



ARTICLE



<https://doi.org/10.1057/s41599-024-03370-1>

OPEN

Echoes of the gothic: transmedia reinterpretations of Edgar Allan Poe's legacy in independent films and video games

Angel Torres-Toukoumidis ^{1✉}, Tatiana León-Alberca² & Eduardo Henriquez-Mendoza³

This study critically examines the development of audiovisual and interactive content that draws on Edgar Allan Poe's oeuvre, with a particular focus on the interplay of transmedia storytelling and gothic elements within these narratives. Utilizing summative content analysis and non-participant observation, this research investigates five films and five independent video games that reinterpret Poe's literary themes. The results underscore the necessity of incorporating Mythos, Topos, and Ethos in adaptations to faithfully evoke the profound emotional resonance and explore the psychological and existential dilemmas inherent in Poe's works. Our analysis reveals distinct narrative strategies in cinema and video games: while horror predominates in film, integrating supernatural elements to evoke fear, video games predominantly leverage noir, crafting complex crime narratives infused with cynicism and dark ambiance. Additionally, the study highlights how gothic elements of abjection and sublimity are leveraged to navigate themes of mortality, morality, and the uncanny, thereby ensuring the continued relevance of Poe's legacy in contemporary media landscapes. This adaptation process not only preserves the essence of Poe's narrative but also dynamically engages a modern audience through innovative transmedia platforms, illustrating the enduring impact of his work on popular culture.

¹Social Science Knowledge and Human Behavior Department, Universidad Politécnica Salesiana, Cuenca 010105, Ecuador. ²Directorate of Publications and Editorial Development, Universidad Nacional de Educación, Azogues 030105, Ecuador. ³Communication Department, Faculty of Education, Art and Communication, Universidad Nacional de Loja. Av Pio Jaramillo ciudadela universitaria, Loja 110103, Ecuador. ✉email: atorrest@ups.edu.ec

Introduction

The recent premiere of the eight-episode miniseries titled “The Fall of the House of Usher” in 2023, directed by Mike Flanagan and released on Netflix, has highlighted the current relevance of American gothic horror author Edgar Allan Poe. This has raised questions about adaptations and creations based on his works. Therefore, this study aims to explore the potential development of audiovisual and interactive materials related to the author. It seeks to understand the characteristics of independent content, the role of gothic elements in these contents, and how they intertwine with transmediality.

Intergenerational storytelling has been a tool to transmit values, thoughts, and concerns throughout history, as evidenced by Poe’s works, whose influence endures for more than two centuries. This is added to by the arrival of digital platforms and multimedia narratives that have marked a new era in the creation and consumption of content, where audiences are increasingly selective and participatory, choosing media platforms according to their preferences. As a result of this context and the convergence of these new digital platforms, the practice of creating and consuming stories in an interconnected manner, known as transmedia narrative (TN), is born. Jenkins (2006), who introduces this concept, defines it as a process where the elements of a narrative are dispersed across various diffusion channels with the aim of creating a comprehensive entertainment experience, where each medium contributes uniquely and distinctively to the whole. A multifaceted approach that not only enriches the narrative experience but also empowers viewers by allowing them the freedom to choose, but also to create.

This phenomenon, which substantially redefines both contemporary narratives and the diffusion and reinterpretation of cultural content, is reflected not only in the production of current stories but also in the creative adaptation of classical works, finding fertile ground for conceiving sophisticated and coherent narratives, resonating significantly with the contemporary audience. A reference case is the works of Poe, whose contributions to the horror and mystery genre have left a lasting impression. As Martynkewicz (2005) states, Poe’s influence transcends temporal barriers, serving as a source of inspiration for a wide range of creators in various artistic and cinematographic disciplines.

Addressing content based on Poe’s works from an independent transmedia perspective, including the gothic elements imbued in that material, arises from the need to understand how creators reinterpret and expand Poe’s poetic and narrative legacy across multiple platforms. This research acquires particular significance considering that a considerable portion of the material analyzed may be ancient, however, its continuity and relevance in the transmedia context are notable. Added to this is Poe’s legacy, which is undoubtedly significant, as Martynkewicz (2005) stated: “Poe was convinced that the importance of literature lies in its effects.”

Edgar Allan Poe’s oeuvre is renowned for its profound impact on both American and international literature, notably shaping the genres of horror, mystery, the macabre, and the grotesque through his unique aesthetic and stylistic characteristics. Aesthetically, where one assesses the quality and impact of these expressions on the sensory and emotional experience of the reader, it is a complex and multifaceted concept, as evidenced by a range of scholarly interpretations. Poe transforms horror into art (Dern 2021), with his obsessive design and haptic space creating a grotesque atmosphere (Bryant 2017). His work also exhibits a dark sensibility tuned to the aesthetic perceptions of contemporary artists associated with the New Gothic Art, wherein contemporary fears linked with death are manifested (Lima 2010).

Stylistically, Poe is considered a cornerstone of the dark Romantic movement (Bodur 2019), marked by a bold approach

to themes of death, mourning, and decay (Lopes 2019). His deliberate lexical technique varies according to the genre and the narrator’s mental state (Zimmerman 2005), reflecting that his style is varied and nuanced, aligning with the moods and obsessions of his characters (Ljungquist, 2009). Furthermore, his intensive use of symbolism and allegory invites deeper philosophical or moral reflections (Kennedy and Peebles 2019).

Poe’s unique fusion of thematic elements and aesthetic expression suggests a promising avenue for further research, particularly in the study of specific media conventions. Future scholarly work could explore how Poe’s narrative techniques and thematic preoccupations have been adapted or transformed in different media, such as film digital media, comic art, music, and literary criticism (Perry and Sederholm 2012). By examining the translation of Poe’s aesthetics into visual languages and interactive platforms, researchers can better understand how his themes of horror, the grotesque, and the psychological are reinterpreted and reimagined in contemporary settings. This line of inquiry not only enriches our understanding of Poe’s lasting impact but also illuminates the broader mechanisms through which literature influences and is influenced by other artistic mediums. This approach could potentially reveal how traditional literary themes are preserved or altered in the shift towards new media landscapes, offering insights into the evolving nature of narrative and aesthetic engagement in the digital age.

All of the above raises the need to pose some questions: What are the specific characteristics of transmedia narrative in the context of Edgar Allan Poe’s works and how are they reflected in independent films and video games? What narrative genres are most prominent in his work? And how do gothic elements and characteristics of the gothic context intertwine in audiovisual narratives based on Edgar Allan Poe? This research will represent a new paradigm for the areas of knowledge in communication and literature, as it will incorporate the combination of three authentic premises: gothic narrative, transmedia, and independent films and video games, which will later be deepened in the theoretical framework.

The rationale for engaging with this domain of scholarly inquiry is predicated upon the imperative to elucidate the manner in which current methodologies of storytelling creation and consumption within a digital and transmedial milieu serve to reinterpret and sustain the heritage of Edgar Allan Poe. This methodology facilitates an investigation into the processes of adaptation and revitalization of conventional journalistic genres within the digital sphere. Furthermore, it examines the integration of gothic elements and attributes within audiovisual narratives that draw inspiration from Poe’s oeuvre, thus enriching the scholarly discourse on digital journalism and infotainment, and providing critical insights for practitioners in the field of communication.

Related works

Transmedia narratives in media convergence. Communication technologies converge to form a symbiotic ecosystem, enabling the adaptation of messages to various forms and audiences. This technological interaction, as Cossalter (2021) points out, generates a constant mutation in media, where moving images initially seen on television transcend to other mediums, becoming intermediaries between creators and consumers of information.

Salaverría and Avilés (2008) consider technological convergence, seen as a natural outcome of the convergence of traditional media, to encompass not only communication channels but also business structures, work processes, distribution, and the languages used. It is evident that media convergence in general,

and technological convergence in particular, are part of a cultural transformation process with diverse information consumption forms (Jenkins 2006). Under this premise, Kalogeras (2014) indicates that media convergence encompasses the interconnection between various media platforms and technologies, facilitating the creation of more enriching and interactive media experiences. TN, in turn, capitalizes on this convergence by allowing content creators to tell stories across multiple platforms, thus reaching wider audiences.

