

BEYOND THE VERSE: POETIC NARRATIVITY AS A HALLMARK OF POE'S IDIONARRATION

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This article revisits the well-established debate over Poe's literary identity by suggesting that viewing him as either a poet or a prose writer limits a full understanding of his style. Instead, the study approaches Poe through the concept of "poetics", which unites his poetry and prose within a single aesthetic system. Building on our previous research on Poe's idiolect, idiostyle, and idionarration, we examine the poeticalness of his prose and introduce poetic narrativity as a defining characteristic of his poetics. Based on Jakobson's concept of the poetic function, Mukařovský's theory of foregrounding, and Yemets's conception of poetic prose, we develop a "Checklist on prose poeticalness" comprising four criteria: rhythmization through syntactic, phonological, and semantic parallelism; grammatical and graphological deviation; text fragmentation resembling poetic stanzas; and stylistic convergence. The checklist is applied to three of Poe's short stories: "Lionizing" (1835), "The Masque of the Red Death" (1842), and "The Thousand-and-Second Tale of Scheherazade" (1845). The analysis demonstrates that all these texts systematically employ repetitive syntactic structures, sound patterning, unconventional punctuation, italics, code-mixing, and fragmented textual organisation. The convergence of these foregrounding devices produces rhythmic, aesthetically intensified prose that exhibits distinctly poetic qualities. Their recurrence across works from different periods confirms that such techniques are not isolated stylistic experiments but stable features of Poe's. The findings show that the principles governing Poe's poetry also organise his prose, revealing the transgeneric nature of his poetics. Consequently, poetic prose is regarded as one of the core characteristics of Poe's idionarration.

ЗА ОБРІЯМИ ПОЕЗІЇ: ПОЕТИЧНА НАРАТИВНІСТЬ ЯК ВИЗНАЧАЛЬНА РИСА ІДІОНАРАТИВУ Е. А. ПО

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Ключові слова: Е. А. По, поетика автора, поетична проза, критерії поетизації прози, висунення.

У статті розглядаються особливості індивідуального стилю Е. А. По, який тривалий час залишається предметом наукових дискусій. Обґрунтовується теза, що інтерпретація творчості автора винятково в межах поезії або прози не забезпечує цілісного розуміння специфіки його художнього мислення. Натомість запропоновано концептуалізацію творчості митця крізь призму його поетики, яка інтегрує поетичний і прозовий дискурси в єдину естетичну систему. Спираючись на результати попередніх досліджень ідіолекту, ідіостилу та ідіонаративу Е. А. По, у статті досліджено поетичність прози автора та запропоновано поняття «поетичного наративу» як одну з визначальних характеристик його поетики. Розроблено перелік ознак поетизації прози, який охоплює чотири взаємопов'язані критерії: ритмізацію тексту, реалізовану через синтаксичний, фонологічний і семантичний паралелізм; граматичні та графологічні девіації; фрагментацію текстової організації, що візуально наближає прозовий текст до поетичного; а також стилістичну конвергенцію. Запропонований підхід застосовано під час аналізу трьох оповідань Е. А. По: «Lionizing» (1835), «The Masque of the Red Death» (1842) та «The Thousand-and-Second Tale of Scheherazade» (1845). Результати засвідчують систематичне використання в усіх трьох текстах повторюваних синтаксичних конструкцій, звукових патернів, неконвенційної пунктуації, графічного висунення, курсиву, іншомовних вкраплень і фрагментації речень. Стилiстична конвергенція формує прозу, якій притаманні виразні ознаки поетичності. Послідовна репрезентація цих прийомів у творах різних періодів творчості Е. А. По свідчить про їхній системний характер і дає підстави розглядати їх не як окремі стилістичні експерименти, а як компоненти його поетики. Отримані результати підтверджують, що критерії, які визначають поетичну творчість Е. А. По, є водночас фундаментальними засадами його прозового письма, що доводить міжжанровий характер його поетики. Таким чином, поетичний наратив розглядається як одна з ключових характеристик ідіонаративу автора.

