A Critical Stylistic Analysis of Pessimism in Selected Short Stories by Poe and Carver

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Abstract

Stylistics is the study of style and Critical stylistics examines how ideology is encoded or implied within linguistic features. Jeffries (2010) developed ten tools or textual conceptual functions to deal with all manner of texts, since all texts contain ideology. The problem investigated by this study is how pessimism is conveyed and represented through the textual conceptual functions in the two selected short stories. Namely, they are *the Fall of the House of Usher* by Edgar Allan Poe and *So Much Water so Close to Home* by Raymond Carver. The style of each story differs greatly from the other, which would inform the application of the textual conceptual functions. The analysis findings show that pessimism is linguistically constructed differently within each story. Poe's story features a larger variety of pessimistic elements such as negativity bias, despair, fatalism, etc. within a single extract, while Carver's has less variety of elements and some extract only feature a single element, like cynicism for instance. Poe's story involves a general anticipation of negative outcomes, hopelessness, futility of action. In Carver's story the narrator has negative expectations from others. This extends to all analysed extracts as well, Poe's Gothic style

involves a richer variety of explicit expressions conveying pessimism. In Carver's understated minimalist style, however, pessimism is largely communicated via subtext, which allows the reader more freedom for interpretation.

Key Words: Style, Critical Stylistics, Textual Conceptual Functions, Pessimism, Pessimistic Elements.

تحليل أسلوبي نقدي للتشاؤم في قصص قصيرة مختارة لبو وكارفر

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الملخص

الأسلوبية هي دراسة الأسلوب، أما الأسلوبية النقدية فتبحث في كيفية ترميز الأيديولوجيا أو تضمينها في السمات اللغوية. طورت جيفريز في كتابها الصادر عام (٢٠١٠) عشر أدوات أو وظائف مفاهيمية نصية للتعامل مع شتى أنواع النصوص، نظراً لاحتواء جميع النصوص على الأيديولوجيا. تتمثل الإشكالية التي تبحثها هذه الدراسة في كيفية نقل التشاؤم وتمثيله من خلال الوظائف المفاهيمية النصية في القصتين القصيرتين المختارتين، وهما: "سقوط بيت آشر" لإدغار آلان بو، و"ماء كثير قريب من المنزل" لريموند كارفر. يختلف أسلوب كل قصة اختلافاً كبيراً عن الأخرى، مما يؤثر على تطبيق الوظائف المفاهيمية النصية. تُظهر نتائج التحليل أن التشاؤم يُبنى لغوياً بطرق مختلفة في كل قصة. تحتوي قصة بو على تنوع أكبر من العناصر التشاؤمية مثل الانحياز السلبي، واليأس، والقدرية، وغيرها ضمن مقتطف واحد، بينما تحتوي قصة كارفر على تنوع أقل من العناصر، وبعض المقتطفات تتضمن عنصراً واحداً فقط كالسخرية على سبيل المثال. تنطوي قصة بو على توقع عام للنتائج السلبية، وانعدام الأمل، وعبثية الفعل. أما في قصة كارفر، فإن الراوي لديه توقعات سلبية من الآخرين. ينطبق هذا على جميع المقتطفات المحللة أيضاً، إذ يمتاز أسلوب بو القوطي بتنوع أغنى من التعبيرات الصريحة التي تنقل التشاؤم. أما في أسلوب كارفر البسيط والهادئ، فإن التشاؤم يُنقل عبر النص الضمني إلى حد كبير، مما يتيح للقارئ حرية اكبر في التفسير.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الأسلوب، الأسلوبية النقدية، الوظائف المفاهيمية النصية، التشاؤم، العناصر التشاؤمية.

1. Introduction

Critical stylistics is used to examine the ideological effects of the text, essentially, what does the text seek to achieve. While it is more commonly associated with texts of sociopolitical subject matters, it is well equipped however to deal with literary texts. Jeffries (2010) developed ten tools or textual conceptual functions to deal with all manner of texts, since all texts contain ideology. This study is concerned with analysing pessimism, within two short stories. Namely, they are *the Fall of the House of Usher* by Edgar Allan Poe and *So Much Water so Close to Home* by Raymond Carver. The aforementioned authors did not originally intend to have pessimism as central element or theme in their stories. However, pessimism is present within these bleak short stories nonetheless. The style of each author differs drastically from the other, one being ornate Gothic horror and the other is minimalist realism. These distinct styles are an asset rather than a drawback in this study. This is because it the understanding of how pessimism is represented by these dissimilar styles using Jeffries' (2010) framework of critical stylistics. More specifically, this study seeks to examine the salient textual conceptual functions in relation to pessimism. In addition, it seeks to find which types of pessimistic elements are prominent, as informed by the textual conceptual functions, in each story. To the best of the researcher's knowledge, there were critical stylistic analyses of Poe and Carver together, let alone studies tackling the aforementioned short stories together. Thus contributing to the significance and value of this study.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Style