That is, TN goes beyond just telling a story through a media outlet; it involves expanding it to other platforms, understanding that these platforms contribute a unique added value to narrative development, characters, and even public engagement (Jenkins et al. 2013). From there, Ryan (2016) adds that, in contrast to conventional “monomedial” storytelling, like a movie or a book, transmedia narrative uses a diverse range of media, including television, cinema, literature, comics, video games, social networks, or websites, among other possibilities.

TN is characterized by three distinctive elements: each medium offers a unique perspective, it involves user participation in the generation and propagation of content, and it maintains autonomy in its content presentation (Guerrero Pico and Scolari 2016; Jenkins 2006; Xu et al. 2023). User participation is a fundamental pillar in TN, with creators commonly considering user evaluations to guide their creative process (Xu et al. 2023). Voigts and Nicklas (2013) point out that “prosumers” often engage in remix culture, repurposing cultural materials to create new works, allowing them to express their creativity and contribute their unique perspectives to the cultural conversation. Jenkins et al. (2013) emphasize that active user engagement is essential for the widespread dissemination of content, facilitating its expansion across different platforms and audiences.

The gothic genre in transmediality. The gothic genre, both in literature and art, is distinguished by its dark, enigmatic, and supernatural atmosphere. It has evolved throughout history, drawing inspiration from various human concerns, which tend to be represented through elements of horror in its narratives (Sánchez-Vérdejo Pérez 2013). It emerged in the 18th century with emblematic works such as Horace Walpole’s “The Castle of Otranto” in England and reached its peak in the 19th century with renowned authors like Edgar Allan Poe and Mary Shelley (Piñeiro Cardabella 2017).

In this vein, Browning (2018) remarks that the characters included in the genre are good indicators of what concerns and scares society at specific moments. Miranda (2017) agrees with this view and mentions that the gothic genre: “is characterized by what shocks the conscience (...) reflects the atmosphere of a specific period” (p. 2). According to authors like Piñeiro Cardabella (2017) and Miranda (2017), this genre often includes elements such as gloomy settings, ruins, dark secrets, tormented characters, and a strong presence of the supernatural and the macabre. Additionally, it addresses themes such as death,

madness, oppression, loneliness, and the duality between good and evil.

These characteristics are precisely what allow gothic works to expand widely through transmedia narrative. Therefore, it is relevant to recall McLuhan’s famous phrase (1964) “the medium is the message” (p.1), as it is the medium that provides the user with the opportunity to immerse themselves in the aforementioned peculiarities of the gothic genre. In transmedia narrative, these characteristics are combined with interactive and participatory elements, challenging traditional notions of linear narrative. For instance, Peaty (2019), referring to games, notes that these constitute a suitable medium for gothic experiences (Table 1).

In the same line, Harvey (2015) comments that transmediality in the fantasy realm, especially in genres like science fiction and fantasy, is favored by the flexibility and coherence inherent in these genres. In the case of Poe’s work, this reality is not distant, as his writings have been adapted for a variety of media, such as film, comics, and literary novels. This has expanded his narrative universe and allowed the author to reach new audiences (Montoya 2023).

Over the years, his poems and tales have been commemorated or have served as the basis for the creation of multiple formats, “ranging from comics and anime to various forms of novelistic storytelling in cinematic renditions” (Montoya 2023, p. 3). This blend of content is also augmented by games and perhaps other forms of content that will gradually make their appearance as technology advances (Harvey 2015), as noted by Vázquez Herrero et al. (2019). It is essential to understand that this dynamic is not static but rather in constant evolution, incorporating emerging forms of communication and innovative practices that leverage their benefits. Hence, it is fundamental for the industry to comprehend and, if possible, anticipate the consumption patterns of future audiences.

Poe’s influence is so significant that Neimeyer (2002) observed it has transcended the confines of his original work, acquiring complete autonomy. This means that both his original works and the ones he inspired can circulate independently, thus spreading his name to new audiences, even despite the passage of time since their creation. Zarzycka (2018) remarks that Poe’s enduring popularity is attributed in part to a dynamic network of interactions among various cultural and communicative elements. This network involves a continuous and fruitful exchange among consumers, predominant media, and specialized cultural niches.

Indeed, Poe has had a close and ambivalent relationship with transmedia narrative. His stories have been adapted and expanded upon. Poe’s transmedial figure has evolved over time, contributing to the expansion of his collective intelligence and participative culture through different interfaces, including online platforms (Miranda 2017; Neimeyer 2002). Poe’s literary legacy stands as a prominent example of transmedia narrative design, inspiring new generations of creators and audiences through a transmedial figure in constant evolution.

Table 1 Independent films and video games base on Edgar Allan Poe’s Legacy.

Name of the film	Director	Noame of the video games	Developer
La Chute de la maison Usher	Jean Debucourt, Marguerite Gance	Looking for Edgard	Jangames, jimena vallejos,eugenialamistica
Buried Alive	Gérard Kikoïne	Escape The Red Death	BanditoStudios
The Tell-Tale Heart	Ernest Morris	The Town of Poe - Chapter One	Mig Creates Games
The Sealed Room	David Wark Griffith	That’s Raventastic	Superfantastic Productions
Nella stretta morsa del ragno	Antonio Margheriti	A Night of Terrors (an Edgar Allan Poe choose-your-own-adventure)	SGRLlibs

Ultimately, these transmedia adaptations do not merely replicate Poe's stories but reinterpret and recontextualize them, using visual and interactive techniques to explore the enduring human concerns at the heart of Poe's work: the macabre, the mysterious, and the moral dilemmas of his characters. This cross-medium exploration facilitates a contemporary re-engagement with Poe's themes, making them accessible and resonant for a modern audience.

Method

Based on the notions of transmediality and the gothic context, the general objective is to examine the reinterpretation and expansion of Edgar Allan Poe's legacy in independent films and video games, highlighting the use of transmedial elements, narrative genres and gothic themes. To accomplish the research objectives, the following specific aims have been delineated: [1] To analyze transmedial components in independent films and video games based on the works of Edgar Allan Poe to identify strategies of dispersed narration across multiple platforms. [2] To classify the predominant narrative genres, such as horror, terror, and noir, used in the adaptations of Poe's works, focusing on how these genres contribute to the interpretation and presentation of the stories. [3] To evaluate the incorporation of Gothic elements in the creation of atmospheres, themes, and narrative developments in the selected works, emphasizing how these elements enrich the aesthetic and emotional experience of the audience.

The journalistic perspective in this study is engaged through the lens of adaptation and reinterpretation, focusing on the transformation of Edgar Allan Poe's gothic themes and narrative structures into audiovisual and interactive media. This approach preserves the core essence of Poe's work while adapting it to contemporary formats. The connection to Poe's narrative and aesthetic legacy is evident in the recontextualization of his gothic elements, such as abjection and sublimity, which resonate with modern audiences. This creates a bridge between traditional literature and new media formats, ensuring the enduring relevance of Poe's work.

Infotainment within the scope of the presented analysis is identified as the blending of informative content with entertainment to enhance audience engagement. In the context of the analyzed films and video games, infotainment is observed through the use of narrative genres (horror, noir) and gothic elements (sublimity, abjection) to captivate audiences while simultaneously conveying deeper themes and moral dilemmas inherent in Poe's works. This approach highlights the dynamic interplay between maintaining narrative integrity and catering to contemporary media consumption preferences, which often prioritize engaging, immersive experiences.

The functioning of media in the context of art and fiction is analyzed through the adaptation of Poe's works into films and video games, exploring how these media forms communicate the psychological and existential themes central to Poe's oeuvre. This includes examining the narrative strategies and aesthetic choices that enhance the emotional and sensory impact on the audience. The study underscores the role of transmedia storytelling as a communicative tool that extends the reach and impact of Poe's narratives. By dispersing elements of the story across various platforms, each contributing uniquely, the study illustrates how media convergence enriches the overall narrative experience and facilitates a deeper engagement with the audience.

Considering the proposed general objective, the focus of the study lies on independent audiovisual material. The reasons supporting this selection are investment, creativity, and accessibility. Regarding budget investment and in contrast to big-budget film productions, within the horror context, possessing a higher

budget or established protagonists does not necessarily imply a larger audience, as evidenced by Fortuna (2018) when exemplifying the success of *Paranormal Activity*, which had a budget of only \$15,000 USD. Concerning independent horror video games, a similar situation regarding investment occurs; Thon (2019) specifies that in recent years there has been a "rise of indies" without excessive support from investments or renowned companies.