Introduction. This study enters the long-standing scholarly debate over whether the American Romantic author Edgar Allan Poe is primarily a poet or a prose writer and argues that such a perspective ultimately limits a full appreciation of his literary work. By shifting the focus to Poe's poetics, this research bridges the gap between his poetry and prose, offering a unified framework for appreciating his genius as a universal author. Poe made his mark throughout his life not only as a poet, prose writer and essayist, but also as a literary critic. From 1835, he worked as an assistant editor at "The Messenger", later at "Burton's Gentleman's Magazine", and subsequently became editor-in-chief of "Graham's Magazine" (Thomas & Jackson, 1987). Given Poe's professional experience, we assume that he was able to

analyse readers' preferences and, consequently, had a thorough understanding of the techniques involved in writing texts of various forms and genres.

Poe writes about his expectations and the process of creating one of his most famous works of poetry, namely "The Raven", in his essay "The Philosophy of Composition" (CTH: 60–71), explaining each stylistic device, theme and issue addressed in the poem. The author also honestly sets out his views on the two literary forms: poetry and prose. He asserts that only "Beauty" is the true and legitimate realm of poetry:

"Now I designate Beauty as the province of the poem, merely because it is an obvious rule of Art that effects should be made to spring from direct causes – that objects should be attained through

means best adapted for their attainment – no one as yet having been weak enough to deny that the peculiar elevation alluded to, is *most readily* attained in the poem.” (CTH: 63).

Instead, Poe defines the realm of prose as “Truth” and “Passion”:

“Now the object, Truth, or the satisfaction of the intellect, and the object Passion, or the excitement of the heart, are, although attainable, to a certain extent, in poetry, far more readily attainable in prose. Truth, in fact, demands a precision, and Passion, a homeliness <...> which are absolutely antagonistic to that Beauty which, I maintain, is the excitement, or pleasurable elevation, of the soul. <...> but the true artist will always contrive, first, to tone them into proper subservience to the predominant aim, and, secondly, to enveil them, as far as possible, in that Beauty which is the atmosphere and the essence of the poem.” CTH: 63).

In other words, Poe asserts that it is important to avoid any deviations within the genre, strictly adhering to the structure of the work. Furthermore, the author emphasises that poetry and prose are mutually exclusive in their effects on the reader. Whilst the aim of the former is to “convey” the text (poetry) to a person’s heart or soul, the latter “satisfies” the intellect.

Poe’s theoretical works gained widespread recognition during the final years of his life (Thomas & Jackson, 1987), though contemporary scholars note certain contradictions and inconsistencies in his claims. While researching the embedding of poetic lines into Poe’s short stories (case studies of “The Haunted Palace” in “The Fall of the House of Usher” and “The Conqueror Worm” in “Ligeia”), Elena Anastasaki (Anastasaki, 2013/14) suggests that such a technique may disrupt the structural coherence of the narrative. At the same time, this can be interpreted as a deliberate attempt by the author to merge two literary forms, ultimately resulting in a more cohesive and accomplished narrative (Anastasaki, 2013/14: 208). The researcher also questions the function of the poetic elements incorporated into Poe’s prose, arguing that, although “Truth” is attributed to prose, it is poetry that ensures the “truthfulness” of the narrative, circumventing both the narrator’s unreliability and the limitations of the narrative’s rationality (Anastasaki, 2013/14: 212). This leads us to conclude that, in “The Fall of the House of Usher”, Poe seeks to achieve perfection in the genre and in the elements of literary form, as he asserts in “The Philosophy of Composition” (CTH: 63), leaving no room for doubt as to the truthfulness and beauty of the story.

We claim that the research of Poe’s poetics opens a deeper interpretation of the author’s poetry and

prose. Until now, his work has predominantly been studied from a single perspective (merely as a poet or a prose writer) (Dawidziak, 2023; Gilmore, 2019; Grimstad, 2019; Grusser, 2019; Kennedy, 2019; Knott, 2023; Mills, 2019; Moreland, 2019; Turpin, 2025 – to name just a few), therefore precluding from a comprehensive understanding of his individual authorial style. Thus, it is necessary to determine the elements that shape Poe’s poetics as a universal author. In our research, such components are idiolect (Marushchak, 2025b, 2025e), idiosyle (Marushchak, 2025a), and idionarration (Marushchak, 2025d). This article is a companion to our “Trans-generic Narratological Vista” (Marushchak, 2025d), which focuses on the narrativity in poetry. Thus, this study *aims* to demonstrate Poe’s universality as an author by broadening the boundaries of the traditional dichotomy between his poetry and prose and by revealing the elements of his poetics that unify both literary forms.

