of the people of his village? are they decent people? or are they evil hypo crates who pretend to be pious while they worship the devil? All these questions remain unsolved in the story. It was a bizarre mysterious experience which made Goodman Brown doubtful till the last days in his life which he lived in suffering from doubts and uncertainty which are the main characteristic of the story.

III. The Unreliable Narrator:

The Narrative structure of the story is another source for its ambiguity. The fact that we are unable to identify the real narrator in the story emphasizes the lack of reliability of the story's narrator. We do not have a reliable narrator in this story because we are not sure whether it is the "narrator" or the main character "Brown" who is narrating it. It is hard to distinguish the narrator's voice from Brown's, so we are not sure whose ideas we are receiving. The story contains a binary opposition between two different attitudes, points of view which appears throughout the story. We feel that there is an alteration between two points of view in most of the plot.

One of these points of view asserts that the story is "real" and "ordinary" and this is the narrator's assessment. The second - which the reader is suspicious about - is that the story is 'imaginary' and "supernatural." (Bloom, 2005, P.4).

The events in the story are viewed and evaluated from these points of view and this creates some kind of contradiction and make us question the reliability of each one of them. The contradiction between these points of view takes the form of switching the roles of the two narrators in the same event. For example, in the witch sabbath, it was not clear whether the whole rites were reported by the narrator or by Goodman Brown, or by both of them. The description of the faces was given by the narrator, but the part of whether they attended or not was by Goodman Brown. (Bloom 6). The narrator does not agree with Brown that there was ceremony to be held, and does not agree with Goodman Brown's condemnation for them as wicked converts. He believes that and attempt to give us the impression that the whole thing was the product of Goodman Brown's bedazzlement.

Another reason for the unreliability of the narrator is the technique of "paralipses" which means having some events which are narrated and non- narrated in the same time. This is another example of the narrator's unreliability because this leads to manipulating the reader's point of view, and this happens either because the narrator is "unreliable" or because he "refuses" to tell what really happens. (Bloom 10). For example, the description of the leader of the witch sabbath, there is almost no description for him, the reader feels that he had the mission to explain it to himself and hesitate to call him a devil. The same hesitation occurs in identifying the content of the communion cup whether it is blood or merely water reddened by the flame light. Another example is when the narrator did not explain Goody Cloyse muttering, whether she was praying or not, and he was not decisive if the dark figure staff really wiggers. The narrator did not provide the missing information in order to create suspense and to make the decision left to the reader to think and evaluate the missing parts of the narrative.

IV. Type of Skepticism:

The story is an example of Religious Skepticism. Hawthorne expresses his doubts about Puritanism. He doubts the worth and credibility of his ancestor's strict religious teaching which prevents people from freedom and creates a number of religious hypotheses.

4- Skepticism in The Fall of the House of Usher:

I. Conflict between science and Metaphysical world:

Poe's fiction was influenced by two philosophical trends which dominated the cultural situation at that time. His fiction appeared within a culture dominated by "reason" as a consequence of applying the philosophical school of "common sense" which prevailed at that time. The "Common sense" philosophy originally started in Scotland and immigrated to America where it proved very popular. It is a realist school of philosophy that came in the aftermath of the eighteenth-century Enlightenment thought. Its famous figures include Thomas Reid, Adam Ferguson, and James Beattie. The philosophy says that we live in a material world which is only understood by our senses, and that any judgement should be based on "experience".

This philosophy which represents one cultural trend at that time was contradicted by another philosophical trend which says that 'Reason' is a transcendental issue and it can only be gained and felt by intuition and introspection. This conclusion mirrors Kant's and Hume's ideas and represents the opposite trend which challenged the first direction. Poe believes that the rational mind is too limited to attain metaphysical knowledge as we find in the story.

The Fall of the House of Usher combines the two elements where we investigate an irrational experience within a rational framework, and we find a clash between the two. The story presents two opposing methods and views. The irrational, mystic represented by "Roderick", and the rational, scientific represented by "the narrator". We understand since the beginning of the story that the narrator is invited to the house of Roderick Usher in a certain mission. His childhood friend, Roderick Usher, suffers from a fatal illness and he needs his friend's help. The narrator accepts the invitation and goes to support Roderick in his predicament, and here the real story begins. The moment the narrator approaches the house of Usher represents the beginning of a conflict which will clash two different methods and will widen to affect the narrator himself and shake his scientific outlook in his life. When the narrator approaches the house, he feels unexplained melancholic feelings to overwhelm him.

"With the first glimpses of the building, a sense of insufferable gloom pervaded my spirit" (Poe, 1839, p. 1).

