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“THE RAVEN”: AN ODYSSEY THROUGH NORSE MYTHOLOGY*

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ABSTRACT

This study purports to find the correlation and the affinities between Edgar Allan Poe's "The Raven" and the very aspect of Norse mythology. To do this, the tales from Norse Mythology will be juxtaposed through the lines of "The Raven". In a way; it will be an odyssey through Norse mythology to the implications of Poe in his poem "The Raven". Despite the fact that "The Raven" is acknowledged for its gothic elements, this paper is bold enough to vie or challenge to find the preliminary connections between the transformation concept in Norse mythology (the examples for these transformations will be displayed through the text), and the flow of the possible images that Poe pictured in his mind.

The raven, as the predominant symbol of the poem is also one of the major animals that the gods Odin and Thor turned themselves into. From this perspective, Edgar Allan Poe might have taken raven as a symbol to utilize throughout his lines. That is to say, now that the raven is a symbolic animal that has undergone some changes in the various mythologies; Poe might have been affected from this event. Therefore, using the raven as the core aspect of the poem could be an ingenious symbolism to make the possibilities infinite.

As we know, Edgar Allan Poe had serious mental breakdown which affected all his works. Nevertheless, this would never ever reduce the paragon of his works. Otherwise, today Van Gogh's works wouldn't be so popular. Thus, we can assert that losing the so-called balance or logic of the life sometimes brings unusual works that turn the

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conventional approaches upside down. Consequently, what Edgar Allan Poe tries to infuse is that by using a conventional symbol from Norse Mythology, he disembarks at various harbors in an unconventional way. For this reason, the study seeks to encrypt all the modifications that Poe might have applied in "The Raven" by depending on the classical tales of Norse Mythology.

STRUCTURED ABSTRACT

Edgar Allan Poe as one of the pioneers of the American contemporary poetry might have been affected through the basics of Norse mythology as well as Greek mythology while utilizing his groundbreaking poem: "The Raven." Therefore, the following paper is a study focused on the correlation and affinities between Edgar Allan Poe's "The Raven" and certain aspects of Norse mythology. The major interest was to find out the preliminary connections between the transformation concept in Norse mythology and possible allusions that Poe may have made while crafting the poem. Therefore, the paper sought to figure out all probable modifications that Poe might have applied based on the classical texts of Norse mythology in five main parts. It was based on two main research questions:

1. To what extent do the legends of Norse mythology affect "The Raven"?

2. What is/are the link/links between Edgar Allan Poe's "The Raven" and the Norse world?

Since this study relies on a hypothetical theory, the research carried on was limited with the close reading of the various Norse legends and the main text, "The Raven", as well as the related works. An archetypal approach was applied on the paper to go hand in hand with the classical tales and legends.

This study aimed at pointing out the possible affinities between Poe's "The Raven" and Norse mythology. The idea sprang from the raven figure emphasized in both. In terms of Norse mythology, the raven played a vital role by being a messenger of the chief god Odin. Similarly, the whole poem of Poe focused on this animal without explaining its main function. Therefore, it was rather probable that the raven in the poem could be the raven of Norse mythology. Besides, Poe may have been affected by many other aspects of Norse myths.

The study may confirm certain apparent resemblances between the legends of Norse mythology and "The Raven". Firstly, Athena, who is mentioned in the poem "The Raven" is the virgin goddess of Greek mythology not marrying anyone or bearing any children. Similarly, the norns are known to be the three virgin sisters who control the destiny of the gods and other beings. Therefore, Lenore, the dead lover of the narrator in the poem, shares a common point with the other two. Athena, the norns and Lenore meet at the concept of virginity, which may be seen as a reference to their purity and innocence.

Furthermore, the notion of war stands out as another common characteristic of the three. Athena, the goddess of war takes active roles in a number of battles changing their directions. Her power is supported by her wisdom and skill at war strategies. Likewise, a group of the norns known as the Valkyries has a strong relevance with wars as they are the warrior maidens of Odin. They are the choosers of the slain men at wars to join Odin in Valhalla and enjoy the unending feasts and prepare for Ragnarok. The Valkyries are mostly portrayed in full armor with the winged helmets.

Just like Athena and the Valkyries, Lenore has a connection with battles, but hers is different from the others. It can be inferred from the poem that the battle of Lenore is with a deadly disease, which she has lost in the end.

Secondly, the figure of raven is one of the most distinctive and clear references that is both found in Norse mythology and the poem “The Raven”. Due to its symbolic meanings and features attributed to this large, black bird, raven’s functions in Norse mythology and the poem indicate certain similarities. The raven in the poem functioned as a messenger because the narrator kept asking questions to it and tried to gather information from the other world as Odin did. He sent his ravens to the world and underworld in order to get news from all. Another similar point between Odin’s ravens and the raven in the poem is their ability to speak. Hugin and Munin representing Odin’s thought and memory brought him news related to the present and the future. As they knew everything that happened in anywhere at any time, those two ravens were the symbol of wisdom, and they shared the knowledge through their skill of speech. In the same way, the raven in the poem was gifted, but its speech was only limited with one word ‘Nevermore’. However, this one magical word seemed to correspond to the questions that the narrator directed at it.