Leech and Short (2007) define style as the way linguistic features are used distinctively, like vocabulary, grammar and tone, to serve a specific purpose by a specific person in a given context. For Baldick (2015), it is

any specific way of language use, it reveals an author's characteristics, like school, genre, or period. It is to the point where particular styles were named after their authors (e.g. Ciceronian), professions (e.g. Journalistic) and periods (e.g. Augustan). Similarly, Spencer and Gregory (1964) consider it a creative and individual way of utilising language resources offered to the author by the genre and his intended purpose within it, his time period and his dialect. Chatman (1978) defines it as the properties of the medium's texture. The medium, is what facilitates the realisation of narrative, such as words, a canvas, paint, a stone (to sculpt), etc. making the narrative a tangible object. Therefore, style is the observable characteristics of said medium, such as balletic movements, graphic design or rather verbal nuance. From what can be gathered on style, it is the choices made by authors consciously or unconsciously, it creates an effect for the reader that could be used to entertain, influence or both. It is more than linguistic aesthetics and technique; it is a representation of identity and culture; it can potentially contain hints of the author's very being and who they are/were.

2.2 Stylistics

Widdowson (1975) demonstrates that stylistics is a way to relate disciplines such as literary criticism and linguistics to literature and language rather than being an independent subject or discipline. It links disciplines by facilitating an interaction between literary criticism and linguistics, as well as a link among subjects, bringing literature and language together at the same time. As per Simpson (2004), stylistics connects literature and linguistics, as it draws upon theories from cognitive psychology, discourse analysis and feminist theory. Language use involves innovation and creativity, which are not exclusive to literary language use and can exist in many discourse forms such as casual conversation, advertising, journalism, etc. Widdowson (1975) maintains

that it is impossible not to consider interpretation and artistic effect while claiming to deal meaningfully with literature. Linguistic approaches do provide analytical frameworks, yet cannot replace the intuitive, interpretive and artistic aspects. Wales (2011) affirms that the interpretation and appreciation that covers literary and non–literary texts is done by analysing textual and linguistic features, which is a general principle maintained by stylistics. Stylistics examines how the writer's artistic accomplishment is related to how it is achieved by using specific linguistic techniques (Leech and Short, 2007). Stockwell and Whiteley (2014) describe the stylistic method as systematic, where terms used in the analysis framework are clear and are rigorously applied after being established. Such an approach is employed by stylisticians to examine how the texts are composed via deliberate authorial choices to create an effect that is specific to the chosen linguistic forms.

2.3 Critical Stylistics

The types of words and sentences an author choose entail conventional resonance and associations for readers. To interpret the relation between the linguistic choices the author uses and his/her values and preoccupations requires the right linguistics to be applied. It fall upon researchers, however, to employ a linguistics that is sensitive to language associations of a community, i.e. a linguistics equipped to treat psychological and sociological linguistic aspects (Fowler, 1977). Jeffries (2010) notes that critical stylistics is a mix of critical discourse analysis, stylistics and functional approaches to grammar. It provides an inclusive set of tools to analyse and explain power in written texts and involves examining a wide range of real texts with many worked examples. Fowler (1977) discussed the 'implied author' concept where, in the matter of prose fiction work, readers can sense the author's

presence. The author holds a stance regarding the ideological and literary traditions that surround the book, its content (characters, narrators if any, ideas) and regarding the implied reader.

2.4 The Genre of Short Stories

Short stories can be categorised as an independent genre, due to having distinctive characteristics that differ from other types of literary prose. According to Abrams and Harpham (2012), it is a short work of fictional prose; its length limits the effects it can achieve as well as the means to achieve these effects. They referred to Edgar Allan Poe as the first critical theorist of the short story and the first to consider it an established genre and how it can be finished in one sitting (thirty minutes to two hours). Cuddon (1992) mentions that in terms of length, the overwhelming majority of short stories tend to have a word count between 1,600 and 20,000. May (2002) demonstrates how reality is primarily transcendent and/or timeless. It would be best reflected by building narratives focusing on powerful moments, the manifestation of a desire and on the universal instead of the particular.

2.5 Overview of Poe, Carver and the Two Selected Short Stories

This section introduces each author and provides a description of each short story.

2.5.1 Edgar Allan Poe

Edgar Allan Poe (1809–1849) an American writer and a pioneer of the horror genre. Poe's writing revolutionized the horror story genre, he is deemed by critics as a macabre master for his mastery of creating a frightful atmosphere. He integrated insight and psychological complexity into the horror story, which was unprecedented (Hourly History, 2018). Packer and Stoneman (2018) discusses weird fiction, originally popularised by authors like Poe and H. P. Lovecraft, who often deal with pessimistic tones. Dawidziak (2023) asserts that Poe draws from deep emotions and personal experience for some of his best works, but

he should not be confused with his mentally unstable narrators. Hayes (2002) points to the Gothic implications of the narrator's vocabulary to describe the Ushers' house. The words "melancholy", "mansion of gloom" and "vacant eye-like windows" were used to describe the house. The bleakness of the house and the pale and decaying trees, reflect the narrator's mental and physical state. He sees his own reflection in a pond near the house, causing him emotional unease (p. 89). Morgan (2023) states that it delighted millions of readers, including significant foreign authors like Fyodor Dostoevsky and Charles Baudelaire. Poe is considered by Alfred, Lord Tennyson as "the most original genius that America has produced."

