

## Punctuation as a Stylistic Device: Dashes in Edgar Allen Poe's " *The Black Cat* "

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### **Abstract**

It is not an overstatement to say that punctuation communicates an interpretation of a written text. It is used as a part of style influenced by treatments of literary texts. As a linguistic form, punctuation will have a relation with stylistics as, a discipline mediating between linguistics and literary criticism. Stylistics represents the linguistic analysis of literary texts and its prior aim is to investigate thematic and aesthetic values generated by linguistic forms, these values convey the author's vision, tone and attitude and increase the affective or the emotive force of the message and

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contribute to make fictional reality function more effectively in the thematic unity.

Lodge (1966: 4) puts style as: “the novelist’s medium is language: whatever he does, qua novelist, he does it in and through language”. What literary stylistics does is to bridge literary works with language. This paper maps the relation between punctuation and style and mainly explores the importance of the punctuation mark "dash", which appears widely in "*The Black Cat*", a short story written by Edger Allan Poe, treating the use of this punctuation mark as a stylistic device that more effectively participates in declaring certain types of emotions and state of affairs clearly manifested in the story.

The study falls into various sections: in section one, some definitions and functions of punctuation are explained. Section two is mostly devoted to present a survey of the concepts: 'Style', 'Stylistics', 'literary Stylistics' and, 'literary criticism'. And then, in section three, the short story "*The Black Cat*" is analyzed depending on the using of the punctuation mark (dash -). Finally, a summary and the conclusion of the results of the study are represented in the last section.

## الخلاصة

ليس هناك مبالغة بالقول أن التنقيط وسيله تساعد في توضيح معنى النص المكتوب . يستخدم التنقيط كجزء من النمط أسلوبى الذى يؤثر على النصوص الأدبية. وكشكل لغوى, فإن علامات التنقيط لها علاقة بعلم دراسة الأسلوب الذى يتوسط بين علم دراسة اللغة والنقد الأدبى كونه يمثل التحليل اللغوى للنصوص الأدبية . إن من أهداف علم دراسة الأسلوب هو البحث فى القيم الجمالية والموضوعية المتولدة عن الأشكال اللغوية , والقيم التى تنقل رؤية الكاتب, اللهجة, والموقف , والتى تزيد من القوة العاطفية أو الانفعالية للرسالة و التى تساهم فى جعل تأثير واقع الأدب القصصى على نحو أكثر فعالية فى الوحدة الموضوعية.

لقد بين اللغوى "لوج" 1966 "إن الوسيلة الاساسيه للروائى هي اللغة, وأيا كان ذلك الروائى فهو لا يستطيع ان يفعل أى شيء بدون اللغة". لذلك فإن جسر تقدير العمل الأدبى هو اللغة. هذا البحث يوضح أهمية علامة التنقيط (الشارحة) التى تظهر بشكل واسع فى ألقصه القصيرة "القطه السوداء" واستخدامها كوسيلة أسلوبية تسهم بشكل مؤثر فى توضيح فكره وأسلوب الكاتب.

تتناول هذه الدراسة بيان العلاقة بين علامات التنقيط والأسلوب ,بالإضافة إلى توضيح أهمية استخدام علامة التنقيط " الشارحة" التى استخدمت بشكل ملحوظ فى القصة القصيرة " القطه السوداء" للروائى ادكار ألن بو,ومن ثم اعتبار هذه العلامة "الشارحة" كوسيلة أسلوبية استخدمت بشكل مقصود لتبيين الأفكار

التي تتضمنها القصة ولتسهم بشكل فعال بإبراز أنماط مختلفة من المشاعر والأحوال التي مرت بها الشخصية الرئيسية في القصة .  
تضم الدراسة أجزاء متنوعة: الجزء الأول يقدم بعض التعريفات الخاصة بالتنقيط ويوضح أهم وظائفه, الجزء الثاني كرس تماما" للتعريف بمفهوم الأسلوب , علم دراسة الأسلوب, التحليل الأسلوبي والنقد الأدبي. وأخيرا يتناول الجزء الثالث تحليل القصة القصيرة "القطعة السوداء" على أساس مدى استخدام "الشارحة" كوسيلة أسلوبية في القصة المذكورة.