Moreover, Poe described a cold dark night surrounded by fear, which sounded akin to Ragnarok. It was the final battle between the good and the evil and resulted in the destruction of almost all gods and other beings. “The Raven” does not depict a bloody war between the good and the evil like Ragnarok. However, it shows certain similarities with it. The great battle that started with a harsh, freezing cold winter ended up with flames in Midgard. Like the winter in Ragnarok, the poem took scene in a chilly December midnight. It would be implied from the poem that the war brought the end of Lenore and drove the narrator into despair and grief.

Finally, the narrator as a human belonged to Midgard of Norse mythology. He was encircled by the walls built by the gods, but even they were not enough to protect him against the dangers of the world out, as his house proves to be a no safe place as well.

Similarities mentioned above brought about the question whether there were any links between Poe and Norse mythology. Poe was known to be inspired by certain fields while creating his works. Thus, it was likely for him to read classical texts of Norse and Greek mythologies and to allude to them in his poems and stories.

Consequently, Poe was a writer who filled his short life with many ingenious works that are respected even today. Instead of being content by having a limited perception, he chose to be discontent by focusing on many other fields and feeding his works. Therefore, it would not be inconceivable for him to make use of Norse myths while giving life to his characters.

Keywords: The raven, Transformation, Edgar Allan Poe, Norse Mythology

“KUZGUN”: İSKANDINAV MİTOLOJİSİNE DOĞRU BİR YOLCULUK

ÖZ

Bu çalışma Edgar Allan Poe'nun “Kuzgun” isimli şiiri ile İskandinav mitolojisi arasındaki bağlantı ve benzerlikleri bulmayı amaçlamaktadır. Bu nedenle, İskandinav mitolojisinden hikâyeler “Kuzgun” şiiri ile karşılaştırılacaktır. Yani, Poe'nun “Kuzgun”daki İskandinav mitolojisine atıflarına dair bir yolculuk olacaktır. “Kuzgun” gotik unsurlarıyla bilinen bir şiir olmasına rağmen, bu makale İskandinav mitolojisindeki dönüşüm kavramı (bu dönüşümlere dair örnekler metin boyunca verilecektir) ve Poe'nun şiirini yazarken zihninde canlandırdığı olası imgeler arasındaki öncül bağlantıları bulmayı amaçlayacak kadar nettir.

Şiirin ana sembolü olan kuzgun aynı zamanda İskandinav tanrıları olan Odin ve Thor'un dönüştüğü başlıca hayvanlardan bir sembolizm olabilir biridir. Bu bağlamda, Edgar Allan Poe kuzgundan şiiri boyunca bir sembol olarak faydalanmış olabilir. Kuzgun farklı mitolojilerde bazı değişikliklere uğrayan sembolik bir hayvan olduğu için, Poe bu durumdan etkilenmiş olabilir. Bu nedenle, kuzgunu şiirin temel noktası olarak kullanmak olasılıkları sayısız kılmak adına yapılmış zekice.

Bildiğimiz üzere, tüm eserlerinde izlerinin bulunduğu ciddi sinirsel çöküntüler yaşamıştır. Fakat bu asla eserlerinin mükemmelliğine gölge düşürmeyecektir. Aksi takdirde, günümüzde Van Gogh'un eserleri bu denli popüler olamazdı. Bu yüzden, yaşamdaki sözde dengeyi veya mantığı kaybetmenin bazen geleneksel yaklaşımları alt üst edecek alışılmışın dışındaki eserlerle sonuçlanabildiği çıkarımında bulunabiliriz. Sonuç olarak, Edgar Allan Poe'nun başardığı şey aslında İskandinav mitolojisindeki geleneksel bir sembolü kullanarak geleneksel olmayan bir yol ile farklı limanlara uğramaktır. Bu yüzden, bu çalışma Poe'nun klasik İskandinav mitolojisindeki hikâyelerden esinlenerek “Kuzgun”da kullanmış olabileceği tüm noktaları bulmayı hedeflemektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Kuzgun, Dönüşüm, Edgar Allan Poe, İskandinav mitolojisi

1. INTRODUCTION

Edgar Allan Poe as being one of the leading figures in gothic tradition and the inventor of detective fiction has been accepted as a prominent American critic, author and poet. In the course of creating his works, Poe is known to benefit from several fields including history, philosophy, gothic literature and mythology due to his educational background. Therefore, it is probable for him to make use of Norse mythology while bringing the pieces together in “The Raven”. In this sense, this paper aims at finding out the similarities between Edgar Allan Poe’s “The Raven” and Norse mythology. The raven is an outstanding figure in Norse mythology by being the symbolic animal of Odin, the chief god. Likewise, the raven functions as a predominant symbol of the poem. Based on this point of view, this study purports to show other possible affinities between the poem and Norse myths by addressing to the transformation concept and other possible modifications that Poe may have applied in his work.