To achieve this aim, the primary *objective* is to carry out a thorough analysis of Poe’s prose from the standpoint of poeticalness, offering a unified framework for interpreting his literary legacy beyond the poet/prose-writer division.

Material and Methods. Before proceeding to the characteristic features of Poe’s idionarration as a component of his poetics, it is worth considering a broader interpretation of the concept of “poetics”. According to Roman Jakobson (1960), it is a branch of linguistics whose central concept is poetic language. Researchers from the Prague School of Structuralism (R. Jakobson & Y. Mukařovský) distinguish between the aesthetic function of poetic language and the pragmatic orientation of standard (or non-poetic) language. It should be noted that “poetic” in the theory of foregrounding is used to denote “literary”, with an emphasis on contrasting it with the “non-poetic”, or the “non-literary” (Jakobson, 1960: 350; Mukařovský, 1964/2014: 42). In his study of the poetic function of language, Jakobson (1960) asserts that it is realised not only in poetry but also beyond its boundaries (Jakobson, 1960: 359) and considers parallelism to be the main feature of poetic language (Jakobson, 1960: 368). Similarly, Yan Mukařovský (1964/2014) identifies this function as automatization, that is, the foregrounding of the speech act, the aim of which is to draw the reader’s attention to the essence conveyed by the foregrounded expressive means (Mukařovský, 1964/2014: 44). Thus, poetic language is characteristic not only of poetic but also of prose texts, and one of the leading features of poeticalness in a literary work is foregrounding.

Research into the poetic prose began with the publication of works by Olexander Yemets (Ємець, 2000; 2021; 2024; Ємець & Захарчук, 2020;

Yemets & Zakharchuk, 2021). The scholar identifies mythological thinking, the establishment of tropes, stylistic convergences, various types of repetition, the paradigmatisation of the text, and intertextual allusions as the main techniques creating the poeticalness of prose (Ємець, 2000: 20). The author emphasises the mutual influence and interconnection of the two literary forms, focusing on the concept of “the poet’s prose” while analysing the short stories of the British poet and prose writer Dylan Thomas.

According to Yemets (Ємець, 2000), the first three techniques of prose poeticalness share a common device – tropes (Ємець, 2000: 24), which are also one of the characteristic features of Poe’s idiolect (Marushchak, 2025b; 2025e), and thus a defining feature of both the author’s poetry and prose. The paradigmatic relationships in the text are the interactions of tropes in parallel constructions, which, in turn, are dominant aspects of Poe’s idiolect (Marushchak, 2025a; 2025c; 2025d) and are employed by the author across both literary forms. Such relationships are classified according to the nature of the connection between tropes: intratextual and intertextual (Ємець, 2000: 86). The latter may manifest themselves both in different texts by the same author (intratextual tropes) and in works by different authors (intertextual tropes). In the context of our study, the presence of intratextual connections between tropes demonstrates the transgeneric nature of Poe’s stylistic preferences.

In contrast, intertextual tropes, based on intertextual allusions (the final technique of prose poeticalness by Yemets), lend the text a symbolic character and poeticise the prose through its polysemy (Ємець, 2000: 86). Finally, the last idiostylistic component of Poe’s poetics is the convergence of linguistic and stylistic devices and techniques within a text or its fragment, which, according to the researcher’s conclusions, is considered one of the leading techniques of prose poeticalness (Ємець, 2000: 19). Thus, the convergence of the key principles of poeticalness with the characteristics of Poe’s idiolect (Marushchak, 2025a; 2025c; 2025d) demonstrates their transgeneric nature and the interconnection between literary forms within an individual author’s work. At the textual level, this convergence is particularly evident in the recurrent grammatical and graphological deviations employed across both literary forms. Thus, they are manifested through unconventional punctuation, the use of italics to highlight words, phrases or sentences, and the author’s graphic deviations from the margins – to name just a few (Marushchak, 2025d). Thus, the author’s texts acquire additional expressiveness and encourage the reader to engage in a deeper interpretation of the foregrounded text. Since foregrounding is considered one of the key features of the poetic

nature of a literary text (Mukařovský, 1964/2014; Ємець, 2000; Schmid, 2014), we consider not only parallelism but also deviation as an equally significant feature of poetic prose.