The house is surrounded by some mysterious vapor which creates some “iciness” and “sickness” in the heart of the narrator’s heart. The sickness in the narrator’s heart augments when he meets his sick friend who is in a terrible condition. “The ghastly power of skin’, ‘The miraculous luster of the eye”, “The silken hair”, all this frightens the narrator, but the fear is emphasized when Roderick ascribes his weird sickness to the house itself.

Roderick who explains that his twin sister is the only living relative in their family, suffers from a mysterious sickness which affects his senses. His eyes cannot handle strong light, certain smells are intolerant, and his skin is allergic to most kinds of fabrics besides that his ears are badly affected by noises. His sister Madeline is not in a better situation for she suffers cataleptical seizures and she almost loses interest in life. Roderick claims that this terrible condition is due to the “atmosphere “which is produced by the house objects and surroundings. He goes far in saying that the house and its surroundings are “sentient”. The way the stones are arranged, the spreading fungi, the decayed trees around, the tarn, besides the man-made things which furnish the house all generate a mystic energy and a mesmerizing atmosphere which gives the house certain vivacity and life, and that this has its own impact on the house’s residents.

The narrator who is a son of a western culture of rationality, receives all what Roderick says with severe skepticism. He rejects Roderick’s theory of the sentient house and mystic atmosphere describing it as “fancy”. As a rational person who depends on logic, he refuses to believe that the house is “alive” and interprets this conclusion as a consequence of Roderick’s depressed mind, so he chooses to be more practical and try to alleviate the melancholy which tortures Roderick’s mind. Unfortunately, all his attempts are futile, they fail to confront the morbid atmosphere of the house which is intensified by Roderick’s gloomy choice of reading, music and painting.

Roderick’s rhapsodies ‘The Haunted House” with its under current meaning, the frightening paintings, the choice of the books, all seem to generate mystic currents which flow everywhere spreading an unpleasant negative effect. Things become worse after Madeline’s death and her burial in the house. At this point, Things start to take a serious more frightening curve when the narrator starts to feel a strong feeling of negativity and unease which can be explained as a presence of that “atmosphere.” He himself suffers from a gloomy feeling which attacks his body and soul. He feels that he is infected with the bleakness of the house which now appears to be really haunted. However, again due to his rationality he helplessly resorts to science in a final attempt to analyze the house’s condition. He tries to scrutinize the landscape because he thinks that the atmosphere stems from it. He is trying to identify the cause of “utter depression of the soul” which for inexplicable reason has come over him, but still, he does not find the cause of his unexpected misery.

‘I struggled to reason off the nervousness which had dominion over me... but my efforts were fruitless. An irrepressible tremor gradually pervaded my frame, and at length, there sat upon my every heart an *incubus* of utterly causeless alarm” (Poe, 1839, P. 9).

The narrator is puzzled and confused, he is lost in his doubts and uncertainty. There is something “unseen” and mysterious which controls and affects him. He compares it to an “incubus” a demon which possesses him. He, the rational man, whose scientific outlook forces him to label any supernatural phenomenon as “superstition’ and to refer to Roderick’s theory of a sentient house as one of his “fantastic superstitions”, uses the same language of the pre-modern superstitious world. He is using the language of spirits and demons to explain his condition.

The narrator’s rationality is shaken, he tries to apply a scientific method to justify the mysterious situation he finds himself in. He does have a scientific explanation for the weird atmosphere of the house which he ascribes to an electrical phenomenon caused by a rank miasma of the tarn around the house. However, he confesses that he is infected by Roderick’s condition and he is possessed by an alien force which cannot be measured nor explained by science.

At the beginning he appears to be confident armed by his rationality and skepticism to the unseen world and supernatural matters, but later his skepticism fades and he becomes helpless and defenseless in front of an attack conducted by metaphysical inexplicable alien force. By the end of the story, and in a stormy night the narrator reads for Roderick the “Mad Artist” trying to distract him from the rough weather. For his big surprise he hears some noises which dreadfully mirrors the actions in the plot. He realizes that these sounds are made by his sister Madeline who turns to be alive! The young woman appears, she comes to her brother and they both fell dead. The narrator immediately leaves the house which crumbles and fall in the tarn taking all its secrets with it.

The story craftly presents two opposing methods of thinking:

- a. Mystic, Romantic, imaginative method represented by Roderick.

- b. Rational, scientific, skeptic presented by the narrator.

Both of these characters are involved to analyze a paranormal phenomenon of a "Haunted House". Each one gave his own explanation which reflects a cultural trend at that time. Roderick is convinced that the house is alive, it almost breathes and it affects whoever reside in the house. On the other hand, the skeptic narrator who is not convinced and tries to rationalize the issue giving a scientific explanation which ascribes the morbid mesmerizing atmosphere of the house to a physical electrical phenomenon caused by a rank miasma of the tarn around the house. However, Although the narrator does not believe Roderick's theory, he is impressed by it and he cannot resist it either. Towards the end of the story, he admits that he is infected by Roderick's condition and he declares himself "possessed". It seems that science is not always capable of explaining certain issues. Poe gives the readers an important message which asserts the limitation of the human mind regarding understanding metaphysical, supernatural matters in this life which they absolutely exist.