The first part of the study focuses on Norse elements in “The Raven” under the subjects of major female figures as well as the raven, Ragnarok and Midgard. The other section targets at the possible imagination and connections in Poe’s mind related to Norse mythology by underlying the concepts of poetry and destiny, and the female figures associated with death realms.

Last but not least, the text sums up the information that has been gathered and present the points that have been claimed throughout the paper in the conclusion part.

2. EDGAR ALLAN POE, HIS STYLE AND HIS RELATION WITH MYTHOLOGY

Edgar Allan Poe went through a life full of hardship and struggles. He led a pitiful life in which he had no option but to endure all difficulties bravely. Despite all the struggles he had to face, Poe proved himself to be an outstanding writer all around the world. “Unquestionably he was a man of great genius. Among the litterateurs of his day he stands out distinctively as an original writer and thinker,” declares John R. Thompson, an American poet and journalist, in a magazine called *Southern Literary Messenger* in 1849 (Bloom, 2008, p. 694). His analytical and imaginative competence has been respected by many.

Poe always refused literary traditions of his own period, notably Transcendentalism. Whenever he had a chance, he attacked the notions of those traditions which commonly contradicted with the ideals that he defended in “The Philosophy of Composition” (1846). Poe’s outlook towards human mind and nature was less positive inhabiting twisted and frightening passions. Fisher, the professor emeritus at the University of Mississippi, emphasizes that Poe’s writings are full of emotionally fragile characters whose souls are captured by terror (Fisher, 2008, p. 34). Sticking to his literary values, Poe fought against certain prominent writers of his era like Emerson, Thoreau and Fuller, and their ideas. It was his unconventional attitude and point of view that made him diversified from his contemporaries and led him to draw criticism in his own country.

Regarding the records, Poe’s identity and works consisted of a wide range of ironies, contrasts and incoherence. While labeled as dishonest, arrogant, choleric, sarcastic and over-ambitious by many of his contemporaries, he was also ironically portrayed as a devoted husband, an honorable and noble man by the others. After many years succeeding his death, the perspective regarding Poe has taken a turn for the better, and the world has accepted his genius producing dozens of reviews and critiques on his masterpieces.

Poe has an enchanting talent for his astonishing style both in gothic and detective stories. Besides, he has a remarkable artistic skill at Classical legendry. Due to his educational background, and subtle wit, he is able to mingle his stories with mythological references masterfully in most of his works. Fisher clarifies that his theory of unity of effect and plot actually devolves from Aristotle, and

many of his works have resemblance to classical works (Fisher, 2008, p. 25). The names of the characters he prefers and the plots he picks for his stories and poems have a certain relation with classical stories and myths, which proves his close connection with mythology.

Poe's works can be considered as multilayered texts having references to detective fiction, gothic elements, historical and political events, and inevitably mythology. Therefore, it would be better to examine each layer to understand his work thoroughly. In "The Philosophy of Composition", Poe mentions that the death is absolutely an effective topic to use, but the death of a beautiful woman stands out to be the most impressive of all, which is unquestionably a commonly addressed one in mythologies (Poe, 2017, p. 148).

The popularity of the story of Persephone exemplifies the relation between the death of a beautiful woman and its impression on people. She was one of the most beautiful figures in Greek mythology that was abducted by Hades and forced to live in the underworld like a dead woman. Daphne who had incredible beauty had to sacrifice her body and turned into a tree so that she could hide from the love and lust of Apollo. Therefore, she chose a different kind of death due to her magnificent beauty (Daly&Rengel, 2004, p. 28). In addition, another famous myth is about Medusa who was once a beautiful mortal, but punished by Athena with a hideous appearance. Losing her beauty and turning into a monster like creature was a kind of death to her. However, the real death occurred when she was beheaded by Perseus (Daly&Rengel, 2004, p. 161).

Edgar Allan Poe practices the theme of the death of a beautiful woman in most of his stories and poems just like in most well-known mythologies. Poe may build a connection between Persephone and Lenore who was also forced to live in the underworld leaving her beloved one behind in his poem "The Raven". In addition, the stories of his female characters show a resemblance to the destructive and woeful fate of female mythological characters. Those entire women are doomed to suffer in their lifetime that is ended by a fatal illness or a villain although their beauty doesn't deserve it.

While having suggested references hidden in the lines, Poe also has direct allusions to distinguish immediately. His poem "To Helen" is one of them in which he may directly address to Helen of Troy describing her beauty and the sorrows she caused. He has other mythological references in the poem such as Dian, the Roman goddess of the moon; and Elysian fire, which is allusion to the Elysian Fields which is believed to be a resting place for the heroes in Greek mythology. Moreover, "Ulalume" is another poem in which Poe focuses on the narrator's loss of his beloved one. The whole poem is intertwined with direct references to mythological features such as Psyche, a princess in Greek mythology; Astarte, the Phoenician goddess of love or Lethean, the legendary river of forgetfulness in Hades (Hamilton, 2003).