## 1-Introduction

Punctuation, including punctuation marks, inter-word spaces, and indentation , is everything in written language other than the actual letters or numbers (Loreto, 2000).Punctuation marks are symbols used to indicate the structure and the organization of a given written language.In written English, for instance, punctuation is inevitably vital to disambiguate the meaning of sentences. For example, "woman, without her man, is nothing" and "woman: without her, man is nothing" have exceedingly diverse meanings, as do "eats shoots and leaves" and "eats, shoots and leaves" ; "the criminal walked and talked half an hour after his head was cut off" is alarming and "the criminal walked and talked; half an hour after, his head was cut off", less so.

Rules of punctuation vary with language, location, register and time and are continually developing. Certain aspects of punctuation are stylistic and are thus the author's choice. In this paper, , "*The Black Cat*", a short story written by Edgar Élan Poe will be analysed depending on the usages of the punctuation mark " the dash - " as stylistic device by which certain emotive effects can be achieved.

### **1.1 What is punctuation?**

Punctuation is simply a sign or *MARK* used in a written sentence to make it easy to read and understand (Partridge 1953:44). In fact, it is one way of conveying the exact intended meaning of a given spoken language. Hence, punctuation gives written words the intended meaning and expression of the spoken words. Converting spoken words into a written form is a critical process. Failure to convey the exact intended meaning of what somebody said, leads essentially to convey the message in a different form which may involve unexpected consequences. Consider the following three phrases below:

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**1) JONAS BEATS JAMES IN THE RUNNING**

**COMPETITION.**

**2) JONAS BEATS JAMES TO RUN IN THE COMPETITION.**

**3) JAMES BEATS JONAS WHILE RUNNING.**

Apparently, the meanings of each of these three sentences are varied by pauses or by changing the tone of the voice. On the other hand, the meaning of written words may also be varied by the use of punctuation. Therefore, a sound knowledge of the functions of punctuation is extremely important to convey clear expression of the written language. As such, the following section is mainly devoted to explain some momentous functions of punctuation.

### **1.2 Some Significant functions of punctuation**

Punctuation marks date back to at least the fifth century BC, when the Greeks began to use marks to show where there were breaks between sentences and parts of sentences. At that time there were only capital letters, and no spaces were made between words, so it's easy to see that reading a text without punctuation must have been quite confusing.

Showing divisions in a text remains the main function of punctuation and of textual features that are often considered part of the punctuation system, such as the use of

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capital letters. White spaces show the breaks between words. Full stops and capital letters show the breaks between sentences, while commas and other marks show divisions within sentences. Breaks between lines and indentation of new lines show where new paragraphs begin. Therefore, the main purpose of punctuation is to prevent confusion, and to make the text easier to read (Crystal, 1997:207).

At one time, there was considerable debate as to whether punctuation in English should be based on the places where one should pause while reading aloud, or on grammar. Of course, grammatical divisions and pauses for breath often fall in the same places, but not always. The debate was won by those who favored using punctuation to mark grammatical divisions. It's very important to remember that one can't decide how to punctuate a text just by reading it aloud. Actually, a language user can't punctuate in English without thinking about grammar. A more modern function of punctuation is to add an extra element of meaning. Thus, a question mark indicates that something is a question, even if there is nothing in the grammatical form of the words to indicate this. Though it has the grammatical form of a statement, the following sentence is understood as a question

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just because it ends with the question mark (?): "John likes dogs?"

Recently, the new trend in writing is directed towards the less use of punctuation marks where possible which is, no doubt, turned widely acceptable among language users who look for practicality. Nevertheless, the phrase 'where possible' is perplexing as occasionally it is the rules of punctuation usage that state what language users *MUST* bring into play, for example, a comma in a particular place, and they can not leave it out on the grounds that fewer punctuation is enhanced. As well, the use of a comma may be optional from a technical standpoint, but it can still make it easier for a reader to understand what is intended to be said.

## **2-What is 'stylistics'?**

As a branch of linguistics, stylistics deals with expressive resources and functional styles of language. It is classified into several types: 'communicative stylistics' that describes expressive peculiarities of certain messages or texts, 'linguo-stylistics' that deals with functional styles and expressive potential of a given language , 'contrastive stylistics' that investigates stylistic systems of two or more

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languages in comparison ', and 'literary stylistics' which deals with different styles of authors.