The second reason supporting the use of independent audiovisual material is the issue of creativity. For the film industry, there is a greater drive towards creative explosions from producers (Farren 2001; Holmlund and Wyatt 2004). Meanwhile, for the video game industry, by omitting financial dependence, creative control is enhanced directly by the team, describing and preparing promotional material for the product without conforming to market interests (Grabarczyk 2016).

Lastly, in terms of accessibility, the limitations of viewing regarding reproduction and rights from video-on-demand platforms to their acquisition are known beforehand, ultimately responding to a pre-production, production, post-production, and parametrized scripting much more interconnected with market interests rather than those of the producer-director/developer of the audiovisual material. Therefore, considering the scarce existing bibliography on the indie context in the horror genre and the need to delve deeper into it from two complementary but parallel scenarios, namely cinema and video games, this study aims to focus on films and video games that are freely accessible, digital format, and do not have direct content restrictions, thus opting for independent films and video games.

To commence the explanation of the methodological design, it must first be established that the study is deeply embedded within the concept of immersion, as this facilitates the creation of a transmedia framework for analyzing a cultural phenomenon through communicational presuppositions that detail the complexities of such experiences (Therrien 2023). Building on this foundation, the selected methodological design is narrative analysis (Bamberg 2012). The employment of narrative analysis in researching the adaptations of Edgar Allan Poe's works into independent films and video games is pivotal for several reasons. Firstly, Poe is renowned for his complex narrative structures and meticulous use of language to create dense atmospheres and intense emotions. Narrative analysis aids in unraveling how these structures are either transformed or preserved across different media such as cinema and video games, providing deeper insights into the adaptation and reinterpretation of Poe's characteristic Gothic and macabre elements. According to Bamberg (2012) narrative analysis not only regards narratives as objects of study but also employs them as tools to probe broader human experiences. This approach is crucial for examining how contemporary audiences experience themes of horror, mystery, and the macabre, typically associated with Poe, through new formats and technologies. It enables researchers to explore how these themes resonate with or diverge from traditional interpretations in modern contexts.

Furthermore, narrative analysis facilitates the identification of thematic and stylistic changes. It allows researchers to assess whether the adaptations maintain the psychological depth and intensity of Poe's original works or whether these themes have been modified to align with modern expectations and sensibilities. Bamberg (2012) underscores that narrative analysis is not merely about collecting narratives but critically analyzing the narrative means employed and their effects on the interpretation of specific experiences. This methodology is essential in studies like the current one, where understanding how specific narrative techniques—such as point of view and the construction of suspense—are applied in the adaptation of classic texts to visual and interactive

media. This analytical approach offers a structured framework to evaluate how Poe's narratives are creatively transformed and contextualized within contemporary media, enriching both the academic discourse on narrative adaptation and our understanding of narrative dynamics in transmedia environments.

In this context, 5 independent films and 5 independent video games linked to Edgar Allan Poe's stories were reviewed. The films were extracted based on categorizations from the list presented on IMDb and freely accessible on YouTube, while the video games come from Itch.io and GameJolt, platforms previously used for research associated with independent video games that are accessible through any browser and any operating system - iOS, Windows, or Linux- (Merchán-Romero and Torres-Toukoumidis 2021).

The entirety of the selected audiovisual material was reviewed between November 10, 2023, and January 10, 2024, within a two-month range. During this period, the researchers examined the 5 films and the 5 video games based on three dimensions: transmedia contextual components, genre of audiovisual narratives, and gothic elements.

1. **Transmedia Contextual Components:** This dimension is organized into three units of analysis, namely Mythos, Topos, and Ethos, which facilitate the description and structuring of the contextual narrative of the content (Tosca and Klastrup 2019): Mythos: Mythos encompasses the characters, creatures, stories, and conflicts that form the backbone of the narrative. It includes the development of main and supporting characters whose interactions and growth drive the plot. Conflicts, both internal and external, challenge these characters and shape the narrative's trajectory. Topos: defines the setting of the narrative, incorporating the geographical locations and the time period in which the story unfolds. It shapes the narrative's context, influencing everything from character behavior to story logistics. The specific historical and cultural settings enrich the authenticity and depth of the narrative world. Ethos: involves the ethical framework and moral decisions that characters face within the story. It examines the principles guiding characters' actions, highlighting conflicts between good and evil. Through Ethos, the narrative explores complex moral dilemmas and the characters' responses to these challenges. **Genre of Audiovisual Narratives:** Using the units presented by Hernández-Santaolalla et al. (2022), the characterizations that compose the genres of horror, terror, and noir are organized, aiming to understand the predominance of genres in the audiovisual material related to Edgar Allan Poe. a. **Horror:** terrifying intention, victory of the irrational in daily life, supernatural threat, fear of the violation of natural order. b. **Terror:** presence of a killer, presence of blood and viscera, confrontation with representations of evil, and subjective point of view. c. **Noir:** atmosphere of cynicism, pessimism, and darkness, presence of antiheroes, presence of narcissistic villain, sexualized female characters, dark and claustrophobic spaces, dark urban iconography.
2. **Gothic Elements:** According to Usarchi (2020), there are two elements that encompass the gothic line of narratives: sublimity and abjection. Both elements are premises that give a recognizable style to this genre. a. **Sublimity:** hypnotic elements that exaggerate feelings and emotional intensity of characters to create a reaction of terror and fear. Complementarily, according to Burke (1958) the sublime is defined by anything that has the capacity to evoke thoughts of pain and danger. Essentially, anything that can be considered terrifying, involves terrifying subjects, or

affects the mind in a way similar to terror, contributes to the sublime. This results in the most intense emotion that one can experience, underscoring the profound impact such experiences have on the human psyche. b. **Abjection:** describes situations that generate a sense of living on the edge along with tension between characters. Also, Kristeva (1982) defines the abject as the human reaction, such as horror or revulsion, to a threatened collapse in meaning. This collapse arises from a blurring of distinctions between subject and object, or self and other. The corpse exemplifies this as it highlights our own mortality, provoking abjection. Other triggers include open wounds, waste, and other reminders of our bodily nature. The abject not only challenges our sense of identity and order but also draws us toward a primal state before symbolic thought.

In conclusion, these three dimensions, from which a multiplicity of analysis criteria derive, contribute properties to evaluate the content of independent films and video games, being systematized through the use of Atlas.ti v.22 software, which will aim to evidence the achieved results.

Results

Transmediatic components of independent cinematic context.

Cinematic language has played a crucial role in integrating the works of Edgar Allan Poe into narratives of the horror, science fiction, and fantasy genres. This dynamic has had a profound influence on these works' ability to evoke emotional reactions in the audience, such as fear and wonder, along with characteristic narrative patterns. These works have led to various research studies in the field of film analysis converging on analogous premises.

In this convergence, it is observed how cinematic narratives, from their intentionality and structure, manifest under a unifying framework that amalgamates the enigmatic or strange, the prodigious or magical, and the fantastic. In the subsequent analysis, five cinematic narratives are identified, explored, and categorized: "The Sealed Room" (1909) by David Wark Griffith; "La Chute de la maison Usher" (1928) by Jean Debucourt and Marguerite Gance; "The Tell-Tale Heart" (1960) by Ernest Morris; "Nella stretta morsa del ragno" (1971) by Antonio Margheriti; and "Buried Alive" (1989) by Gérard Kikoïne, which share common patterns regarding Mythos, Topos, and Ethos:

Regarding Mythos, two indicators are discerned: confrontation with guilt and personal conflicts and deceit. Regarding the former, confrontation with guilt is observed in "The Tell-Tale Heart," focusing on internal struggle with guilt and paranoia, highlighting how internal feelings can manifest in devastating external consequences, while Personal Conflicts and Deceit are reflected in "The Sealed Room," where romantic deceit and revenge are central, showing how love and deceit can lead to extreme decisions, specifically, the King's impulsive decision to seal his lover's fate in the room at the critical moment (scene at 7:03") underscores the emotional and spontaneous components of the narrative. Similarly, "La Chute de la maison Usher" presents the main characters trapped in their own world of despair and madness, suggesting an exploration of the limits of the mind and the consequences of obsession.