Poe proves to have a certain talent for applying particular mythological allusions to contribute to the atmosphere of death and decay in his works. Virginia Eudy, an MA student at the University of North Carolina, states that in "Ligeia" the narrator first meets the beautiful woman Ligeia in a small town on the Rhine River. By making use of water as a tool, Poe may refer to sirens of Greek mythology that symbolize the darker side of beauty (Eudy, 2009, p. 4). Apart from sirens, Poe has direct allusions to Delos, Greek island presided over by Apollo and Artemis, and Lea who bore twins from Zeus.

Besides his straight references to the myths, Poe also applies an indirect way of reflecting them in his works. As his style mainly focuses on gothic tradition, most of the time the presence of mythology in Poe's works is surrounded by the notions of darkness, curse and death. His use of mythology in such a dark way enables him to combine the structural features of his works with the theme and the feeling that he wants to arouse. "The Fall of the House of Usher" stands as an example of this combination. Eudy claims that Madeline Usher has a likeness to Clytemnestra who killed her

husband as revenge. While Clytemnestra suffered from grief due to the loss of her daughter, Madeline Usher endured a deadly illness (Eudy, 2009, pp. 9-10). In the end, both female characters led to the destruction of the males. However, the story of Madeline ended with demolition of the house as well.

Fisher clarifies the point that Poe had a large scale of reading list including archeological explorations, travel literature and biographies of historical figures. Besides, he also benefited from Jacob Byrant’s works on ancient mythology (Fisher, 2008, pp. 15-16). Therefore, Poe fed on the information he gained from the myths and historical phenomenon while creating his works. As he stood close to the dark side of humanity and human psychology, the dark side of mythology and history turned out to have a central role in his writings. In conclusion, his mythological background reinforces the idea that he may have been affected by Norse mythology in “The Raven”.

3. NORSE ELEMENTS IN “THE RAVEN”

3.1 Athena of Greek Mythology, the Norns of Norse Mythology and Lenore in “The Raven”

At the very beginning of the poem, a raven flies into the chamber of the narrator and perches on the bust of Pallas where it stays till the end. It can be assumed that Pallas who is commonly known as Athena has a significant role in the poem. This symbol leads to a connection between Athena, the norns and Lenore.

Initially, Athena is known to be the virgin goddess of Greek mythology. She is never married to anyone or bears any children (Hard & Rose, 2009, p. 180). Similarly, the norns of Norse mythology are three virgin sisters who decide the destinies of all beings including the gods. In this sense, Lenore who is described as “a rare and radiant maiden” by the narrator can meet with others at the same point, virginity (Poe & Pinching, 2004, p. 411). The idea of their bodies that are untouched may symbolize their innocence and purity.

Additionally, Athena is a prominent warrior figure in Greek mythology. She has slaughtered a great number of her enemies and changed the flow of wars. Thus, she is frequently illustrated with her shield and spear. Like her, a group of norns known as the Valkyries¹ has a relation with wars as they go to the battlefields and choose the slain men to be taken to Valhalla where the heroes enjoy the accompany of Odin and get ready for the final battle. Unlike Athena and the Valkyries, Lenore’s war does not take place in fields against bad people. As it can be inferred from the poem, she has to fight against a fatal illness, which she loses in the end.

As well as Lenore, the raven is another central figure in the poem. Due to its substantial functions in Norse mythology, it can be claimed that the raven in the poem actually symbolizes something more important.

3.2 The Raven

To understand the functions of the raven in both Norse mythology and the poem, it is prior to mention the concept of transformation in Norse mythology. The notion of transformation or shape-shifting has a remarkable history in both cultures and myths. Referring to well-known figures such as Zeus of Greek mythology or Loki the mischief god of Norse mythology, it is common for most cultural and mythological beings to transform themselves into an animal. The ethnologist Lissner puts forward the idea that “the road to supernatural powers is easier to follow in an animal shape and that spirits can only be reached with an animal’s assistance” (Steiger, 1999, p. 11). In this sense, it can be claimed that animals undertake a prominent role in almost all mythologies as their existence proves a kind of bond between the gods and humans.

¹The Valkyries are Odin’s handmaidens bringing bravesoulsto Valhalla.

When it comes to Norse mythology, out of all animals, the raven stands out as the most predominant figure due to being a symbol of Odin, the chief god. Odin had two ravens; Hugin (thought) and Munin (memory) that flew over all worlds and brought information to Odin. Therefore, he was able to see and hear everything that took place in all nine worlds including the underworld. From this perspective, the raven functions as a messenger bird that provides knowledge and wisdom. Furthermore, Daly, an editor and writer of more than thirty books states that when Idunn², the goddess of youth, was lost, Odin sent his ravens to the underworld to search for her (Daly&Rengel, 2010, p. 99). Thus, the raven may also act as an animal that creates a bridge between this world and the world of the death.