Therefore, in line with the argument regarding the criteria for narrativity in poetry (Marushchak, 2025d), we propose using the following *Checklist on prose poeticalness* for the purpose of identifying and analysing poetic elements in prose (in our study, in Poe’s works):

1. Rhythmization of the text structure achieved through syntactic (repetition of syntactic constructions), phonological (alliteration, consonance, assonance, etc.), and/or semantic parallelism.

2. Grammatical and graphological deviation (unconventional punctuation, highlighting of text fragments using italics, authorial graphic deviations).

3. Text fragmentation (use of the text fragments resembling poetic stanzas).

4. Stylistic convergence.

Let us examine these criteria using several of Poe’s short stories from different periods of his life to demonstrate the systematic nature of the author’s use of techniques for creating poetic prose.

Results and Discussion. The study of the dominant characteristics of Poe’s idiolect as a component of his poetics involves analysing the tropes in his texts (both poetic and prose). The stylistic techniques and devices employed by the author are not unique or innovative; however, we can discern the author’s preferences in his choice of particular tropes. It is worth noting that Poe does not favour any single stylistic device but combines several within a single poem or prose fragment. It is precisely this authorial approach that sets Poe apart from other authors, and the flexibility of the methods he employs in both poetry and prose points to the transgeneric nature of his work.

One of the author’s early short stories, “Lionizing” (1835), is about Robert Jones, who becomes a celebrity thanks to his large nose and his expertise in the so-called “nosology” (the science of the nose), but loses it after accidentally shooting off his rival’s nose during a duel. In such a way, Poe emphasises the fleeting nature of undeserved fame. The first poetic device, namely syntactic parallelism, manifests itself in the repetition of the pattern “*Oh* + Adj + V(ed) + N” (“‘*Oh, beautiful!*’ *sighed her Grace. ‘Oh my!’ lisped the Marquis. ‘Oh, shocking!’ groaned the Earl. ‘Oh, abominable!’ growled his Royal Highness.*” (TS₁: 179)). Thirteen consecutive paragraphs begin with the phrase “*There was*” (TS₁: 180–182), overstructuring the text and creating an effect of predictability. Furthermore, a combination of syntactic and semantic parallelism is observed in the following sentences:

“*Bête!*” said the first.
 ‘Fool!’ said the second.
 ‘Dolt!’ said the third.
 ‘Ass!’ said the fourth.
 ‘Ninny!’ said the fifth.
 ‘Noodle!’ said the sixth.” (TS₁: 183)

The former is achieved through the “N + said + ordinal numeral” pattern, whilst the latter stems from the semantic similarity of the nouns at the beginning of the sentence, as they carry a negative connotation and emphasise the dismissive attitude of all his friends towards the protagonist. Furthermore, in the last example, the author begins each sentence on a new line, which visually resembles verse lines. At the same time, the thirteen consecutive paragraphs, each beginning with a syntactically similar sentence structure, can be compared to the stanzas of a poem. This organisation of the text contributes to an additional, at times excessive, rhythmization of the prose fragment, which is a poetic feature.

The names of secondary characters, in which alliteration can be observed, serve as striking examples of phonological parallelism (“*Bliss Bas-Bleu*”, “*Earl of This-and-that*” (TS₁: 179), “*Sir Positive Paradox*” (TS₁: 180), “*Theologos Theology*», “*Bibulus O’Bumper*” (TS₁: 181), “*Ferdinand Fitz-Fossilus Feltspar*”, “*Count Capricornutti*” (TS₁: 182)). This technique enhances the impact of the lexical units, emphasises the author’s sarcasm and, overall, lends poeticalness to the text.

The next poetic element, deviation, is equally represented in both Poe’s poetry and prose, and thus has a transgeneric nature and contributes to the poeticalness of prose. In the short story “*Lionizing*”, italicised words predominate at the graphological level (here – in bold): “*He mentioned Muriton of red tongue; cauliflowers with velouté sauce; veal à la St. Meneshoult; marinade à la St. Florentin; and orange jellies en mosaïques.*» (TS₁: 181), whilst the grammatical level is peculiar with the unconventional dashes and code-mixing. Remarkably, the lexemes or word phrases highlighted in the short stories in italics are borrowed by the author from French, thus combining two levels of deviation (graphological and lexical). This creates a sense of strangeness that prompts the reader to pause mid-sentence, look up the meaning of the word, and interpret the significance of the highlighted passage.