Regarding Topos, two indicators are also noted: closed and oppressive spaces; and historical and timeless settings. Considering closed and oppressive spaces, both "The Sealed Room" and "Buried Alive" use enclosed spaces to create a sense of claustrophobia and tension, emphasizing how the environment can influence the characters' emotional state and the viewer's perception. On the other hand, historical and timeless settings are presented in "La Chute de la maison Usher" on the scene at 1:24",

where the exterior of the house is shown, leverages expressionist imagery to intensify the gothic ambiance and “Nella stretta morsa del ragno,” where they recreate environments evoking the past, approximately the 18th or 19th centuries, using castles and mansions to create an atmosphere of mystery and decay.

Lastly, Ethos, defined as the values, ethics, or morality reflected through characters or narrative decisions, is subscribed in the cinematic context towards the following indicators: distorted morality; and distrust and betrayal. For distorted morality, “The Tell-Tale Heart” and “Nella stretta morsa del ragno” explore how characters’ actions can be influenced by their distorted perceptions of morality, leading to ethically questionable decisions. For the second indicator, distrust and betrayal are evident in “The Sealed Room,” where the distrust and actions of the King reflect themes of power and control, while in “Buried Alive,” Janet’s pursuit of justice highlights resistance against corruption and oppression.

Each of these films provides a unique window into the complexities of the horror, fantasy, and science fiction genres, through their distinctive narrative and stylistic approaches. From the claustrophobia and tragedy of “The Sealed Room” to the dark mysteries of “Buried Alive,” and through the psychological and supernatural decay of “La Chute de la Maison Usher,” each work presents a unique fusion of Mythos, Topos, and Ethos, thus offering varied perspectives on how they can be applied to unravel the layers of meaning and symbolism in cinema about extraordinary narratives and their contemporary interpretation.

Genre of narratives in the independent cinematic context. The cinematic adaptation of Edgar Allan Poe’s works has been a field for exploring the horror, terror, and noir genres. Through the exploration of these genres, as suggested by Hernández-Santallalla et al. (2022), the aim is to understand the reinterpreted and reinvented narratives in cinema based on Edgar Allan Poe’s saga. Each selected film presents a unique amalgamation of these genres, exhibiting everything from the terrifying intent and the supernatural of horror to the presence of killers and visceral blood of terror, not forgetting the dark tones and moral ambiguity of Noir. This analysis focuses on unraveling the manifestation of these elements in the mentioned films, allowing not only a recognition of the genres themselves but also an appreciation of the transformation and adaptation of Poe’s narratives into cinematic languages.

The film “The Sealed Room” capitalizes on tension and unease, fundamentals of horror, in its visual narrative, managing to convey terror through claustrophobia and the characters’ fatal destiny. On the other hand, “La Chute de la maison Usher” captures the essence of gothic horror, infusing terror through its oppressive and decadent atmosphere and exploring themes of madness and illness. This approach is contrasted with “The Tell-Tale Heart” (Fig. 1), a key moment is depicted in the scene at 4:12”, where Edgar’s distress in his room effectively conveys the horror and terror genres through visual storytelling. The intensification of these elements is later seen at 46:59”, where Edgar’s guilt reaches a crescendo, showcasing the film’s effective use of the horror genre where horror and terror focus on the psychological torment of the protagonist, reflecting internal struggle and paranoia.

In “Nella stretta morsa del ragno” the narrative unfolds in a castle setting, with critical scenes like at 25:00”, where the gothic atmosphere is emphasized through the use of cobwebs and eerie sounds and “Buried Alive” offer a more modern interpretation of these genres. The former utilizes an ancient castle and ghostly apparitions to create a setting of gothic horror, but its transition to color and modern special effects attenuates the traditional



Fig. 1 From the film *The Tell-Tale Heart* (1960) by Ernest Morris.

gothic atmosphere. Meanwhile, “Buried Alive” focuses on psychological horror with a narrative centered on fear and tension created by inexplicable events in a disturbing environment. However, the terror in “Buried Alive” is intensified by gruesome and bloody deaths, characteristic of the gothic genre, which contrasts with the subtlety of “The Sealed Room”.

Patterns identified suggest that, although the selected films lean towards the horror or terror genres, elements of film noir serve as intertwining threads to enrich the narrative and atmosphere, associating with crime, mystery, and ambiguous morality, adding a layer of complexity through their aesthetics and themes, thereby contributing to a richer and multidimensional cinematic experience, while the horror genre tends more towards the grotesque, the supernatural, and visceral fear, and the terror genre is more associated with suspense and psychological fear.

Ultimately, the marked presence of supernatural threats and the explicit intention to generate fear through the irrational suggest a slightly greater compatibility with the horror genre, which tends to emphasize these aspects more directly and viscerally than terror, which leans more towards suspense and psychological fear without necessarily involving supernatural elements explicitly. Therefore, based on the information provided and the nature of the evaluated narrative components, it could be argued that the mentioned films have a greater compatibility with the horror genre.

Gothic elements in the independent cinematic context. The films represent varied expressions of the gothic genre in cinema, each bringing an adaptation of the elements of sublimity and abjection identified by Usarchi (2020). Sublimity elevates the narratives to the extraordinary and incomprehensible with its hypnotic elements that intensify emotions and create reactions of terror and fear, complementarily abjection anchors them in the deepest and most repulsive terrors of the human condition that delve into emotionally extreme situations and tensions between characters. These films, though differentiated in style and era, share an attraction to the mysterious and the dark, exploring the limits of gothic narrative.

In “The Sealed Room” and “The Tell-Tale Heart,” sublimity focuses on the exaggeration of feelings and internal tensions. In “The Sealed Room,” the passion and revenge of the king create an atmosphere of imminent tragedy, while in “The Tell-Tale Heart,” the protagonist’s obsession with a beating heart underscores the intensification of anxiety and fear. These films also explore abjection through deep moral and ethical conflicts, manifested in extreme actions and deviations from conventional morality. On

the other hand, “La Chute de la maison Usher” and “Nella stretta morsa del ragno” lean more towards supernatural mysteries and atmosphere to evoke gothic sublimity. The mysterious connection between characters and their surroundings in “La Chute de la maison Usher” and the use of visual effects in “Nella stretta morsa del ragno” highlight the mysterious and magical. The abjection in these films manifests in physical and moral degeneration, and in complex ethical dilemmas that confront the characters with the unknown.

“Buried Alive” explores the theme of claustrophobia and impending doom through the narrative of a reform school with a dark past. Janet’s investigation into the disappearances at the school leads to intense scenes filled with suspense and gothic horror, particularly noted in the film’s climax where the gothic narrative reaches its peak. It combines elements of psychological terror with a gothic narrative, using tormenting visions and intense fear-inducing situations to highlight sublimity. The constant confrontation with ethical and moral dilemmas, along with interaction with dark forces, embodies abjection in its purest form. Together, these films demonstrate how the gothic genre adapts and evolves, maintaining its central elements of sublimity and abjection while exploring new forms of expression and narrative.

Sublimity is manifested through extreme situations and exploration of intense emotions, going beyond the everyday, inviting the viewer to confront the immense and the incomprehensible. This element not only serves to create a sense of awe or terror but also elevates the narrative conflict to a plane where characters and viewers confront the absolute and the transcendental. In two films, sublimity is presented with greater symbolism, “La Chute de la maison Usher” with a supernatural atmosphere that immerses the viewer in a reality where the physical and the metaphysical merge. For instance, the scene at 25:17” with the portrait of Lady Madeline uses visual symbolism to reflect the pervasive gloom and despair, deepening the gothic elements within the cinematic narrative and “The Tell-Tale Heart” with the protagonist’s obsession with the beating heart becoming a metaphor for guilt and madness. In contrast, abjection, related to repulsion, the grotesque, decay, and death, challenges the limits of what is socially acceptable and morally conceivable, inviting reflection on the human condition and its shadows, the film that contains the most aspects related to abjection is “Buried Alive,” which in addition to the fear of premature burial, also explores human vulnerability to death and isolation, elements that evoke both horror and morbid fascination. Sublimity and abjection, when employed so intricately, not only define the gothic genre but also elevate these narratives, allowing for a deeper exploration of what it means to be human.

Transmediatic components of the independent ludic context.