It seems appropriate to say that the key word to 'stylistics' is the word 'style' which is differently defined by many linguists "stylistics is concerned with the idea of style, with the analysis of literary text, and with the use of linguistics"(Thornbrow and Wareing,1989:3). Style is one of the defining features of every literary text and should be preserved as faithfully as possible because it represents the speaker's/writer's "conscious or unconscious selection of a set of linguistic features from all the possibilities of a language" (Crystal, 1987:60) .This selection, as Traugott and Pratt (1980:60) assert, is a deviance that represents only one aspect in the language of literature. According to Gabriela (2003:22), style can be seen as a "notational term" or as an "addition" of certain stylistic traits.

As a notational term, style can be based on a number of principles. The first one is the complexity of the relationships between the speaker/writer and the text. The second one is represented by the relationship between the text and the listener/reader, and the third one, is the attempt to objectify the approach and to eliminate references to the communicants at either end of the communication process. In fact, style can

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be seen as a departure from a set of patterns which have been seen as a norm and, therefore, stylistic analysis is seen as a comparison between features in the text whose style we analyse and the text that we consider as a norm. (ibid)

Style can also be seen as an addition of certain stylistic qualities, so the stylistic analysis becomes a stripping process. The third view sees style as connotation, whereby each linguistic feature acquires its stylistic value from the textual and situational environment. Stylistic analysis then becomes a study of the relationship between specific linguistic units and their environment. (ibid)

In fiction, style is the manner in which the author tells the story. Along with plot, character, theme, and setting, style is considered one of the fundamental components of fiction. (Ramond, 2002:1)

The system of conventional punctuation marks (apostrophe, colon, exclamation mark, semicolon, comma, dash, hyphen, parentheses, period, question mark, quotation marks) is used to represent suprasegmental features like intonation, tempo, timbre, stress, intensity, and to signal the pragmatic meaning of utterances (e.g., interrogation, exclamation). As a graphic means of signalling the suprasegmental features of language, punctuation is primarily

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the matter of grammar - one of the properties of a 'good style' is a certain minimum of punctuation which is necessary to secure the intelligibility of writing. Secondly, punctuation is also a concern of stylistics since, for example, the degree of presence of a punctuation mark is the function of emotional/personal involvedness. (ibid)

The technology of writing employs not only graphic expressive means, such as the alphabet, but also some metagraphological means, such as punctuation, as a way of bridging the gap between the time and place of message production and the time and place of message reception. As such, it is to verify punctuation as one prominent component of style that the researchers turn in following sections of the present study.

## **2.1 Literary stylistics and Literary Interpretation.**

According to many scholars, stylistics represents a bridging ground between linguistics and literary interpretation. As a part of his contribution to explain what stylistics is concerned with, Widdowson (1975:117) asserts that "stylistic analysis shades imperceptibly into literary appreciation". Stylistic analysis, as Cuddon (1999: 872) puts it, examines the writer's choice of words, his figures of

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speech, the devices the shape of his sentences, the shape of his paragraphs, of every conceivable aspect of his language and the way in which he uses it.

However, a clear distinction is made by J. Mistic (1985:31) between stylistic analysis and literary interpretation. He defines stylistics or text analysis as a procedure which aims at the linguistic means and devices of a given text, the message, topic and content of analysed texts are not the focus.

Therefore, the method of stylistic analysis can be equally applied to the study of language use in literary as well as non-literary texts. But, on the other hand, literary interpretation can be seen as a process which applies exclusively to literary texts and it aims at understanding and interpreting the topic, content and the message of a literary work. (Ibid)

The prior goal of stylistics is not simply to describe the formal features of texts for their own sake, but in order to show their functional significance for the interpretation of text; or in order to relate literary effects to linguistic causes. (Wales, 2001:437-8 as cited in Davies and Elder, 2006:331).

Therefore, the main concern of literary stylistics as discipline mediating between linguistics and literary criticism can be simply and broadly defined as thematically and

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artistically motivated verbal choices (Shen Dan, 1995:19). In other words, its object is to investigate thematic and aesthetic values generated by linguistic forms, values which

convey the author's vision, tone and attitude, which increase the affective or emotive force of the message, which contribute to characterization and make fictional reality function more effectively in the thematic unity.

Leech et al (1981:. 2) remark that "by making ourselves explain how a particular effect or meaning is achieved we understand better not just how it is achieved (which in itself is essential to the critical task of explanation) but also gain a greater appreciation of what the writer has created". In this sense, the investigation directly progresses from linguistic forms to literary significance or interpretation.