2.5.2 *The Fall of the House of Usher*

A gloomy short story that centres around the visit of Roderick Usher's friend, an unnamed narrator who arrives at the house of Usher. There is a focus on melancholic setting and atmosphere, which parallels the depressed and withering state of the main characters. The narrator describes the outside appearance of the sorrow invoking, decayed house and its interior is no different. The Gothic mansion's inhabitants are impacted by such sorrow. Roderick and Madeline Usher, especially, reflect the mansion's deteriorated and irredeemable state. Eventually, they share the same fate as the mansion in an inevitable collapse, ending the Usher lineage. Throughout all of this, however, the narrator describes what he observes. He attempts to rationalise the cause behind the state of the house and its inhabitants, yet he is unable to fully and decisively understand what or why. It could have been a generational curse behind the family's demise, or a series of bad decisions and self neglect that led to the family's demise.

2.5.3 Raymond Carver

Raymond Carver (1938–1988) is a celebrated American writer, for his simplistic, everyday language prose signals an unseen mystery; critics

deem him as the father of minimalism. His style is admired and imitated by writers and writing teachers. Readers loved his grim, often humorous stories about the lives of the working poor and their problems. In her study entitled "Optimism and Pessimism in Raymond Carver's Short Stories", Bernardo Blanco (2015) found an unmistakable distinction between his early stories and the ones in Cathedral in terms of containing a pessimistic view. In *The Idea* and *Neighbors* a pessimistic view is easier to observe than an optimistic one in *Careful*. Carver's pessimistic or optimistic approach may not be obvious at first, but the contrast is clear between his writings when his life was falling apart and he had a drinking problem and his works when he started to recover. Monti (2013) asserted that Carver wrote objectively in his narrative. He emulated real-life interactions with his choice of brief sentences and dialogue. Amir (2010) states that Carver uses scene mode, a technique of showing instead of telling, where the story's events occur in real time on the page. Carver (1984) mentioned how he writes about ordinary objects, like a woman's earring, a window curtain, a chair, etc., using ordinary language and gives them immense power. He creates tension by what is left out and implied as well as how words are expressed and connected explicitly.

2.5.4 *So Much Water so Close to Home*

The story deals with themes of amorality, communication breakdown in a relationship, distrust and the psychological impact of violence. It involves a woman, Claire, who feels alienated in her relationship with her husband and the father of her child. The story revolves around the incident where her husband, Stuart and his friends came across a dead body of a girl on their camping trip. It was not so much about what they did, but rather about what they did not. They camped for two days without reporting the dead body to the authorities. The communication broke down between her and Stuart. She feels uneasy around him after

he told her, although he kept this information from her for a while. She feels that she does not know nor can she trust him anymore; it is to the point where she suspects his involvement in a crime. She displays trauma and feels a sense of entrapment, which do not resolve at the end of the story.

2.6 Pessimism

Van der Lugt (2021) defines pessimism as a value judgment of reality or life, resulting from the supreme value of man conflicting with the perceived life facts. What marks the pessimism of most philosophers is a sense of deep personal investment and urgency. In contrast with the prior treatment of pessimism as a philosophical system or stance, another perspective, however, treats it as an issue of temperment, a perspective accepted by Bertrund Russel. Russell (1946/2004) believes that pessimism and optimism are both matters of temperament rather than philosophical ones. Hecht (2013) states how pessimism is the anticipation of a negative future; a pessimist mainly focuses on the negative aspects and potential negative outcomes. It can be temporary as a mood or a lingering personality trait. There are pessimistic beliefs that are far more nuanced and extreme.

Prescott (2012) holds that pessimism is a compound of attitudes, intentions and commitments or a stance. As a stance it is primarily marked by the bad prevailing over the good. He asserts that the following views, collectively, address key components of, or issues involved in, pessimism:

Cynicism or Fatalism. Pessimism is the view of humans being fundamentally corrupt, evil or irredeemably bad. It can also be the view that human agency is futile in light of basic constraints affecting the human condition.

Skepticism or Nihilism. Pessimism is the view of accepting knowledge to be impossible conclusively. In addition it can be the view that

important values like truth, meaning, happiness or the good cannot be achieved or do not exist.

The Affirmation of Decline. Pessimism is the view that conditions are in a state of decline or simply getting worse.

Despair. Pessimism is to abandon hope, due to adversity, depression, or a character defect.

This is a broad presentation of concepts as views linked to pessimism and can even be manifestations thereof, is valuable for this study. *Cynicism, fatalism, skepticism, nihilism, affirmation of decline* and *despair* will be considered as pessimistic elements to be economical and for convenience.

Hecht (2013) maintains that pessimism is connected with *avoidance strategies* to cope with distress. In addition, a passive attitude and hesitation can be expressed by a pessimist in a challenging encounter or when an opportunity presents itself.

These concepts should be adequate to represent pessimism that can be analysed in the short stories selected for this study.