Based on the analysis of the data provided regarding the narrative grounded in Edgar Allan Poe, the video games “Looking for Edgar,” “Escape The Red Death” (2023), and “The Town of Poe - Chapter One” (2021) contain a less intricate storyline than the other video games, with an adventure game format and user experience and rules that facilitate their progression, unlike “That’s Raventastic” (2017) and “A Night of Terrors (an Edgar Allan Poe choose-your-own-adventure)” (2022) which lead towards a text adventure game format that requires reading to advance. Regarding the transmediatic components, Mythos, Topos, and Ethos of the video games inspired by the work of Edgar Allan Poe have been interpreted in a way that maintains the spirit of literature through new narrative forms.

Regarding Mythos, two recurring indicators are presented: immersive narratives and central conflict. For immersive narratives, the video games present stories rich in mystery,

exploration, and discovery, involving dark discoveries, hidden secrets, which are consistent with Poe’s gothic narrative style. In 3 of the 5 games, this transmediatic component is reflected, particularly, “Looking for Edgar” integrates the element of Mythos by immersing players in a 19th-century cave exploration where they encounter iconic symbols from Poe’s tales, such as a black cat and a pendulum, at key moments in the gameplay. These symbols are crucial in unlocking deeper narrative layers and advancing the story; in “The Town of Poe - Chapter One” a more interactive narrative is proposed that unfolds through the exploration of a cemetery, in which puzzles must be solved and clues obtained to end the supernatural situations of the graveyard; and “That’s Raventastic” a guided experience about the story “The Raven” in which the story is gradually unraveled through puzzles about intriguing and complex episodes interspersed with mockery and irony. On the other hand, the following indicator: central conflict is oriented towards a focal confrontation either a battle against supernatural forces, the internal struggle of the characters, or the confrontation with deep fears. The video games that stand out the most in this indicator are “A Night of Terrors (an Edgar Allan Poe choose-your-own-adventure)” and “Escape the Red Death”. In the former, it represents the escape from physical conflicts and emotional battles. The character evades attacks and irrational situations in which symbolic protagonists of Poe’s stories appear, trying to reach tranquility, which is symbolized by arriving at a beach. Meanwhile, the latter video game revolves around the preparation for the battle between Prince Prospero and the Red Death mask, indicating two conflicts: the first conflict, referring to survival and physical confrontation that pragmatizes this dispute, while the second conflict involves an emotional self-confrontation of Prince Prospero, between saving himself and fleeing, or facing to save the guests and residents of the castle.

In this regard, the Topos, a transmediatic component referring to the geographical detail of a specific historical period, all selected video games are set in a past time with dark and oppressive environments, “Looking for Edgar” takes place in a cave, “Escape the red death” and “A Night of Terrors (an Edgar Allan Poe choose-your-own-adventure)” are set in Prospero’s castle, “The Town of Poe - Chapter One” in a cemetery, this last game sets the player in a dynamically rendered cemetery where the environment plays a critical role. The game uses misty, gothic visuals and cryptic tombstone inscriptions to enhance the spooky atmosphere, making the setting a character in its own right. Finally, the chronological time of “That’s Raventastic” is unknown, being a timeless graphic story that combines images of the era with memes, but it contains 19th-century language. In general, the frequent use of gothic and claustrophobic environments to create tension and atmosphere is reflected. The variety of scenarios suggests a flexible interpretation of the locations, adapting them to create immersive and thematically coherent game worlds that not only serve as a backdrop but as active elements that reinforce the narrative and the player’s emotional experience.

As for Ethos, it corresponds to the implicit or explicit ethics of the world and the codes of behavior that characters must follow. A range of behaviors and motivations are shown that reflect the complex psychological and emotional archetypes typical of the characters immersed in the stories. Irrational actions driven by fear are shown as expressed in “Looking for Edgar,” leading to a desire to achieve the goal, for “Escape the red death,” that fear produced by pain and agony impels courage to confront the red death, in “A Night of Terrors (an Edgar Allan Poe choose-your-own-adventure)” specific scenarios of irrationality are exhibited when fleeing the castle, being entranced and following the shadow of an unknown woman that leads to an environment of

tranquility and peace. While in these 3 video games fear is presented as the main narrative driver of the stories, in “The Town of Poe - Chapter One” regardless of the ethical uncertainties and behaviors of Poe, actions are taken according to the objective of the missions, that is, there is no defined ethical deontology estimated in the progress of the video game, graves are opened, conversations with the dead are held, ghosts are released, all to release the cemetery from the curse. In “That’s Raventastic” mockery, jokes, and irony have no limits, in most cases this game showcases Ethos by engaging players with ethical decisions that affect the storyline. Players navigate through moral dilemmas linked to Poe’s themes of madness and guilt, with their choices influencing the game’s outcome and character fates. falling into the ridicule of Edgar Allan Poe’s stories using memes as in the dialog: -I wish for it be tomorrow; -It is now tomorrow five minutes before midnight; -You are a jerk; -Eagerly I wish the morrow, and in others, subsuming to hints of black humor, like the moment of Lenore’s disappearance with a carton of milk next to her photo, a phone number, and a message: Last seen with symptoms of Tuberculosis.

As a conclusion of the results of this section, video games inspired by the works of Edgar Allan Poe effectively capture and adapt the essential elements of Mythos, Topos, and Ethos characteristic of his literature. In doing so, they not only preserve the basis of their narratives but also offer new interpretations and experiences through the interactive medium. These games are based on the rich atmosphere, dark themes, and psychological complexity of Poe’s works, inviting players to immerse themselves in scenarios that are both familiar and novel, keeping alive the essence of his literature in contemporary popular culture.

Genre of narratives in the independent ludic context. Upon analyzing the patterns, it is possible to notice that each genre has its own distinctive characteristics that appeal to different aspects of the player’s experience. Horror and terror share some overlap in their intention to evoke fear but differ in how it is presented and what aspects of fear they explore. Noir, on the other hand, is clearly distinguished by its focus on criminal narrative, atmosphere, and aesthetics.

In terms of significance, considering the diversity and depth of narrative and aesthetic elements, noir appears to be the most significant in video games based on the tales and poems of Edgar Allan Poe. This is due to its ability to interweave complex criminal narratives with a unique atmosphere that reflects cynicism, pessimism, and darkness, offering a rich and immersive experience. Furthermore, the noir genre incorporates a variety of characters and motivations, which can provide a more nuanced and reflective experience compared to the more directly emotional approaches of horror and terror.

The noir genre offers narrative and aesthetic richness; in contrast, horror and terror may have a more immediate and visceral impact on the player, using tension, fear, and uncertainty as central elements. However, these two genres often focus more on sensory experience and less on complex narrative or character development compared to noir.

Looking at each genre individually, horror seems to be immediately associated with Poe’s work due to its supernatural themes and its ability to evoke fear. These video games use atmosphere and narrative to immerse the player in experiences where tension and fear are constant through everyday scenarios that create a sense of uncertainty and disorientation, often accompanied by an oppressive atmosphere, in which the natural order is violated, and an irrational victory is generated, all palpable within the ludic experience environment. The video games showing a greater inclination towards items related to the horror genre are



Fig. 2 From the video game “Looking for Edgard” (2020) by Jangames.

“A Night of Terrors (an Edgar Allan Poe choose-your-own-adventure)” and “That’s Raventastic,” emphasizing the terrifying intention and irrationality, with the former immersing the player in interactive stories based on Poe’s works, known for their psychological and supernatural horror, and the latter offering an irrational or surprising ending that challenges logical expectations. “The Town of Poe - Chapter One” includes ghosts and undead, and “Scape the red death” this game exemplifies the horror genre by creating a tense atmosphere where players must strategize survival tactics against the looming threat of the Red Death. The game intensifies fear through dark visuals and sudden, eerie sound effects that heighten the player’s sense of urgency and dread.

Regarding the horror genre, it focuses on the presence of psychological fear and anticipation, manifested through intentional fear, dark and claustrophobic spaces. It is worth mentioning that this is the least employed genre in video games, with notable exceptions being “Looking for Edgard” and “A Night of Terrors (an Edgar Allan Poe choose-your-own-adventure).” Emphasizing the noir genre, this text-based adventure weaves complex narrative threads involving crime and moral ambiguity. Players solve mysteries by making choices that reveal hidden motives and secrets, enhancing the dark, pessimistic tone of the game (Fig. 2).