The question may be asked what particular linguistic features in a text are going to be relevant to interpretation. Analysts often restrict themselves to those features which, for some reason or another, attract some degree of foregrounding. In the following section, the extent to which punctuation marks (especially the dashes) largely contribute to increase the effective or the emphatic force of the message and then effectively to reflect the author's style in "*The Black Cat*" will be fairly demonstrated.

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### 3- A Stylistic analysis of 'The Black Cat'.

" *The Black Cat* " is an account of a deliberate murder by a man who will be hung the following morning for his crime. The narrator of the story sets out to write an account of household events, events that led him to murder his wife and resulted in his conviction and imminent death by hanging. (Howard, 2007:1; Bloom, 1985:7)

The events of the tale which is a detective story remain somewhat ambiguous and complex (Quinn, 1941:9), and the over use of dashes reflects this atmosphere. There are about 62 dashes in the whole story. The use of this punctuation mark increases the vagueness and ambiguity of the text thematic items.

Reading the outset of the story, the narrator sense of fear and of being unsteady is clearly recognized as he tells about his situation in a prison cell awaiting execution. " *But "to-morrow, I die, and to-day I would unburthen my soul "* (p:82), says the narrator, and then he tells about the horrifying events that led up to his death sentence. He is so hesitant to put his crime on what, so he resorts to the use of dashes. Consider the following extract from the short story:

*(FOR the most wild, yet most homely narrative which I am about to pen, I neither expect nor solicit belief..... Yet,*

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*mad am I not —and very surely do I not dream. But tomorrow I die, and to-day I would unburthen my soul. My immediate purpose .....household events. In their consequences, these events have terrified —have tortured —have destroyed me... To me, they have presented little but Horror —to many they will seem less terrible than baroques. Hereafter, perhaps, some intellect may be found which will reduce my phantasm to the common-place —some intellect more calm, more logical..., nothing more than an ordinary succession of very natural causes and effects.) (P: 82)*

Directly the two coming paragraphs offer his idea without any resourcing to dashes because his idea is brighter than before and common i.e. there is no depression or tension. He talks about his childhood, he says, he was tender and compassionate. Because he especially liked animals, his parents provided him many pets to care for. His fondness for animals continued into adulthood. After he married, his wife also obtained pets for him, including birds, a goldfish, a dog, rabbits, a small monkey, and a black cat. The positive side of the narrator's personality is manageably reflected in the following paragraph which thoroughly manifests obvious lack of dashes:

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*(From my infancy I was noted for the docility and humanity of my disposition. My tenderness of heart..... We had birds, gold fish, a fine dog, rabbits, a small monkey, and a cat. This latter was a remarkably large and beautiful animal, entirely black, and sagacious to an astonishing degree. In speaking of his intelligence..... mere man.)*(P: 82)

.Over the years, the narrator's disposition changed for the worse when he began to drink heavily. He became moody and violent toward his wife, and even struck her at times. He mistreated all of his pets except Pluto. In time, however, he even started to mistreat the cat. The anger and disintegration of the narrator's personality is well reflected in his way of narrating through uncompleted sentences using dashes.

*(Our friendship lasted, in this manner, for several years, during which my general temperament and character —through the instrumentality of the Fiend Intemperance —had (I blush to confess it) experienced a radical alteration for the worse. I grew, day by day, more moody, more irritable, more regardless of the feelings of others. I suffered myself to use intemperate language to my At length, I even offered her personal violence..... they. But my disease grew upon me —for what disease is like Alcohol!*

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*—and at length even Pluto, who was now becoming old, and consequently somewhat peevish —even Pluto began to experience the effects of my ill temper.) (P: 83)*

One night when he returned home drunk, the cat then bit him on the hand, he was full of anger. He cut out one of the cat's eyes. Then he hung the cat on a tree and executed it. He had tears in his eyes when he did the deed, for he knew that the cat had loved him, that it had never crossed him. The status of horror, hate and ill soul with referring to the idea "Perverseness" as a part of all humans is also narrated by using many dashes.