3. The Methodology of Research

This section includes a data description, being the two selected short stories and the methods employed to analyse them.

3.1 Research Design and Data Selection

The study used a qualitative analysis method and adopted Lesley Jeffries' (2010) critical stylistics model. A mixed method would increase objectivity, but it can be a counterproductive complication in the context of this study. There is a variety of linguistic expressions and structures conveying pessimism in the data. They will be categorised under the following pessimistic elements: despair, fatalism, skepticism, nihilism, avoidance strategies, cynicism and affirmation of decline. It is difficult to say if there is an agreed upon or fixed number of elements to reflect the core dimensions of what constitutes a pessimistic worldview. These

elements, however, are an attempt (by the researcher) to capture pessimism, since they are linked to it, in the selected short stories. The analysed data in this study is the *Fall of the House of Usher* by Poe and *so Much Water so Close to Home* Carver. Both stories similarly feature dark and morbid themes, they also have no redemption or positive character development. While other stories by these authors can be darker and more foreboding. Yet they do not necessarily involve pessimistic notions conveyed by language, such as of futility of action, hopelessness, characters that anticipate negative outcomes, etc. There are 12 extracts primarily selected based on the density of expressions that convey pessimism within them and based on their significance to the narrative as a secondary criteria. The units of analysis include words and structures, featured in the processes and triggers within the textual conceptual function in Jeffries' (2010) framework.

3.2 The Framework of Analysis

The study's adopted framework is Lesley Jeffries' critical stylistics framework. According to Jeffries (2010), it combines theories from critical discourse analysis and precise tools from stylistics. The model contains tools that can be flexibly employed either as a set or individually "to establish what a text is *doing*" (p. 6). The latter statement implies a broad range of critically analysable texts that can be approached in a flexible manner. Her model is well suited to analyse literary text since Jeffries (2010) asserts that all texts contain ideology, and that linguistic choices made by a text producer are always ideological. Jeffries (2010) framework provide 10 textual conceptual functions (or TCFs for convenience). They represent a well-defined set of analytical tools to analyse ideology within texts. The relationship between the tools as concepts with words is manifested by processes

and/or triggers, which are linguistic realisations that vary in kind and number for each tool.

1. Naming and Describing

It is a TCF that is concerned with how texts, along with their authors implicitly, could represent a worldview by choosing from the common resources from a language. A noun phrase packages ideas and in turn the choices of naming or noun modification can convey pessimism due to them being evaluative. The processes involve choice of noun/near-synonym, evaluative or metaphorical noun choice and noun-phrase pre-modification.

2. Representing Actions/Events/States

This TCF revolves around the verbal component of the clause and provides a stereotypical presentation of information on actions (what is being done), events (what is happening) or states (what simply is). Pessimism can be indicated through the use specific verb in a specific situation. The processes involve, Material-Action (Intentional (MAI), Supervention (MAS) and Event (MAE), Verbalisation (V), Mental-Cognition (MC), Reaction (MR), Perception (MP), Relational-Intensive (RI), Relational-Possessive (RP) and Relational-Circumstantial (RC).

3. Equating and Contrasting (e.g., X is Y or X is not Y)

This tool focuses on the capacity of texts to show relations of similarity (equating) and differences (contrasting). This implies that the text producer can define what is equated and what is contrasted, which is ideologically significant. Pessimism can be shown in what is equated or contrasted. Equating triggers include, copular structure "X is Y" (including clefts), apposition "X, Y", etc. Contrasting triggers include, Negated opposition – X not Y, Transitional opposition – from (or turn) X into Y, etc.

4. Exemplifying and Enumerating

Exemplifying provides explicit instances of a category, but not exhaustive ones. Lists that exemplify can be vague at the end since they could end with a catch all or a broad, open ended category. While enumerating provides complete and comprehensive lists, which can create an impression of thoroughness and completion. They are triggered by Explicit markers: "for example," "for instance," etc. , List structures with conjunctions (and), Three–part lists (symbolic completeness) etc.

5. Prioritising

It involves syntactic possibilities and the use of linguistic features, like the choice of certain syntactic structures to fronted themes or ideas to shape perspectives and interpretations. The ideological implication here is that the reader can be influenced by what a writer considers a priority. Pessimism can linguistically manifest in what is subordinated or fronted. Its processes include clause–end such as new–information and focus in default word order, fronting, cleft sentences It is X that…" & pseudo–clefts "What X does is…", etc.

6. Implying and Assuming

This TCF revolves around the impact behind what is not stated explicitly. The implied, or assumed, ideologies are important since they cannot be easily scrutinised or questioned. The implied meaning that is dealt with in this TCF, is inferred by the reader relies on context and flouting the conversational maxims. This TCF views assuming (presupposing) is the fixed background information found within the text and deemed as true. Implicature is triggered by flouting the Gricean maxims of quality, quantity, relation and manner. Existential presupposition triggers include definite noun phrases (the, this, my, etc.). Logical presupposition is triggered by change of state verbs, factive verbs, etc.