To conclude, the noir genre is the most utilized genre in video games based on Poe’s works. This genre features a perspective distinguished by its criminal stories, dark atmospheres, and complex characters. Its prominence could be explained by its ability to intertwine mystery and crime elements with a deeply cinematic and stylized atmosphere, resonating well with the psychological and environmental narratives that characterize many of Poe’s stories. Additionally, the introspective and often psychological nature of noir complements the exploration of mental states and moral dilemmas central to Poe’s literature. The video games that best present this genre are “The Town of Poe - Chapter One” and “That’s Raventastic,” which include elements of mystery and exploration of dark themes, although their connection to noir primarily focuses on atmosphere and shadowy characters.

Ultimately, the striking prominence of noir over horror and terror in these video games suggests a rich layer of narrative complexity that goes beyond mere evocation of fear. While horror remains a central genre for video games based on Poe’s work, the strong presence of noir highlights a fascination with darker and psychologically rich narratives that explore human nature from morally complex and stylistically unique perspectives.

Gothic elements in the independent ludic context. The information reveals that both elements, sublimity and abjection, have notable presences in the video games, although they focus on different aspects of the gothic experience. Sublimity is highlighted

for evoking deep and often overwhelming emotions, complemented by the symbolic and narrative elements of the game. This includes sensations of fear and intrigue, particularly related to concepts such as death and the unknown, which are central in gothic literature. As for abjection, it is characterized by the exploration of themes related to death, fear of the unknown, and the struggle for survival. This manifests through direct confrontations with deadly threats and the confrontation with the boundaries of morality and humanity.

Proceeding with the review of the 5 video games, in the element of sublimity, it can be observed that “Scape the Red Death” plays with fear and intrigue in the face of a deadly threat; “Looking for Edgar” seems to focus more on emotional and symbolic immersion, specifically, The game employs sublimity by placing players in vast, ominous cave systems that evoke a sense of both awe and terror. The sublime experience is compounded by the discovery of Poe’s symbols, which are cleverly integrated into the puzzles and storyline, enhancing the mystical and overwhelming emotional impact; “The Town of Poe-Chapter One” induces a more detective-like reaction than oriented towards the sublime, suggesting that the focus is on solving mysteries or puzzles rather than evoking the extreme emotions typical of sublimity; “That’s Raventastic” incorporates noises and texts designed to convey a sense of unease or fear, which could be considered an approach to sublimity through atmosphere and suspense; and “A Night of Terrors (an Edgar Allan Poe choose-your-own-adventure game)” seems to maximize sublimity by exaggerating each new environment to show the majesty or terror of the scenarios, inviting the player to immerse deeply in experiences that transcend the mundane.

Regarding abjection, “Scape the Red Death” fulfills this element by presenting a boundary situation where the player’s actions focus on survival through extreme moral decisions; “Looking for Edgar” does not address this aspect, suggesting that its gothic focus leans more towards the sublime and less towards the abject; “The Town of Poe-Chapter One” the adrenaline of completing missions under pressure could be interpreted as a form of abjection, especially when these missions involve facing repulsive or morally ambiguous aspects; “That’s Raventastic” explores abjection by confronting players with grotesque scenes and moral decay that challenge their perceptions of normalcy and comfort. Players experience a blend of humor and horror, encountering scenarios that disgust and fascinate, pushing them to explore the limits of their own empathy and curiosity; and “A Night of Terrors (an Edgar Allan Poe choose-your-own-adventure game)” is full of abject emotions and decisions, indicating that it confronts the player with the repulsive, the forbidden, and the morally ambiguous intensely.

The 5 examined video games demonstrate the versatility and depth of the gothic genre in the interactive medium. Through abjection and sublimity, these games offer rich and complex experiences that go beyond mere entertainment. They serve as vehicles for exploring dark, complex, and often taboo themes such as death, morality, and confrontation with the unknown. In doing so, they not only engage the player at a superficial level but also invite deep immersion in the most intense and fundamental human emotions, reflecting the key characteristics of the gothic. These elements, when used effectively, enrich the narrative and gameplay, creating memorable experiences that resonate emotionally and psychologically with players.

Discussions and conclusions

The adaptations of Edgar Allan Poe’s gothic themes in independent films and video games are analyzed not merely as entertainment but as complex communicative acts that preserve

and reinterpret literary legacies. This demonstrates the power of media convergence and transmedia storytelling in maintaining cultural heritage. The study concludes that infotainment plays a crucial role in modern adaptations of literary works. By blending informative content with engaging storytelling techniques, filmmakers and game developers attract and retain audience interest while delivering profound thematic content. This blending enhances the educational value of entertainment media, positioning it as a significant tool for cultural transmission and preservation.

The research discusses the adaptation of Poe’s gothic themes into modern media, highlighting the importance of Mythos, Topos, and Ethos. This can be compared with studies by Browning (2018) on the utility of Gothic as a cultural resource, and Ursachi (2020) on the transmedial reconstruction of the Gothic, to discuss how the dark, enigmatic atmosphere typical of Gothic literature is adapted across different media platforms. The analysis reveals a distinction between the genres prevalent in Poe-based films and video games, with a stronger presence of horror in films and noir in games. This finding can be contrasted with works by Hernández-Santaolalla et al. (2022), which discuss audiovisual narrative genres, and Kalogeras (2014) on media convergence, to explore how the unique attributes of each medium influence genre prominence and narrative techniques. The document mentions the role of user participation in transmedia narratives, especially in video games. Comparing this with insights from Jenkins et al. (2013) on spreadable media and Xu et al. (2023) on reader influence in transmedia storytelling, discuss how interactive elements in video games based on Poe’s works facilitate a deeper engagement with Gothic themes and narrative complexity.

Transmedia Study on Edgar Allan Poe, encompassing both films and independent video games, has revealed significant argumentative patterns and aesthetic elements that reflect the contemporary adaptation and reinterpretation of his gothic legacy. Through the analysis of transmedia components, narrative genres, and gothic elements, a profound understanding has been achieved of how Poe’s narratives transform and persist in modern media.

Regarding transmedia components, the research identified that both films and video games share a focus on Mythos, Topos, and Ethos, maintaining the spirit of Poe’s gothic narrative. The ability of these media to evoke intense emotions and explore internal and external conflicts, oppressive settings, and complex moral dilemmas was highlighted. Particularly in the cinematic context, they offer a solid structure to understand how each film addresses Poe’s narrative, from intrigue and betrayal to mysteries and psychological conflicts. In the ludic context, not only do they preserve the essence of his narratives, but they also provide new interpretations and experiences through the interactive medium. The games delve into the rich atmosphere, dark themes, and psychological complexity of Poe’s works.

Regarding narrative genres, in the cinematic context, the prominence of horror is maintained by featuring supernatural threats and the explicit intention of generating fear through the irrational, ranging from psychological horror and tension to the atmosphere of mystery and pessimism, each incorporating aspects of horror, terror, and noir in ways that enhance their respective narratives. While in the ludic context, horror, terror, and noir present distinctive characteristics that appeal to different aspects of the player’s experience. While horror and terror provoke fear in complementary but distinct ways, noir is distinguished by its focus on criminal narrative, atmosphere, and aesthetics. The analysis suggests that noir is significantly prominent in video games based on Poe’s stories, due to its ability to interweave complex criminal narratives with a unique

atmosphere, reflecting cynicism, pessimism, and darkness, and providing a richer and more immersive experience.