In this context, the raven figure in the poem proves itself to be more significant and functional than just being an animal. In the middle of a cold midnight, the narrator hears a knocking at his chamber door and when he opens it, he “whispered and an echo murmured back the word, “Lenore”-” (Poe & Pinching, 2004, p. 412). It can be understood from the reply of the narrator that he waits Lenore to visit him, which is impossible as she is already dead. However, upon hearing another tapping at his window, he welcomes a raven into his room. Therefore, the raven may function as a messenger bird from the underworld. The acts of the narrator throughout the poem strengthen this idea as he keeps asking questions related to his lost beloved one. Like Odin who gains knowledge from the ravens that perch on his shoulders, the narrator tries to learn the answers about Lenore from the raven that perches on the bust of Pallas in his room.

In addition, the raven in the poem and the ravens of Odin show another similarity regarding the ability to speak. It was Odin who thought Hugin and Munin to speak so that they could fly all around the world and bring him news. Nothing could be hidden from Odin as his ravens were able to see and hear everything that took place on behalf of Odin. They used their ability to express themselves in order to share their knowledge and wisdom. The raven in the poem is also gifted with the ability of speech although it is only limited with one word ‘Nevermore’. However, it can be understood from the poem that the raven is able to answer back the narrator’s questions with this one magical word.

To conclude, the raven figure both in the poem and Norse mythology shares certain common aspects. In addition, owing to a raven’s frequent association with death may pave a way to the idea of Ragnarok, the final battle of the good and the evil that results in many deaths.

3.3 Ragnarok vs. The Midnight Dreary

Ragnarok is the final battle of the gods. McCoy, an independent scholar of the pre-Christian religion and mythology of the Norse and other Germanic people, portrays it as “Final Fate of the Gods” as it resulted in the deaths of all gods and other creatures except for one man and woman (McCoy, 2016, p. 280). Balder was the son of Odin and Frigg and he was always associated with love, light and innocence. Following his death, the Norse world had to face its inevitable end. Everything started with Fimbulwinter, which was an unending terrible winter leading people to suffer from hunger and anger and to kill each other, including even their brothers and sisters. The world was all in dark as the ravenous wolves Skoll and Hati devoured the Sun and the Moon. It was succeeded by huge earthquakes as described by Gaiman, an English author of short fiction, novels, comic books, graphic novels, audio theatre and films (Gaiman, 2017, p. 270). Two sons of Loki, Fenrir the great wolf and Jormungard the Midgard serpent, freed themselves and destroyed everything and everybody they came across. Loki, who had been punished for his insults and mischief was able to escape from his bonds and led the army of the evil. The good and the evil encountered each other in Vigrid, Midgard. It was a

²The golden-haired goddess who supplied the Aesir gods with apples that gave them eternal youth.

bloody war causing the death of all gods and other entities. However, a man and a woman who had hidden in the trunk of world tree were able to survive giving a hope for rebirth.

Unlike Ragnarok, the poem does not depict a gory war in which people fight with their swords and spears. However, it shows certain similarities with it. The great battle that starts with a harsh, freezing cold winter ends up with flames promising a new life in Midgard. Like the winter in Ragnarok, the poem takes scene in a chilly December midnight. The narrator pictures the night as "the midnight dreary", and "the bleak December" (Poe & Pinching, 2004, p. 411). By referring the night with these terms, the narrator may have mentioned about how gloomy and cold the atmosphere is. As the winter made people angry and offensive at Ragnarok, the narrator sounds nervous and restless towards that cold winter night.

As well as the setting, the death of Balder and Lenore and its effects show some resemblance. Rocha depicts Balder as the god of "love, peace, forgiveness, justice, light and purity" (Rocha, 2016, p. 790). His death resulted in the loss of light and innocence in all nine worlds. People started to forget about constructive emotions such as love and patience, which resulted in destruction. Similarly, Lenore is described as pure and innocent woman by the narrator. With her loss, he actually loses the light of his life: "Deep into that darkness peering, long I stood there wondering and fearing" (Poe & Pinching, 2004, p. 412). Moreover, when Balder was taken away to live with Hel in the underworld, everyone was filled with sorrow. Hermod the messenger god went to Hel and begged her to give Balder back (Foster & Cummings, 2017, p. 798). She accepted it on one condition, but the gods failed to realize it in the same way, when Lenore's death devastates the narrator. He is in a great grief and melancholy. He is trapped in a room with the coldness of a winter night. If he had a chance like Hermod, he would obviously take it to bring Lenore back.

The midnight that the narrator mentions is not about a bloody war between the good and the evil. People do not kill or wound each other. However, what the narrator portrays sounds much more like a psychological war. The tension ascends line by line. As Ragnarok determines the final destiny of the gods, this midnight in which he encounters the raven settles on the possible fate of the narrator. Indeed, he has to admit that Lenore is gone, and their reunion is not possible. Unlike the final war that assures a rebirth, this midnight destroys all his hopes for resurrection: "And my soul from out that shadow that lies floating on the floor/ Shall be lifted- nevermore!" (Poe & Pinching, 2004, p. 417).