7. Negating

It is treated as a process of constructing non-existent realities. Similarly, its ideological effect is to cause the reader to think of a hypothetical reality where the negated statement exists, which can convey pessimism depending on the context. It involve processes or triggers found in syntactic, morphological and lexical negation, as in negative particle "not / n't" inside verb phrase, negative determiners & pronouns (no, none, ...), etc. Morphologically negated forms (prefixes un-, in-, etc.) Lexically negative nouns, verbs & adjectives (lack, absence, etc.)

8. Hypothesizing

This tool focuses on how modality reflects ideology in texts since it looks into the hypothetical scenarios introduced by modality. Some texts can reflect how the writer envisions different postulated realities. Modality could create the said alternative realities in the mind of the reader as well. Pessimism could be hypothesised in expressing uncertainty, obligation, desire, etc. through modality, for instance. The processes/triggers include modal auxiliary verbs (will, would, etc.), modal lexical verbs (think, know, etc.), etc.

9. Presenting the Speech and Thoughts of Other Participants

Representing the words and thoughts of another person is significant, because their ideology can be manipulated as well as the ideology of the reader. There can always be a gap between the quoted and the original version. There is ideological significance in the seemingly straightforward reporting of speech or thought. The TCF deals with speech presentation categories, as in direct speech, indirect speech, etc. on the one hand and thought presentation categories, as in narrative reported thought, indirect thought, etc. on the other.

10. Representing Time, Space and Society

This TCF is concerned with analysing how texts position the reader in the text world created within through deictic expressions. (e.g., using

deixis to potentially imply shared values). The TCF involves place deixis as in here/there, demonstratives, etc., time deixis, as in now/then, time adverbials, etc., person deixis, such as I, you, etc. and social deixis, as in titles (Mr, Dr), address forms, etc. These TCFs are not specifically made to analyse pessimism, they however, offer an adequate level of flexibility and rigor to analyse a wide range of concepts and/or phenomena, including pessimism. This makes this framework a valuable asset to many analyses.

4. Data Analysis

The analysis findings are presented in this section through the textual conceptual functions connected to pessimistic elements, in the two selected short stories.

4.1 Analysis of the Two Selected Short Stories

This section presents the salient textual conceptual functions within three sample extracts from each story. The salience of which is based on their number/count and/or effect as well as the types of pessimistic elements linked to them. Starting with Poe's story then Carver's.

Poe's *The Fall of the House of Usher*

Extract 1: Arriving at the Gloomy House of Usher

During the whole of a dull, dark, and soundless day in the autumn of the year, when the clouds hung oppressively low in the heavens, I had been passing alone, on horseback, through a singularly dreary tract of country, and at length found myself, as the shades of the evening drew on, within view of the melancholy House of Usher. I know not how it was—but, with the first glimpse of the building, a sense of insufferable gloom pervaded my spirit. I say insufferable; for the feeling was unrelieved by any of that half-pleasurable, because poetic, sentiment with which the mind usually receives even the sternest natural images of the desolate or terrible (Poe 1839/1997, P. 3)

Linguistic Expressions & Processes	TCFs	Pessimistic Elements
dull, dark, and soundless day (pre–modification)	Naming and Describing	Negativity Bias
singularly dreary tract of country (pre–modification)		
melancholy House of Usher (noun modification)		
a sense of [insufferable gloom] (pre–modification) [pervaded] (MAE) my spirit	Naming and Describing & Representing Actions, Events and States	Despair
the feeling was (RI) [unrelieved] (morphological negation)	Representing Actions, Events and States & Negating	

Interpretation

The story opens with the narrator setting an oppressive atmosphere before any major event happens. The text reflects this through temporal and spatial descriptions: "dull, dark and soundless day" and "singularly dreary tract of country." The House of Usher is described as "melancholy." The narrator signals a looming inexplicable force through the negated mental cognition process of knowing. A mere glimpse evoked a sensation of "insufferable gloom" that pervaded and overwhelmed him. The morphological negation in "unrelieved" creates a hypothetical reality where relief should be possible through poetic beauty, yet it cannot be, intensifying the hopelessness. The text positions the reader through adverbial structures in a time and space with highly negative noun descriptions, conveying despair and setting pessimistic expectations.

TCFs Count: Naming and Describing (4), Representing Actions, Events and States (3) and Negating (1)

Extract 2: The Decline of Roderick Usher

To an anomalous species of terror I found him a bounden slave. "I shall perish,"said he, "I must perish in this deplorable folly. Thus, thus, and not otherwise, shallI be lost. I dread the events of the future, not in themselves, but in their results. Ishudder at the thought of any, even the most trivial, incident, which may operateupon this intolerable agitation of soul. I have, indeed, no abhorrence of danger, except in its absolute efect—in terror. In this unnerved, in this pitiable, condition Ifeel that the period will sooner or later arrive when I must abandon life and reasontogether, in some struggle with the grim phantasm, Fear" (Poe, 1839/1997, pp. 9– 10).