*(And then came, as if to my final and irrevocable overthrow, the spirit of PERVERSENESS. Of this spirit philosophy takes no account. Yet I am not more sure that my soul lives, than I am that perverseness is one of the primitive impulses of the human heart —one of the indivisible primary faculties, or sentiments, which give direction to the character of Man. ....overthrow. It was this unfathomable longing of the soul to vex itself—to offer violence to its own nature—to do wrong for the wrong's sake only—that urged me to continue and finally to consummate the injury I had inflicted upon the unoffending brute. One morning, in cool blood, I slipped a noose about its neck and hung it to the limb*

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*of a tree; —hung it with the tears streaming from my eyes, and with the bitterest remorse at my heart; —hung it because I knew that it had loved me, and because I felt it had given me no reason of offence; —hung it because I knew that in so doing I was committing a sin —a deadly sin that would so jeopardize my immortal soul as to place it —if such a thing were possible —even beyond the reach of the infinite mercy of the Most Merciful God.) (P: 84)*

That night, he awakened to the cry of “Fire!” He, his wife, and his servant escaped, but the blaze destroyed his house and all his possessions. The next day, he and other townsfolk noticed a strange sight amid the ruins the figure of a cat with a rope around its neck imprinted on the plaster of the only wall still standing in what had been his bedroom. Here he describes the sight of the hung cat.

*(On the night of the day on which this cruel deed was done, I was aroused from sleep by the cry of fire.... I am above the weakness of seeking to establish a sequence of cause and effect, between the disaster and the atrocity. But I am detailing a chain of facts —and wish not to leave even a possible link imperfect. On the day succeeding the fire, I visited the ruins. The walls, with one exception, had fallen in. This exception was found in a compartment wall, not very*

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*thick, which stood about the middle of the house, and against which had rested the head of my bed. The plastering had here, in great measure, resisted the action of the fire—a fact which I attributed to its having been recently spread. About this wall a dense crowd were collected, and..... There was a rope about the animal's neck.) (P: 84)*

The image horrified him. However, upon reflection, he surmised that someone in the crowd gathered outside during the fire must have cut down the cat and thrown it through his bedroom window to awaken him. Then, when one of the other walls fell, it must have pressed the outline of the cat into the wall that remained.

*(When I first beheld this apparition—for I could scarcely regard it as less—my wonder and my terror were extreme. But at length reflection came to my aid. The cat, I remembered, had been hung in a garden adjacent to the house. Upon the alarm of fire, this garden had been immediately filled by the crowd—by some one of whom the animal must have been cut from the tree and thrown, through an open window, into my chamber. ....accomplished the portraiture as I saw it.) (P: 84)*

One night, he saw a black cat on a barrel of gin or rum. It was as big as Pluto and similar to him in all other respects

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except one: It had a white splotch on its breast. When he stroked it, the cat purred and rubbed against his hand. After making inquiries, he discovered that the cat was apparently a stray. So he took it home. The cat was content with its new surroundings, and the narrator's wife took a fancy to it. The narrator here uses dashes in describing the cat.

*(One night as I sat, half stupefied, in a den of more than infamy, my attention was suddenly drawn to some black object, .....object thereupon. I approached it, and touched it with my hand. It was a black cat—a very large one—fully as large as Pluto, and closely resembling him in every respect but one. Pluto had not a white .....delighted with my notice. This, then, was the very creature of which I was in search. I at once offered to purchase it of the landlord; but this person made no claim to it—knew nothing of it—had never seen it before.....When it reached the house it domesticated itself at once, and became immediately a great favorite with my wife.) (P: 85)*

In time, however, the narrator once again became irritable and moody. What helped to provoke him was that it had a missing eye, as Pluto did. Although the cat annoyed him, he avoided maltreating it; the memory of what he had done to Pluto was still fresh. Eventually, though, he began to

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detest the creature and attempted to avoid it whenever he saw it. But the cat sensed no animosity in him, for it followed him from room to room.

*(For my own part, I soon found a dislike to it arising within me. This was just the reverse of what I had anticipated; but I know not how or why it was —its evident fondness for myself rather disgusted and annoyed. By slow degrees, these feelings of disgust and annoyance rose into the bitterness of hatred. I avoided the creature; a certain sense of shame, and the remembrance of my former deed of cruelty, preventing me from physically abusing it. I did not, for some weeks, strike, or otherwise violently ill use it; but gradually —very gradually —I came to look upon it with unutterable loathing, and to flee silently from its odious presence, as from the breath of a pestilence.*

*..... If I arose to walk it would get between my feet and thus nearly throw me down, or, fastening its long and sharp claws in my dress, clamber, in this manner, to my breast. At such times, although I longed to destroy it with a blow, I was yet withheld from so doing, partly it at by a memory of my former crime, but chiefly —let me confess it at once —by absolute dread of the beast.) (P: 86)*