Exploring gothic elements, sublimity, and abjection, not only honor the spirit of Poe's works but also offer perspectives to rethink gothic cinema in contemporaneity, highlighting the author's influence and relevance in cinematic art. From the claustrophobia and tragedy of "The Sealed Room" to the dark mysteries of "Buried Alive," passing through the psychological and supernatural decay of "The Fall of the House of Usher." Sublimity is reflected in the exaggeration of emotions and hypnotic situations, from the obsessive beating heart in "The Tell-Tale Heart" to the tormenting visions in "Buried Alive." Abjection is presented in the exploration of the limits of human experience, as seen in the ethical and moral dilemmas in "The Sealed Room" and "Nella stretta morsa del ragno." The examined video games, such as "Looking for Edgar," "Escape The Red Death," "The Town of Poe - Chapter One," "That's Raventastic," and "A Night of Terrors (an Edgar Allan Poe choose-your-own-adventure)," demonstrate the versatility and depth of the gothic genre. Through abjection and sublimity, they offer rich and complex experiences that go beyond simple entertainment. They serve as means to explore dark, complex, and often taboo themes such as death, morality, and confrontation with the unknown, engaging the player not only at a superficial level but also inviting deep immersion in the most intense and fundamental human emotions, reflecting the key characteristics of the gothic. Sublimity in these games is manifested in the ability to evoke deep and often overwhelming emotions, complemented by the symbolic and narrative elements of the game. "Escape The Red Death" and "A Night of Terrors" maximize sublimity by exaggerating environments to highlight the majesty or terror of the scenarios, inviting the player to immerse in experiences that transcend the mundane. "Looking for Edgar" focuses on emotional and symbolic immersion, while "That's Raventastic" uses noises and texts to convey a sense of unease or fear, approaching sublimity through atmosphere and suspense. Conversely, abjection is characterized by the exploration of themes related to death, fear of the unknown, and the struggle for survival, manifested through direct confrontations with deadly threats and the confrontation with the boundaries of morality and humanity. "Escape The Red Death" presents a boundary situation where the player's actions focus on survival through extreme moral decisions, while "The Town of Poe - Chapter One" introduces pressure missions that could be interpreted as abjection, especially when these missions involve facing repulsive or morally ambiguous aspects.

The interrelation among film, video-game media, and Edgar Allan Poe's oeuvre is intrinsically connected, particularly within the framework of transmedia adaptations and the gothic genre. Transmedia storytelling, which involves disseminating a narrative across multiple media platforms to enrich the audience's comprehension of the story, proves indispensable when adapting Poe's literary creations. These works are imbued with complex themes and atmospheric settings that are well-suited for exploration through diverse forms such as film and video games. Poe's foundational narratives and stylistic intricacies provide a fertile ground for visual and interactive media adaptations. His narratives, characterized by psychological depth, dark romanticism, and pervasive gothic elements, align seamlessly with the horror and mystery genres that dominate films and video games. These media enhance the atmospheric essence of Poe's stories through visual and auditory elements, offering an immersive experience that textual representations alone may not fully convey.

Furthermore, the research underscores the dual function of media as both a medium for artistic expression and a vehicle for fiction, emphasizing its profound impact on narrative

construction and audience engagement. In the process of adapting Edgar Allan Poe's works, the films and video games analyzed in this study not only serve as sources of entertainment but also act as catalysts for deeper contemplation and reflection on human nature and societal issues. This dual function of media highlights its capacity to transcend mere entertainment, offering a platform for complex narrative explorations that engage with the psychological and existential themes central to Poe's oeuvre.

In this context, media becomes an integral part of narrative construction, capable of shaping and reshaping audience perceptions and emotional responses. The films and video games analyzed in the study demonstrate how media can manipulate visual aesthetics, soundscapes, and interactive elements to evoke specific emotional reactions and convey complex thematic content. Moreover, the study highlights the role of transmedia storytelling in enriching the narrative experience. By dispersing elements of Poe's stories across multiple platforms, transmedia adaptations create a comprehensive and multifaceted narrative universe. This approach not only preserves the integrity of Poe's original works but also introduces new dimensions and interpretations that resonate with contemporary audiences. The convergence of different media forms—cinema, video games, literature—facilitates a dynamic interplay of narrative strategies, allowing for a richer and more nuanced exploration of Poe's themes.

In cinematic adaptations, Poe's influence is evident in the creation of atmospheric tension and thematic depth. Films adapt his narratives to explore the horror genre, focusing on supernatural elements and the exploration of complex moral dilemmas and internal conflicts. They maintain a robust gothic aesthetic, utilizing settings, mood, and tone to amplify the psychological and emotional impact on the audience.

Conversely, video games provide an interactive dimension that allows players to engage more profoundly with Poe's themes. Video games inspired by Poe often incorporate noir elements, marked by dark, cynical atmospheres and intricate criminal narratives. This medium facilitates a personalized exploration of the narrative, where players experience psychological tensions and moral conflicts firsthand, often influencing the story's trajectory through their decisions.

Additionally, the quintessential gothic elements in Poe's work—such as the motifs of death, madness, and the supernatural—are vividly realized in both films and games. These elements craft a gothic ambiance that is both sublime, evoking terror and awe, and abject, confronting players and viewers with the depths of the human psyche and the unknown. In summation, Edgar Allan Poe's thematic and stylistic features effectively translate across media, offering a rich repository for contemporary reinterpretation and reimagination, thereby perpetuating his legacy within modern popular culture.

This research contributes to the understanding of how Edgar Allan Poe's gothic legacy is preserved and reimaged in contemporary media, highlighting the relevance of the journalistic perspective and its significance for communication. It underscores the importance of media as a tool for cultural transmission and preservation, illustrating how traditional narratives can be adapted and enriched through modern technology and transmedia storytelling.

In summation, the analyzed independent films and video games demonstrate a continuing fascination with themes of death, abjection, and the sublime, pillars of the gothic genre that Poe mastered. However, the development of new technologies, especially in the realm of video games, has opened unprecedented avenues for generating fear and narrative immersion. The interactivity of video games, combined with technologies such as virtual reality (VR) and artificial intelligence (AI), allows for

deeper and more personalized experiences, which may be prioritized to capture the attention of new generations, who seek not only to consume stories but to live them.

This transition to interactivity does not diminish the importance of cinema, but it does suggest a change in how experiences of terror are valued and sought. While movies offer a directed and contemplative narrative, video games invite users to be active participants in the story, with the ability to make decisions that affect the development and outcome of the narrative. This level of agency is something that cinema cannot replicate in its traditional format, making immersion and the generation of fear manifest differently.

Regarding the obstacles of this research, they include rapidly changing platforms and development tools, future research may face the difficulty of comparing works across time or adapting research methodologies to new interactive formats; limited access to independent works. Many independent films and video games may have limited distribution or be difficult to access for analysis, therefore, for this exploratory analysis, only 5 films and 5 video games that were accessible were opted for; and lastly, the diversity of interpretations of Poe's work. Adaptations can vary widely in their fidelity and approach to the original works, which can complicate comparative analysis. Under this scenario, future researchers are recommended to foster collaboration with independent developers and filmmakers to gain access to their works and better understand their creative processes and to develop a robust theoretical framework that allows for the analysis of both faithful adaptations and free reinterpretations both in the cinematic and ludic realms, valuing innovation and creativity in the dissemination of Poe's works.

Data availability

The primary data used in this study is the publicly accessible independent movies and films. The data used for this study are cited in the reference section.

Received: 13 February 2024; Accepted: 17 June 2024;