Linguistic Expressions & Processes	TCFs	Pessimistic Elements
[To an anomalous species [of terror] (post-modification)] (fronting) I found him a bounden slave.	Prioritizing & Naming and Describing	Negativity Bias & Fatalism
"I must (formally deontic, epistemic in function) perish in this deplorable (pre-modification) folly	Hypothesizing & Naming and Describing	Despair
Shall (epistemic modality) I be lost.	Hypothesizing	
I dread (MR) the events of the future	Representing Actions, Events and States	Negativity Bias
I have, indeed, no (syntactic negation) abhorrence of danger, except in its absolute effect—in terror. (contrast)	Negating & Equating and Contrasting	
I feel (MR) that the period will (epistemic modality) sooner or later arrive (MAE) when I must (formally deontic, epistemic in function) abandon life and reason together	Representing Actions, Events and States & Hypothesizing	Despair & Affirmation of Decline
in some struggle with the grim (pre-modification) phantasm, Fear. (equating)	Naming and Describing & Equating and Contrasting	Fatalism

Interpretation

The narrator establishes Roderick's deteriorated state through fronting: "To an anomalous species of terror" prioritizes terror as the primary frame. The narrator found Roderick as a "bounden slave," presenting him as a man whose will was robbed—indicative of fatalism. Roderick states "I shall perish, I must perish in this deplorable folly," where both modals convey certainty of his demise. He affirms he will be lost and expresses fear through the verb choice "I dread the events of the future." The syntactic negation "I have no abhorrence of danger, except in its absolute effect—in terror" creates a contrast revealing his irrational fear. The fronted structure "In this unnerved, in this pitiable, condition" naturalizes his deteriorated state as given information. He anticipates inevitable collapse: "I must abandon life and reason together," where "must" functions epistemically expressing high certainty. He equates fear with "the grim phantasm, Fear," elevating its threatening status and indicating fatalism—Roderick is helpless and anticipates his demise with no hope of averting it, an affirmation of decline.

TCFs Count: Hypothesizing (3), Representing Actions, Events and States (3), Naming and Describing (3) Equating and Contrasting (2), Prioritizing (1) and Negating (1)

Extract 3: Two Deaths and an Imminent Fall

As if in the superhuman energy of his utterance there had been found the potency of a spell, the huge antique panels to which the speaker pointed threw slowly back, upon the instant, their ponderous and ebony jaws. It was the work of the rushing gust—but then without those doors there did stand the lofty and enshrouded figure of the lady Madeline of Usher. There was blood upon her white robes, and the evidence of some bitter struggle upon every portion of her emaciated frame. For a moment she remained trembling and reeling to and fro upon the threshold—then, with a low moaning cry, fell heavily inward upon the

person of her brother, and in her violent and now final death-agonies, bore him to the floor a corpse, and a victim to the terrors he had anticipated (Poe, 1839/1997, pp. 24-25).

Linguistic Expressions & Processes	TCFs	Pessimistic Elements
the superhuman (pre-modification) energy	Naming and Describing	Negativity Bias & Fatalism
ponderous and ebony jaws (noun choice)		Negativity Bias
the [lofty and enshrouded] (pre-modification) figure	Naming and Describing	
she remained (RI) trembling and reeling	Representing Actions, Events and States	
fell (MAS) heavily inward		Fatalism
in her violent and now final death-agonies (noun choice)	Naming and Describing	Negativity Bias & Fatalism
a victim (noun choice) to the terrors he had anticipated (subordination)	Naming and Describing & Prioritizing	Fatalism

Interpretation

The text suggests Roderick's words possessed mystical power, reflected by "superhuman energy" and the noun choice "spell," as if his utterance conjured the anticipated event—indicating fatalism powerful enough to influence affairs supernaturally. The noun choice "jaws" metaphorically presents doors as part of a sinister predator. The adjectives "lofty and enshrouded" present Madeline as imposing despite being on the verge of death. "Bitter struggle" upon her "emaciated frame" indicates immense suffering. The verb "remained" sets up a relational intensive process with a persistent state of suffering—trembling and reeling. Madeline "fell" (MAS), an unconscious action that ended the Usher bloodline. The noun choice "victim" highlights Roderick's immense fear, and the compound noun "death-agonies" encodes violent death.

The subordinate clause "he had anticipated" reinforces Roderick's fatalism as given fact, positioned finally for emphasis. His fatalistic beliefs were fulfilled—he died of terror as what he dreaded most took place, a self–fulfilling prophecy ending the Usher lineage.

TCFs Count: Naming and Describing (5), Representing Actions, Events and States (2), and Prioritizing (1)

The Findings of *The Fall of the House of Usher*

Naming and Describing is the most prominent TCF. Noun choices and descriptions reflect negative evaluations evoking pessimism: negativity bias in "bleak walls," "vacant eye–like windows"; despair in "insufferable gloom," "utter depression of soul"; and fatalism in "To an anomalous species of terror I found him a bounden slave," describing Roderick's enslavement to terror.

Representing Actions, Events and States is the second most prominent TCF, present in material processes without agency or intention, and in mental and relational processes. In "An air of stern, deep, and irredeemable gloom hung over and pervaded all," the RI "hung over" signals a static looming state, while the MAE "pervaded" hints at a depressive force beyond control. Mental processes show the narrator's inability to process comparisons: "with an utter depression of soul which I can compare to no earthly sensation."