The great war of the gods took place in Vigrid, Midgard while the great war of the narrator hits him in his own room with the goods and memories covering all around. Thus, his small chamber can be a symbol of a massive battle occurs in the world of humans, Midgard.

3.4 Midgard in A Chamber

When three sons of Bor; Odin, Vili and Ve were born, they were trapped in the void between the fire and the ice. They felt trapped in this dark world, so they killed Ymir, the first giant and created the world out of his body. They placed the sparks from Muspel in the sky as the Sun, the Moon and stars. That was how they started to give shape to the nine worlds. As the middle world, they created Midgard and used the eyelashes of Ymir to build a wall around it. They could protect humans from giants and other dark powers. To give life to humans, they made use of trees. Gaimann epitomizes that Odin was the one who blew life into them while Vili provided them with intelligence and drive; and Ve was the one who designed and shaped them as people (Gaiman, 2017, p. 34). They were the parents of all mankind.

Humans led a peaceful long life under the protection of gods and the walls around Midgard. They stood in Midgard with the heavens above and the underworld below. However, Ragnarok was also their final destiny as well as gods'. They were killed by the jaws and flames of Fenrir, the giant wolf, poison of the Midgard serpent, and the attacks of giants and monsters that broke loose.

Like Midgard created by the sons of Bor, the chamber of the narrator is surrounded by the walls. Thus, it can be claimed that the narrator is being protected by the gods till Ragnarok as death is the only thing that Norse gods cannot prevent from coming. When the narrator opens the window for the raven to fly in, he welcomes the death. From that point on, his room is unsafe like Vigrid. Just like his ancestors who fought at Ragnarok, the narrator has got to fight and lose in the end.

4. THE POSSIBLE IMAGINATION AND CONNECTIONS IN POE'S MIND

4.1 The Concept of Poetry

NurEmineKoç, Assist. Prof. Dr. at Istanbul Aydin University underlies the fact that "Literature has always impact on writing and changed history by the enlightenment thoughts of writers who always reconstruct ideas that lead the audiences to new philosophies and thoughts" (Koç, 2015, p. 65). Poetry as a form of literature has always paved alternative ways to the readers for innovative thinking and it has been regarded as a tool to grasp wisdom and awareness. Similarly, in Norse mythology, the function of poetry is to mention about the deaths of heroes, defeats and victories in battles, the stories related to gods and the power of fate as stated by Davidson, a specialist in the field of early northern religion (Davidson, p. 218). Therefore, poetry in Norse mythology is a means to spread the traditional and mythical stories from one generation to another.

The power of poems in Norse myths is symbolized with the mead of poetry, a liquid that makes a person who drinks from it gain knowledge and an inspiration to make poetry. That is the reason why it was so important to Odin. As Gaiman summarizes the story, upon hearing that the mead was stolen by Suttung the giant, Odin asked Thor to prepare vessels and a huge fire. Meanwhile, Odin changed himself into a giant to work on the field of Baugi, the brother of Suttung in return for a sip from the famous drink. However, Suttung refused to share his mead with his brother and Odin, so Odin transformed himself into a serpent to slither into a chamber where the mead was protected by the daughter of Suttung, Gunlod. As soon as he reached the room, Odin turned himself into an attractive man and convinced Gunlod to share the mead by seducing her. In the end, Odin drank all the mead in the shape of an eagle and started to escape while Suttung was chasing him behind. Nevertheless, Suttung was caught by the fire that Thor had lit before and died. Odin spat the mead into the vessels, but also spilled some in Midgard. Gaiman states that "When we hear a fine poet, we say that they have tasted Odin's gift" (Gaiman, 2017, pp. 136-151).

Odin is known with his lust for more wisdom and knowledge. For this reason, he has sacrificed one of his eyes and hung himself from the world tree for nine days without eating and drinking anything while bleeding to death. Therefore, when Odin put his life into danger for the sake of the mead of poetry, it can be claimed that what he did was not for just a delicious drink. He was aware that poetry was an efficient way to see the world from a different perspective and acquire wisdom. It was also a delightful way to share knowledge.

In that sense, if for a moment we consider Norse myths real-like, Edgar Allan Poe is obviously one of those who are gifted with poetry thanks to Odin. In "Philosophy of Composition" he asserts the idea that "... a poem is such, only inasmuch as it intensely excites, by elevating, the soul; and all intense excitements are, through a physical necessity, brief" (Poe, 2017, p. 86). As it is brief and intense, Poe regards poetry as the most suitable form of literature to reach the audience.

Eventually, Odin suffered a lot by working on fields for weeks and risking his life to capture the mead of poetry. As one of the wisest gods, he chose poetry to share his wisdom and knowledge with others. Similarly, Poe reflects on poetry and tries to figure out its elementary functions. Furthermore, he prefers to write "The Raven" as a poem underlying the importance of poetry just like Odin did.