II. Ambiguity and Mystery:

Like most of Poe's stories, *The Fall of the House of Usher* is shrouded in uncertainty and mystery. The story's Gothicism is manifested in that kind of fear over something that you are not aware of. A great part of the fear in the story is in its vagueness and how it deals with the unknown. In this story, there are no boundaries between reality and allusion, real and fantastic, sanity and insanity.

The story lacks clarity and this creates a feeling of uncertainty and generates confusion. It establishes its own world of mysterious secrets which may provoke you to suspect its frightening incidents. To begin with, the title of the story is ambiguous because it conveys a double meaning. What did Poe mean? What exactly falls? Is it the house or the family? After that we have the setting which seems ambiguous as well, we do not have narrative markers for place and time, and we cannot tell where the story takes place. Then comes the narrator whom we know nothing about except his gender and that he is Roderick's friend. The story gives no description of his physical features, nor explains where he comes from.

We do not know a lot about the Usher's family either. The family is socially isolated and they live a weird life. Even the narrator who is his childhood friend does not seem to know much about him. We only know that Roderick is sick but even his sickness is another point of mystery. Roderick suffers from an unknown illness which affects his senses and Madeline, his twin sister, is also suffering from an illness whose symptoms baffled her physicians for a long time. Even if we can find explanation for these vague points "The House" remains the main mystery in the story. The way it was presented surrounded by fog asserts its vagueness. The house stands as an independent character with a creepy appeal, and it is also a powerful symbol to represent the "unknown". As soon as the narrator reaches the house, he feels a vague inexplicable iciness and sickening in his heart. This sickening is a part of a creepy atmosphere which dominated the house. The house seems to have a mysterious secret by which it can control and affect its inhabitants including the narrator who was mysteriously trapped in this house and he cannot escape it until it collapses. The reader's mind is confused by Roderick's theory that 'all vegetable things are sentient' which implies that the house is alive. He refers to some kind of mysterious power which can generate life and vitality to the inanimate objects inside the house and the natural surroundings surrounding it. This is not the only creepy thing about the house because many creepy incidents happened inside, such as the fade lights which are never bright, the sounds coming from the stringed instruments, the burial of Madeline while she is alive, and the astonishing immediate mirroring of the plot of *Mad Tryst* with the events happening in the house. Among all this, the reader is not well-guided, he expects to find explanation for all these mysterious incidents in the story, but instead he finds himself lost in bewilderment.

III. The Unreliable Narrator:

There is an intellectual uncertainty which grows in the narrator's head since the beginning of the story. The narrator first appeared as a therapist willing to help his friend, but soon we find him in a disastrous state of mind wondering whether he has become a madman. The reader tends to believe the assumption that the narrator is mad. Although the story presents Roderick as "insane", the reader thinks that it is the narrator who is mentally disturbed. He doubts that the narrator imagines and inflates the fearful situations and incidents in the story which is according to the reader they did not even happen. The narrator was in a state of mind which hindered him from perceiving the actual surroundings. He doubted his perceptions and feelings, and often described his mental states in a negative way and emphasized on his excessive nervous agitation which surprisingly led him experience the same signs of

Roderick's madness. The reader doubts if the narrator is capable of depicting an accurate image and giving a precise account of the events he experienced. Let us take his attitude towards Madeline as an example, it is unbelievable that the narrator did not know that his close childhood friend did not have a twin sister. Another suspicious incident is how he readily confirms to Roderick's plan to bury her in the house in a strange behavior he should not be involved in.

The incredible coincidence of the similarities of the events of *Mad Trist* makes us believe that it is only imagination or a feeling of guilt especially that Madeline's tomb is beneath the room where he sleeps. This fact with a help of the frightening atmosphere of a storm left him in a state of terror, so it is likely that the following events might be only a product of his imagination.

IV. Type of Skepticism:

The story exemplifies rational skepticism. Rational Skepticism which is also referred to as scientific Skepticism generally focuses on debunking theories which believed to be far beyond the mainstream of science. The rational skeptics focus on and analyze the claims which they consider to be contradictory to science. They usually apply reason to the ideas which usually fall in the category of metaphysics and the paranormal which may be regarded as pseudo- science.