Negating creates alternative realities highlighting what should occur versus actual outcomes. In "the feeling was unrelieved by any of that half–pleasurable, because poetic, sentiment," the narrator's feeling should be redeemed by poetic quality, yet cannot be, reinforcing despair.

Pessimism is caused by a dark force looming over the house and the Ushers themselves. Roderick's unstable state stems from an ailment latent from early age and innate disposition, indicating fatalism—he was destined to suffer. He anticipates his demise: "I feel that the period will

sooner or later arrive when I must abandon life and reason together," affirming his decline indicates despair.

Carver's *So Much Water*

The following section includes three sample extracts analysed from the story.

Extract 1: A Tense Interraction

My husband eats with a good appetite. But I don't think he's really hungry. He chews, arms on the table, and stares at something across the room. He looks at me and looks away. He wipes his mouth on the napkin. He shrugs, and goes on eating. "What are you staring at me for?" he says. "What is it?" he says and lays down his fork. "Was I staring?" I say, and shake my head. The telephone rings. "Don't answer it," he says. "It might be your mother," I say. "Watch and see," he says. I pick up the receiver and listen. My husband stops eating (Carver 1989, p. 79).

Linguistic Expressions & Processes	TCFs	Pessimistic Elements
My husband eats (MAI) with a good appetite.	Representing Actions, Events and States	Cynicism
[But] (contrasting) I don't [think] (MC & epistemic verb) he's really hungry.	Equating and Contrasting, Representing Actions, Events and States & Hypothesizing	
chews (MAI), stares (MAI), looks at me (MAI), looks away (MAI)	Representing Actions, Events and States	Avoidance strategies & Cynicism
Don't answer it (syntactic negation)	Negating	Avoidance strategy

Interpretation

The husband's eating is represented through MAI, but Clair's cynical response—using the epistemic verb "think" negated—suggests Hypothesizing about his true state. The italicised verbs (chews, stares, looks away, etc.) indicate Clair's extreme descriptiveness, suggesting

she suspects something. Stuart's avoidant actions (looks away, stares at something) and his defensive response ("What are you staring at me for?") raise tension. When the telephone rings (MAE), Stuart's "Don't answer it" uses syntactic negation, indicating avoidance. Clair's observations reveal suspicion, making cynicism and avoidance strategies the main pessimistic elements.

TCFs count: Representing Actions, Events and States (6), Equating and Contrasting (1), Hypothesizing (1) and Negating (1)

Extract 2: Corpse Encounter and a Questionable Reaction

They saw the girl before they set up camp. Mel Dorn found her. No clothes on her at all. She was wedged into some branches that stuck out over the water. He called the others and they came to look. They talked about what to do. One of the men—my Stuart didn't say which— said they should start back at once. The others stirred the sand with their shoes, said they didn't feel inclined that way. They pleaded fatigue, the late hour, the fact that the girl wasn't going anywhere. In the end they went ahead and set up the camp (Carver 1989, p. 81).

Linguistic Expressions & Processes	TCFs	Pessimistic Elements
They saw (MP) the girl before (time adverbial) they set up camp.	Representing Actions, Events and States & Representing Time, Space and Society	Cynicism & Avoidance Strategies
No (syntactic negation) clothes on her at all.	Negating	
They talked (V) about what to do.	Representing Actions, Events and States	
my Stuart (social deixis) didn't say (V) which—said they should (deontic modality) start back at once.	Representing Time, Space and Society, Representing Actions, Events and States & Hypothesizing	
They pleaded (V) [fatigue, the	Representing Actions,	Cynicism

late hour, the fact that the girl wasn't going anywhere.] (three-part list)	Events and States & Exemplifying and Enumerating	

Interpretation

The temporal deictic before marks their priorities—they saw the girl before setting up camp. The negation no clothes conjures an alternative reality of dignity. One man suggested they should (deontic modality) start back at once—a hypothetical obligation—but my Stuart (social deixis) is ironically used, signaling distance since Stuart wasn't the one suggesting the right action. The others stirred (MAI) the sand, a trivial distraction, and didn't feel inclined (boulomaic modality), showing lack of desire. They pleaded with a three-part list (fatigue, late hour, girl wasn't going anywhere), expressing completeness of justifications and lack of empathy. The verbs reflect moral avoidance, justifying Claire's cynicism.

TCFs count: Representing Actions, Events and States (4), Representing Time, Space and Society (2), Exemplifying and Enumerating (1), Negating (1) and Hypothesizing (1)

Extract 3: A Suspicious Man and the Sound of Water

A green pickup comes up behind me and stays behind me for miles. I keep slowing at the wrong times, hoping he will pass. Then I speed up. But this is at the wrong times, too. I grip the wheel until my fingers hurt. On a long clear stretch he goes past. But he drives along beside for a bit, a crewcut man in a blue workshirt. We look each other over. Then he waves, toots his horn, and pulls on up ahead. I slow down and find a place. I pull over and shut off the motor. I can hear the river down below the trees. Then I hear the pickup coming back. I lock the doors and roll up the windows. "You all right?" the man says. He taps on the glass. "You okay?" He leans his arms on the door and brings his face to the window. I stare at him. I can't think what else to do. (Carver 1989, p. 86).