4.2 The Concept of Destiny

The concept of destiny is variable based on religions and cultures. In a common sense, it is believed that fate is decided by a power, which is called differently in each culture and religion, and people are supposed to follow certain rules to please that holy being. In her article on the movie *Barravento*, Dilek Önder, Assist. Prof. Dr. at Gelişim University, states that the cavalla fishermen “believe their destiny depends on the will of Iemanjá, the goddess of the sea, and they have to follow her order to guarantee their survival” (Önder, 2018, p. 12). In this case, that superior creature is named as the goddess of the sea. However, Norse mythology has a different name for it. In Norse mythology, the perception of fate differentiates from many other common notions. The norns who are known to be three virgin sisters are responsible for the destiny. Therefore, they are the ones who decide the fate of all beings including the gods. Although the gods are gifted with limitless powers and rights to reign over anything or anybody, they stay far below the fate. Like other beings, they possess restricted will as the norns have authority to measure and control time.

The story of Balder, the son of Odin and Frigg, proves the weakness of the gods against the destiny. Balder was the second son of Odin and he was loved by everyone and everything. He was accepted to be the god of love, justice, innocence and hope. Colum states that in the palace of Balder, there had never been crime, blood or falseness (Padraic Colum, pp. 1992-1993). However, one day he started to have nightmares about the end of the world. When he mentioned about his bad dreams to his father, Odin talked to an old wise woman who told him that Balder would die and go to the underworld. Shocked by the news, Frigg decided to reach everything and everybody in the world and have their promise not to harm or kill Balder. No matter how hard they tried, Loki was able to make Hermod, the blind brother of Balder kill him accidentally.

The story of Balder clearly shows that the gods cannot change the destiny. Ragnarok is another example to prove gods’ weakness towards the fate. All the gods were aware that the lives would end as a result of a bloody battle in the end. For this reason, Odin prepared an army to help them in the upcoming war. He had the Valkyries, the Choosers of the Slain who went to the fields of war and chose the heroes to bring them into Valhalla. Moreover, Odin fought for the sake of the magic mead as he was aware that giants would use it against gods in the last battle. Freya also welcomed the spirits of the slain warriors in her army for the final war. However, although they knew what would happen, their attempts to alter it failed in the end.

Similar to what is known about the fate and Norse gods, Edgar Allan Poe started *Ligeia* with a quotation from Joseph Glanvill as below:

“And the will therein lieth, which dieth not. Who knoweth the mysteries of the will, with its vigour? For God is but a great will pervading all things by nature of its intentness. Man doth not yield himself to the angels, nor unto death utterly, save only through the weakness of his feeble will.” (Poe, Brower, & Johnson, 2009, p. 33)

He was an intelligent man having a struggle with his adverse fate. By referring to the lines of Glanvill, he might have implied that the fate was not something to be changed or controlled by man. However, with a restricted will, he could find a way to save his soul and live the life thoroughly. His understanding of restricted will is like the gods’ notion of will in Norse mythology. Even the gods were not able to make a slight change in destiny. Despite the fact that they knew they would die; the gods chose to fight to the end and show their power.

Like the gods, Poe was aware that his love had to end when death came into his life, but he still preferred to live the ecstasy of love in his bones, and he reflected that feeling in almost all his works. The woman figures in his works were fighting against a deadly disease or were already dead. Just as all beings in North myths accepted the fact that Ragnarok would be their end, Poe knew his fate was surrounded by ‘the death of a beautiful woman’. Therefore, instead of giving up, he embraced his

fate and alleged it to be the most effective topic to be used. The destiny was over everything and everybody, but his feeble will would at least affect the way how he felt.

4.3 The Female Triangle: Hel, Freya and Lenore

Hel is the name of the goddess of death presiding over a death realm which is also called as Hel, a place above Niflheim. She is the daughter of Loki and the ogress Angrboda. Her brothers are Fenrir, the wolf and Jormungard, the Midgard serpent. Gaiman describes Hel as a girl who is terrible to look at. On the right side of her face, she is lively with a pink cheek and a green eye like her father's. However, on the left side, her face is greenish black with a rotted eye "in the bruises of death" (Gaiman, 2017, p. 96).

As soon as Odin meets Hel, he sends her down to Niflheim, the realm of cold, dark and death. She is given the authority over the miserable souls of those who die of sickness, old age or corruption. Her palace is called Eljudnir in which she has a table named as Hunger, a knife as Starvation, a bed as Sickness and the curtains around it as Misfortune.

Hel shares her kingdom with her hound Garm which is a fearsome animal that guards the gates of the realm, many serpents that keep spitting venom around and Nithog the corpse eater dragon living at the foots of Yggdrasil. At Ragnarok, Hel takes the side of the evil, so she leaves Niflheim with her hound Garm and the dragon Nithog to join the fray. She raises an army with the death under her sovereignty. Besides, Garm and one-handed Tyr kill each other, and Nithog devours so many corpses in the battlefield that it survives after Ragnarok.