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The cat, like his predecessor, was missing an eye. Unlike his predecessor, the cat had a white marking on his chest that resembled the gallows. The cat became a favorite of the narrator's wife but almost immediately, the narrator took an intense dislike to the animal. However, the more he detested the cat, the more closely the cat attached itself to him, and, in turn, the more he detested it. The narrator confessed that he got to the point that he wanted to kill the cat but the remembrance of Pluto and his crime staid his hand, as he feared the creature. The desire of killing the cat and the narrator detest toward the cat reflect his personality and mood. The state is notably detected from the way of narrating because we have here about 16 dashes as it is shown below:

*The reader will remember that this mark, although large, had been originally very indefinite; but, by slow degrees —degrees nearly imperceptible, and which for a long time my Reason struggled to reject as fanciful —it had, at length, assumed a rigorous distinctness of outline. It was now the representation of an object that I shudder to name —and for this, above all, I loathed, and dreaded, and would have rid myself of the monster had I dared —it was now, I say, the image of a hideous —of a ghastly thing —of the GALLOWS! —oh, mournful and terrible engine of Horror and of Crime*

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*—of Agony and of Death!*

*And now was I indeed wretched beyond the wretchedness of mere Humanity. And a brute beast —whose fellow I had contemptuously destroyed —a brute beast to work out for me —for me a man, fashioned in the image of the High God —so much of insufferable wo! Alas! neither by day nor by night knew I the blessing of Rest any more! During the former the creature left me no moment alone; and, in the latter, I started, hourly, from dreams of unutterable fear, to find the hot breath of the thing upon my face, and its vast weight —an incarnate Night-Mare that I had no power to shake off —incumbent eternally upon my heart! ) (P: 86)*

One day, the narrator, his wife, and the cat descended the stairs into the cellar of the building where they lived. The cat tripped the narrator. The narrator was enraged and lifts an ax to kill the cat. However, his wife stopped the blow. This enraged the narrator further and he buried the ax in his wife's brain. He decided to hide it behind brick wall. He supplies irrevocable evidence when he says that with the "*hideous murder accomplished*" he could now set about the task of concealing the body. Here, the narrator seemed to feel that he had found peace. The cat was gone and the narrator was sure that no one would discover his secret. Inquiries and searches

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were made and no evidence was found. He was happy and confident. The happiness and the good mood is clear in his way of narrating. There are no dashes and the only "dash" in the end of the paragraph used to separate between the last two sentences.

*(One day she accompanied me, upon some household errand, into the cellar of the old building which our poverty compelled us to inhabit. The cat followed me down the steep stairs, and, nearly throwing me headlong, exasperated me to madness. Uplifting an axe, and forgetting, in my wrath, the childish dread which had hitherto stayed my hand, I aimed a blow at the animal which, of course, would have proved instantly fatal had it descended as I wished. But this blow was arrested by the hand of my wife.... The rubbish on the floor was picked up with the minutest care. I looked around triumphantly, and said to myself—"Here at least, then, my labor has not been in vain.") (P: 87)*

On the fourth day after her murder, police thoroughly investigated the house but, of course, found nothing. When they were about to leave, the narrator—pleased at his cleverness and his ability to handle the police began to talk too much. At that moment was heard a cry from within the wall, like that of a sobbing child. Then the cry turned into a

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scream. The police tore the bricks from the wall and found the decaying corpse. On its head was the black cat. Without realizing it, the narrator had walled it up with the body. The narrator here seems hesitant and dashes are used again with the presence of police.

*(..... Even a search had been instituted —but of course nothing was to be discovered. .... "Gentlemen," I said at last, as the party ascended the steps, "I delight to have allayed your suspicions. I wish you all health, and a little more courtesy. By the bye, gentlemen, this —this is a very well constructed house." (In the rabid desire to say something easily, I scarcely knew what I uttered at all.) —"I may say an excellently well constructed house. These walls —are you going, gentlemen? —these walls are solidly put together"; and here, through the mere phrenzy of bravado, I rapped heavily, with a cane which I held in my hand, upon that very portion of the brick-work behind which stood the corpse of the wife of my bosom.) (P: 88)*

A second search was made at the house of the narrator. The narrator was confident that he would not be found out and wanted to make a boast to satisfy his own triumph, so he rapped sharply on the wall behind which his wife's corpse

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was hidden and boasted about the solid build of the house. Immediately an inhuman wail emitted from the tomb.