Published online: 27 June 2024

References

- A Night of Terrors (an Edgar Allan Poe choose-your-own-adventure) (2022) [Video game] SGRLlibs
- Bamberg M (2012) Narrative analysis. In APA handbook of research methods in psychology, Vol 2: Research designs: Quantitative, qualitative, neuropsychological, and biological. American Psychological Association, USA, pp. 85–102
- Bodur K (2019) "P (oe) sychology": The Psychoanalytic Examination of the Theme of Death in Poe's Works. *Edu 7 Yeditepe Üniversitesi Eğitim Fakültesi Derg* 8(10):55–62
- Browning JE (2018) Horror and the Gothic's utility as a cultural resource and critical tool. *Palgrave Commun* 4:38. <https://doi.org/10.1057/s41599-018-0092-x>
- Bryant C (2017) An effect all together unexpected: The grotesque in Edgar Allan Poe's fiction. The University of Vermont and State Agricultural College, United States
- Buried Alive (1989) [Film]. Gérard Kikoine, USA
- Burke E (1958) *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful*. Columbia University Press, New York
- Cossalter J (2021) Entre la cultura participativa y la convergencia mediática: El producto audiovisual argentino de YouTube: Te Lo Resumo Así Nomás. *Aura Rev de Historia y Teoría del Arte* 13:111–130. <https://www.ojs.arte.unicen.edu.ar/index.php/aura/article/view/922>
- Dern J (2021) Horror Art: A review of The Great Illustrators of Edgar Allan Poe. *Stud Fantastic* 12(1):99–105. <https://doi.org/10.1353/sif.2021.0013>
- Escape The Red Death (2023) [Video game] BanditoStudios
- Farren P (2001) Producing Horror. *Film Irel* 24:84
- Fortuna G (2018) Narrative strategies in contemporary independent American horror movies. *Panoptikum* 19(26):121–130. <https://doi.org/10.26881/pan.2018.19.09>
- Grabarczyk P (2016) Is every indie game independent? Towards the concept of independent game. *Game Stud* 16(1):1–26
- Guerrero-Pico M, Scolari CA (2016) Transmedia storytelling and user-generated content: A case study on crossovers. *Cuadernos Info* 38:183–200. <https://doi.org/10.7764/cdi.38.760>
- Harvey CB (2015) *Fantastic Transmedia*. Palgrave Macmillan, London
- Hernández-Santaolalla V, Fernández Gómez JD, Rubio-Hernández MDM (2022) Audiovisual Narrative Genres as a Tool for Advertising Research. *Estudios sobre el Mensaje Periodístico* 28(3):661–676. <https://doi.org/10.5209/esmp.78764>
- Hsieh HF, Shannon SE (2005) Three approaches to qualitative content analysis. *Qualitative Health Res* 15(9):1277–1288. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1049732305276687>
- Holmlund C, Wyatt J (2004) *Contemporary American independent film: from the margins to the mainstream*. Routledge, London
- Hernández-Sampieri R, Fernández-Collado C, Baptista-Lucio P (2014) *Metodología de la investigación*. McGraw Hill, México
- Javanshir R, Carroll B, Millard D (2020) Structural patterns for transmedia storytelling. *PloS One* 5(1):e0225910. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0225910>
- Jenkins H (2006) *Convergence Culture. Where Old and New Media Collide*: New York. University Press, New York
- Jenkins H, Ford S, Green J (2013) *Spreadable Media: Creating Value and Meaning in a Networked Culture*. New York University Press, New York
- Kalogeris S (2014) *Transmedia storytelling and the new era of media convergence in higher education*. Palgrave MacMillan, New York
- Kennedy JG, Peeples S (2019) *The Oxford Handbook of Edgar Allan Poe*. Oxford University Press, USA
- Kristeva J (1982) Approaching abjection. *Oxford Literary Rev* 5(1-2):125–149
- La Chute de la maison Usher (1928) [Film]. Jean Epstein, France
- Lima MA (2010) Poe and gothic creativity. *Edgar Allan Poe Rev* 11(1):22–30. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/41506386>
- Ljungquist KP (2009) Poe's Style: From "A" to Zimmerman. *Poe Stud* 42(1):144–147. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/48599348>
- Lopes S (2019) Anti-Transcendentalism and Dark Romanticism In Poe's "The Masque of the Red Death". *Rev Entrelinhas* 13(1):1–3. <https://doi.org/10.4013/entr.2019.131.08>
- Looking for Edgard (2020) [Video game] Jangames
- Martynkewicz W (2005) Edgar Allan Poe. Editorial Edaf, S. A, Madrid
- Merchán-Romero J, Torres-Toukoumidis A (2021) Types of Gameplay in News-games. Case of Persuasive Messages about COVID-19. *Journal Media* 2(4):746–757. <https://doi.org/10.3390/journalmedia2040044>
- Miranda M (2017) Reasoning through madness: The detective in Gothic crime fiction. *Palgrave Commun* 1(3):1–11. <https://doi.org/10.1057/palcomms.2017.45>
- Montoya C (2023) Diseño Transmedial: Cruces entre Cine, Comics y Novelas literarias. *Cent de Estudios en Diseño y Comunicación* 26(187):131–139. <https://doi.org/10.18682/cdc.vi187.9477>
- Neimeyer M (2002) Poe and popular culture. In: Hayes KJ (ed) *The Cambridge Companion to Edgar Allan Poe*, 1st edn. Cambridge University Press, London, p 205–224
- Nella stretta morsa del ragno (1971) [Film]. Antonio Margheriti, Italy
- Piñero Carballeda A (2017) El gótico y su legado en el terror: Una introducción a la estética de la oscuridad. Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México. Facultad de Filosofía y Letras/Bonilla Artigas Editores, México
- Peaty G (2019) Gothic Games. *Aeternum: J Contemp Gothic Stud* 6(2):2–6
- Perry D, Sederholm C (2012) Adapting Poe: Re-Imaginations in Popular Culture. Palgrave Macmillan, London
- Ryan ML (2016) Transmedia narratology and transmedia storytelling. *Artnodes* 18:1–10. <https://doi.org/10.7238/a.v0i18.3049>
- Sánchez-Verdejo Pérez FJ (2013) Lo gótico: semiótica, género,(est) ética. *Herejía y Belleza: Rev de estudios culturales sobre el Mov gótico* 1:23–38
- Salaverría R, Avilés JAG (2008) La convergencia tecnológica en los medios de comunicación: retos para el periodismo. *Blanquerna Sch Commun Int Relat* 23:31–47
- That's Raventastic (2017) [Video game] Superfantastic Productions
- The Tell-Tale Heart (1960) [Film]. Ernest Morris, United Kingdom
- The Town of Poe - Chapter One (2021) [Video game] Mig Creates Games
- The Sealed Room (1909) [Film]. David Wark Griffith, USA
- Therrien C (2023) Immersion. In *The Routledge companion to video game studies*. Routledge, United Kingdom, pp. 564–571
- Thon JN (2019) Playing with Fear: The Aesthetics of Horror in Recent Indie Games. *Eludamos J Comput Game Cult* 10(1):197–23. <https://doi.org/10.7557/23.6179>
- Tosca S, Klastруп L (2019) An Experience Approach to Transmedia Fictions. In: Freeman M, Rampazzo Gambarato R (eds) *The Routledge Companion to Transmedia Studies*. Routledge, London, p 392–400
- Ursachi I (2020) Transmedial Reconstruction of the Gothic. *J Stud Res Lang Lit* 8:70–74
- Vázquez Herrero J, González Neira A, Quintas Froufe N (2019) Active audience in transmedia fiction: Platforms, interactivity and measurement. *Rev Lat de Comunicación Soc* 74:73–93. <https://doi.org/10.4185/rlds-2019-1322en>

- Voigts E, Nicklas P (2013) Introduction: Adaptation, Transmedia Storytelling and Participatory Culture. *Adaptation* 6(2):139–142. <https://doi.org/10.1093/adaptation/apt012>
- Xu H, Patiño JG, Linaza JL (2023) Reader influence on the creation of transmedia science fiction: A participatory culture perspective. *Humanit Soc Sci Commun* 10(1):1–14. <https://doi.org/10.1057/s41599-023-01772-1>
- Zarzycka A (2018) Edgar Allan Poe's Adventures in Convergence Culture. In: Kalla IB, Ponoatowska P, Michulka D (Eds) *The Fringes of Literature and Digital Media Culture*. Brill, Buckinghamshir, p 14–60
- Zimmerman B (2005) *Edgar Allan Poe: rhetoric and style*. McGill-Queen's Press-MQUP, Canada

Author contributions

Conceptualization: ATT and TLA; methodology: ATT; data acquisition: EHM; formal analysis: ATT and EHM; data curation: TLA and EHM; validation: ATT. Drafting the work or revising it critically for important intellectual content: writing—original draft preparation: ATT, TLA, and EHM; writing—review and editing: EHM and ATT; visualization: TLA. Final approval of the version to be published: project administration and supervision: ATT.

Competing interests

The authors declare no competing interests.

Ethical approval

Ethical approval was not required as the study did not involve human participants.

Informed consent

Ethical approval was not required as the study did not involve human participants.

Additional information

Correspondence and requests for materials should be addressed to Angel Torres-Toukoumidis.

Reprints and permission information is available at <http://www.nature.com/reprints>

Publisher's note Springer Nature remains neutral with regard to jurisdictional claims in published maps and institutional affiliations.



Open Access This article is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License, which permits use, sharing, adaptation, distribution and reproduction in any medium or format, as long as you give appropriate credit to the original author(s) and the source, provide a link to the Creative Commons licence, and indicate if changes were made. The images or other third party material in this article are included in the article's Creative Commons licence, unless indicated otherwise in a credit line to the material. If material is not included in the article's Creative Commons licence and your intended use is not permitted by statutory regulation or exceeds the permitted use, you will need to obtain permission directly from the copyright holder. To view a copy of this licence, visit <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>.

© The Author(s) 2024