The method of the rational skeptic is to test any claim by applying reason and critical thinking to it in order to determine its validity and this is exactly what the narrator did. The narrator who is clearly referred to as: a "skeptic" refused to believe Roderick's supernatural claim about the sentient house. According to the narrator, Roderick's theory is a paranormal issue which is against science and which needs to be tested in order to prove its accuracy. He remained a persistent skeptic for most of the story, and he helplessly attempted to analyze a paranormal experience by subjecting it to reason. No matter the result is, the narrator was convinced that there must be a scientific explanation for this supernatural phenomenon and he attempted to find it.

Conclusion:

There is a connection between Skepticism and Supernatural literature where it exists taking the following forms:

- 1- Mystery leads to uncertainty: Mystery is an essential component in writing a Gothic literary work. It adds suspense to the plot of the literary work but at the same time it made the reader suspicious about the event mentioned especially if they are not well stated and explained.
- 2- A method to express doubts about certain beliefs in a sense of criticizing certain notions and beliefs. As a genre of literature, Gothic writing reflects the period concerns and anxieties. Some characters of the Gothic literary works are "skeptics" in a sense that he expresses his doubts about the worth and credibility about certain beliefs.
- 3- A method by which people can gain truth or Knowledge: In some cases, the skeptic is an "inquirer" who seeks knowledge. In these cases, the doubts aroused by a skeptic are needed because they are helpful to "learn" and "gain" truth and knowledge.
- 4- An attitude of denying the unseen world: sometimes applying skepticism into a supernatural context is realized by presenting the character of a skeptic as a denier or a non- believer who doubts the existence of the supernatural world.

This research attempted to make a comparison between four supernatural literary texts which include a certain level of skepticism. It conducts the comparison within the following frames:

- a. Skepticism as an instrument of criticism
- b. Skepticism as uncertainty:

A. Skepticism as an instrument of criticism:

1- The Rime of the ancient Mariner:

The poem discusses religious issues such as "sin", "Punishment" and "Salvation". The creepy experience of the mariner reflects Coleridge's confusion and dissatisfaction with the church teaching about these concepts and it implies his desire to use his own philosophical thoughts to explain them.

2- Frankenstein:

In Frankenstein, Mary Shelley gives a moral lesson about the consequences of the vicious use of science. This lesson was presented through conducting an illegal experiment. of creating a human being. Other than the moral and religious objections for such a project, this experiment raises scientific doubts about the possibility to perform this experiment and create life.

3- Young Goodman Brown:

Hawthorne expresses his resentment of Puritan's hypocrite community which pretends to be religious while it hides the ugliness of sin, immortality and religious intolerance.

4- The Fall of the House of usher:

Poe Criticizes a cultural trend based on rationalism and claims the possibility of obtaining ultimate knowledge. He presents a story of conflict between science and supernaturalism which ended in affirming that science alone is not enough to explain everything in life and that rationality does not always have the final word.

B. Skepticism as uncertainty including the following points:

- a. Mystery and ambiguity
- b. Unreliable narrator
- c. Type of Skepticism

1- Mystery and ambiguity:

As all the Gothic literary works, the mysterious atmosphere prevails in the chosen literary works in this research. Four different mysterious cases differ in their events but they resemble each other in their ambiguity and puzzlement they bear and convey to the reader. *The Rime of The Ancient Mariner* is shrouded in mystery which is realized in most of the events, symbols, characters and imagery. Unlike *Frankenstein* whose main point of ambiguity is the process of the creation of the monster. In *Young Goodman Brown* ambiguity is accompanied the reader since the beginning till the mysterious ending of the story including the setting, characters and confusing events. Finally, *The Fall of The House of Usher* has the lion share of ambiguity and unsolved questions, where we almost know nothing in this story. The title, the uncomplete description of the setting, the identity of the narrator, and the secret sickness of the twins, all these are vague points which need clarification and explanation.

2- The Unreliable Narrator:

We have four unreliable narrators: The ancient mariner, Victor Frankenstein, Goodman Brown, and the anonymous narrator in the *Fall of the House of Usher*. All of them are considered unreliable but for different reasons. The ancient mariner's unreliability is due to his hallucinations, whereas Victor Frankenstein's pride and subjectivity made us tend to call him unreliable especially after comparing his narrative to two other narratives in the novel. Goodman Brown seems to be daydreaming and it was hard to tell who the real narrator is.

3- Type of skepticism:

Each literary work included in this comparison expresses a different level and type of skepticism. In *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*, we find that the mariner is a religious skeptic who probable echoes Coleridge's attitude towards the concept of the "Original Sin". In *Frankenstein* skepticism took another form where we doubt the science used in the formation of the monster and this place the novel among the examples of "scientific Skepticism". Again, we have another religious skeptic who is Goodman Brown who condemned the hypocrisy of the Puritan society in a clear evidence of Hawthorne's own criticism of this doctrine. Finally, we have the rational skeptic, the anonymous narrator who at first denied the existence of the supernatural world, but then had no choice but to believe in it.

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