Because of the horror of the situation, he seems to be hesitated so he resorts to open dashes as if he escapes from continuing of reciting his fulfill idea regarding his crime. Another impression, there is a duality i.e. he hates his habits but he has no control over his nervous .So he finds an outlet by leaving words or ideas by creating such dashes. To Poe, it is clear that it may be inventing his own way to desert unwelcomed idea via making dashes. Perhaps, he wants to open his heart to the reader as an endeavor to find a solution to his state. It is evident, also, that when his tension is low ,he lessens his habit of making over use of dashes as he tries to escape from his crime and thinks reasonably of a way to protect him legally. Here is the climax of tension because now he faces his crime and there is a hint of regret because of committing crime. The paragraph ends with many dashes. Also, a new kind of tension is felt when he guesses his state after committing such crime .He remembers his victim and when the police came, the tension appears again. He forced to be under arrested; he wants to cover his crime as the following extract suggests:

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*(But may God shield and deliver me from the fangs of the Arch-Fiend! No sooner had the reverberation of my blows sunk into silence than I was answered by a voice from within the tomb! —by a cry, at first muffled and broken, like the sobbing of a child, and then quickly swelling into one long, loud, and continuous scream, utterly anomalous and inhuman —a howl —a wailing shriek, half of horror and half of triumph, such as might have arisen only out of hell, conjointly from the throats of the damned in their agony and of the demons that exult in the damnation. (P: 88)*

In the last paragraph of the story, the absence of the dashes is clear, as if he wants to demonstrate the end of his hesitation with the end of the story. The police discovered the body and he must accept the reality of being arrested.

*Of my own thoughts it is folly to speak. Swooning, I staggered to the opposite wall. For one instant the party upon the stairs remained motionless, through extremity of terror and of awe. In the next, a dozen stout arms were tolling at the wall. It fell bodily. The corpse, already greatly decayed and clotted with gore, stood erect before the eyes of the spectators. Upon its head, with red extended mouth and solitary eye of fire, sat the hideous beast whose craft had seduced me into murder, and*

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*whose informing voice had consigned me to the hangman. I had walled the monster up within the tomb! ). (P: 89)*

## **Conclusion**

No doubt, Poe is known primarily for his mastery of the Gothic genre, which has a number of conventions, including evocations of horror, death and mystery. In "*The Black Cat*", the horror and suspension in the story led to the hesitation of the narrator and, further, the ill temper he has in the story is heavily influenced by his status as an alcohol addict. Having analyzed this literary text, "*The Black Cat*", by examining the narrator's language which suggests a confused and uncertain mind, punctuation appears as the prominent stylistic device by which certain types of effects and emotions are successfully created in the story. Hence, the frequent use of "dash", one can conclude, reflects the style of the writer and the main theme of his story.

Depending on the different situations analysed, the punctuation mark "dash" is first used to indicate an emendation or an unexpected turn in a sentence and situation, for instance the transformation of the narrator's temper and status. His kindness to the animals changed into violence down to alcohol. Then, the narrator's hesitation and fear after

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his murder, is clearly shown through the frequent use of dashes as he narrates his story and tells about his breaking thoughts. When the police came searching for the corpus, at the beginning, he was sure that they will not find it so there is no place to use the dashes but, then, he moved to the using of dashes in order to reflect his fear when they found it. The end of narrator's hesitation with the end of the story is made evident as no ' dash ' is being used anymore in the last paragraph of the story. The police discovered the body and, therefore, he must accept the reality of being arrested.

Thus, Poe's manipulation of this punctuation mark (dash) is intended to vividly depict the situation in which language is used and to represent the manner in which the narrator tells his story ". His choice of this punctuation mark (the dash) adds some extra feelings and emotions that, as the researchers believe can never be expressed by the use of any other mark of punctuation.

In "*The Black Cat*", the study assumes that some thematic and aesthetic values are explored by the use of the (dashes). These values mainly contribute to make fictional reality function more effectively in the thematic unity of the story. As far as narrating the events of the story, the exact emotions and attitudes of the narrator are sensitively

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demonstrated by the use of the dashes and, thus, the emotive force of the message intended by this literary text is manageably fortified only by the use of the dashes which functions as a prominent stylistic device in Poe's short story "*The Black Cat*".

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