Linguistic Expressions & Processes	TCFs	Pessimistic Elements
I keep slowing (MAI) at the wrong times	Representing Actions, Events and States	Cyncism & Avoidance Strategies
Hoping (MR) & (boulomaic modality) he will pass	Representing Actions, Events and States & Hypothesizing	Cyncism
I can hear (MP) the river down below (place deixis) the trees.	Representing Actions, Events and States & Representing Time, Space and Society	Negativity Bias
I lock (MAI) the doors and roll up (MAI) the windows.	Representing Actions, Events and States	Cyncism & Avoidance Strategies
"You all right?" (DS) "You okay?" (DS)	Presenting the Speech and Thought of Others	Cyncism
I stare (MAS) at him. I can't think (MC) what else to do.	Representing Actions, Events and States	Despair

Interpretation

Claire's MAIs (slowing, speeding up, gripping the wheel until her fingers hurt) signal avoidance. Hoping (MR and boulomaic modality) he will pass shows her desperate desire to avoid interaction, establishing an alternative threatening reality. The man's friendly gestures (waves, toots MAI) don't alleviate tension. Water's presence (I can hear the river—MP with spatial deixis down below) serves as a pessimistic trigger and negativity bias, reminding Claire of death and suggesting she fears repeating male violence. She locks (MAI) the doors and rolls up (MAI) the windows—avoidance strategies based on cynicism. Direct speech reporting ("You all right?" "You okay?") presents raw interaction, but Claire's terror is evident. I stare (MAS) and can't think (MC) shows exhausted resources and despair. Claire's hypervigilance and cynicism

towards this man mirrors her behavior with Stuart, suggesting lasting cynicism towards men.

TCFs count: Representing Actions, Events and States (7), Presenting the Speech and Thought of Others (2), Representing Time, Space and Society (1) and Hypothesizing (1)

The Findings of *So Much Water*

Representing Action, Events and States is the most prominent TCF. Claire displays fixation on Stuart's actions, narrating them as chews, stares, looks at me, looks away, shrugs, wipes, goes on eating, lays down his fork (p. 79)—mostly material action intentional processes indicating agency. This monotonous narration affirms her interpersonal cynicism towards Stuart's avoidance strategies. Their reaction to the corpse encounter exemplifies avoidance: The others stirred the sand with their shoes, ... They pleaded fatigue (p. 81)—trivial reactions unfitting the situation.

Presenting Others' Speech and Thoughts is the second most prominent TCF. Direct speech like "Godamn it, why can't people mind their own business?" (p. 80) highlights Stuart's words, justifying Claire's cynicism. Narrator's Report of Thought Act in He gives me what he [thinks] is a meaningful look (p. 80) reveals Claire's doubting stance.

Hypothesizing indicates pessimism through modality. Epistemic modality shows doubt: I don't [think] he's really hungry (p. 79), denying Stuart's sincerity. Deontic modality in they [should] start back at once (p. 81) reflects a hypothetical obligation that remains unfulfilled.

Other significant TCFs include Representing Time, Space and Society (positioning Claire's cynical deictic centre, e.g., spatial deixis down below for the threatening river), Negating (reinforcing cynicism by suggesting Stuart lied or hid something), and Exemplifying and Enumerating (Claire's thorough observation of Stuart's actions signals abnormal vigilance).

The corpse encounter invites reader cynicism towards the men's morally and legally questionable behavior, making it easier to presume malicious tendencies.

Conclusions

The paper concludes with pessimism being represented differently in each short story, as informed by the textual conceptual functions therein. Pessimism were constructed with greater variety of elements in Poe's story than Carver's. Poe's ornate Gothic style contains more explicit language, which provides a wider range of pessimistic elements present. Compared to Poe, Carver uses everyday language in his story. His understated style of conveying more implicitly than otherwise proves to demand more interpretive effort to analyse the linguistic construction of Pessimism.

In terms of pessimistic elements, Poe's story featured despair, fatalism and negativity bias, while Carver's story, on the other hand, prominently featured cynicism and avoidance strategies. The text in Poe's story reflects negativity bias as the narrator presents the environment he observes as well as the characters who inhabit the Usher mansion. Through the narrator's description of Roderick's state and the report of the latter's speech, it conveys Roderick's despair, his fatalistic perspective of the inevitable near doom of the Ushers' and affirms the decline of his state. In Carver's story, the elements reflected by the narrator, Claire, who has a cynical stance towards her husband mainly because of the camping incident, his reaction and behaviour during which.

The salient TCFs in Poe's story ordered based on the number of occurrence were Naming and Describing, Representing Actions, Events and States and Negating. In Carver's, they were Representing Actions, Events and States, Presenting Others' Speech and Thoughts and Hypothesizing. The difference of TCFs representation within each story

extends to the processes within the said TCFs themselves. Representing Actions, Events and States, for instance, is represented differently in each story and conveys different pessimistic elements.

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