Hel's realm is surrounded by high walls and huge gates, which leaves no hope of escape. Once a soul is under her power, even Odin the chief god cannot reclaim the soul unless Hel gives permission. Therefore, it is obvious that Hel has more authority than gods and other beings, which empowers the evil side at the final war.

As well as being the goddess of love, fertility and beauty, Freya has a close relation with the deaths like Hel. She is the daughter of the Vanir god Njord and the sister of Frey. After the Aesir and Vanir, war has ended with a peace treaty; she comes to Aesir with her brother. Her house in Folkvang the region left to her in Asgard.

In Falkvang, she has a hall called as Sessrumir where she welcomes the souls of slain warriors and heroes. Spataceanin her master's thesis at the University of Oslo states that Freya is believed to choose half of the dead together with Odin (C.S., 2006, p. 51). Therefore, her hall is said to have as much space for its guests as does Valhalla, the palace of Odin. The main aim is to create an army of the dead that fights beside Odin and the Aesir gods at Ragnarok.

In this sense, Hel and Freya stand as two women figures of Norse mythology who have ultimate power to rule over a big army of the dead. They both have a realm to welcome the spirits and prepare them for Ragnarok, but they represent two opposite sides. The appearance of Hel who is the embodiment of evil reflects her side thoroughly. Spataceanin indicates that SnorriSturluson describes Hel as a "half-black half-flesh colored" giant woman (C.S., 2006, p. 30). It can be inferred from her description that half of her body symbolizes decay and death just like her heart. The main goal of her existence is linked with destruction, so she is obsessed with destroying the gods and their world.

While Hel is surrounded with darkness, corruption, illness and eradication, Freya signifies light, morals, health and birth. Her good heart is reflected on her legendary beauty. Against the darkness of Hel, Freya sparkles with her light and benevolence. She aims to build up a new world full of happiness and peace at the side of the good. Therefore, it can be claimed that Freya is the binary opposition of Hel in Norse mythology.

The concept of death realm brings about a triangle of women in which Lenore stays between Hel and Freya. In Norse mythology, if a person dies bravely in a war, he deserves to go to Valhalla to join Odin and his army enjoying the food and the drinks till Ragnarok. On the other hand, the ones who die of illness, old age or corruption are sent to Hel where half dead-half living Hel waits for them in dark. Therefore, it can be interpreted from the poem “The Raven” that Lenore dies of illness. When the conditions under which she passes away are taken into consideration, her soul is doomed to go to Hel. Lenore is not depicted as a heroine who fights bravely for the sake of the gods. She is just a weak woman who deserves to serve to Hel in her kingdom.

However, Lenore, on the other hand, can also be associated with Freya. The narrator in the poem pictures Lenore as “a sainted”, “rare and radiant maiden whom the angels named Lenore” (Poe & Pinching, 2004, p. 416). Her beauty is respected by the narrator as is Freya’s in Asgard. Her existence is associated with light and divinity. Therefore, her fight might be against the evil side, and she may be resting in Freya’s palace till Ragnarok.

5. Conclusion

This study aimed at pointing out the possible affinities between Poe’s “The Raven” and Norse mythology. The idea sprang from the raven figure emphasized in both. In terms of Norse mythology, the raven played a vital role by being a messenger of the chief god Odin. Similarly, the whole poem of Poe focused on this animal without explaining its main function. Therefore, it was rather probable that the raven in the poem could be the raven of Norse mythology. Besides, Poe may have been affected by many other aspects of Norse myths.

The study may confirm certain apparent resemblances between the legends of Norse mythology and “The Raven”. Firstly, like Athena of Greek mythology the norms of Norse mythology were known to be virgins and real fighters. In this sense, Lenore could be a character inspired by those two as she was claimed to be a virgin and to fight against a fatal illness. Secondly, the raven in the poem functioned as a messenger because the narrator kept asking questions to it and tried to gather information from the other world as Odin did. He sent his ravens to the world and underworld in order to get news from all. Moreover, Poe described a cold dark night surrounded by fear, which sounded akin to Ragnarok. It was the final battle between the good and the evil and resulted in the destruction of almost all gods and other beings. It would be implied from the poem that the war brought the end of Lenore and drove the narrator into despair and grief. Finally, the narrator as a human belonged to Midgard of Norse mythology. He was encircled by the walls built by the gods, but even they were not enough to protect him against the dangers of the world out, as his house proves to be a no safe place as well.

Similarities mentioned above brought about the question whether there were any links between Poe and Norse mythology. Poe was known to be inspired by certain fields while creating his works. Thus, it was likely for him to read classical texts of Norse and Greek mythologies and to allude to them in his poems and stories.

Consequently, Poe was a writer who filled his short life with many ingenious works that are respected even today. Instead of being content by having a limited perception, he chose to be discontent by focusing on many other fields and feeding his works. Therefore, it would not be inconceivable for him to make use of Norse myths while giving life to his characters.

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