Taken together, the excessive rhythmic structure of the text achieved through parallelism, the use of deviation to capture the reader’s attention, and the text fragmentation form a stylistic convergence which, in turn, demonstrates the presence of all poetic features in accordance with the above-proposed *Checklist*. Thus, the analysis allows us to assert the mutual influence of literary forms in

Poe’s work and to identify the poetic narrative as a characteristic of the author’s idionarration.

Let’s consider one more fragment from Poe’s short story “*The Masque of the Red Death*” (1842):

...through the blue chamber to the purple – through the purple to the green – through the green to the orange – through this again to the white – and even thence to the violet, ere a decided movement had been made to arrest him (TS₁: 676).

First, the reader’s attention is drawn to the excessive frequency of phrases following the “*through the ... to the ...*” pattern. The repetition of the final word of one phrase at the beginning of the next constitutes the stylistic device of anadiplosis, which serves to enhance the rhythm of the passage. The additional separation of parallel syntactic constructions by dashes contributes to sentence fragmentation, which visually resembles verse lines. Finally, the accumulation of all these techniques within a single text fragment indicates stylistic convergence. Consequently, the short story “*The Masque of the Red Death*” can also be considered an example of poetic narrative.

We shall now analyse another of Poe’s short stories from the later period of his career – “*The Thousand-and-Second Tale of Scheherazade*” (1845). The story is a partly humorous sequel to the famous collection of tales, “*One Thousand and One Nights*”. It recounts how, the day after escaping death, Scheherazade attempts to tell the king yet another story about Sinbad the Sailor’s eighth and final voyage, as well as the various mysteries he and his crew encounter. However, the king dislikes the tales Scheherazade has just invented so much that he has her executed the very next day. The first thing that catches our attention is the text’s structural organisation. Scheherazade’s story is interrupted eighteen times by the king’s exclamations, and this is reflected in the text by the pattern “*‘Hum!’ said the king*” (TS₂: 1160), where instead of “*Hum*” there are various semantically similar lexemes (such as “*Hoo*”, “*Humph*”, “*Poooh*”, “*Pshaw*” (TS₂: 1161–1162) – to name just a few).

The phonological level of parallelism is characterised by consonance (the repetition of the sounds [j], [s], [g], [d]) and assonance (the repetition of the sound [i]), which is clearly evident in the phrase: “*Washish squashish squeak, Sinbad, hey-diddle diddle, grunt unt grumble, hiss, fiss, whiss*” (TS₂: 1158). Here, this stylistic device contributes to excessive rhythmization, further enhancing the text’s poeticalness.

According to the next criterion of poeticalness in prose, a graphological deviation can be observed here. Apart from the last example, which is italicised in the text, the author foregrounds individual

lexemes or entire sentences, in particular code-mixing (“*dénouement*” (TS₂: 1152), “*Le mieux <...> est l’ennemi du bien*”, “*verbatim*” (TS₂: 1154)), or emphasises certain words spoken by the king (here – in bold) (“*It is, in fact, **very** surprising, my dear*” (TS₂: 1159), “***That**, now, I believe*” (TS₂: 1165)). After all, the final scene depicting the ruler’s irritation and his decision to execute his wife is marked in the text by an excessive use of dashes, which in turn fragmentises the passage and emphasises the character’s unstable emotional state:

“Stop!” said the king – “I can’t stand that, and I won’t. How long have we been married? – my conscience is getting to be troublesome again. And then that dromedary touch – do you take me for a fool? Upon the whole, you might as well get up and be throttled” (TS₂: 1169).

As illustrated by the analysis of Poe’s short stories presented above, based on the *Checklist on prose poeticalness*, we observe in all three texts a stylistic convergence of various types of emphasis that leads to the fragmentation of the text and, at times, structurally mimics verse lines. Thus, the presence of the listed criteria in Poe’s prose enables us to assert the poetic qualities of the author’s prose, since the works under consideration span different periods of his work. On this basis, we consider poetic narrative to be one of the leading characteristics of the author’s idionarration and, consequently, of his poetics.

Conclusions. The analysis of Poe’s short stories demonstrates that the poeticalness of his prose is not an occasional stylistic phenomenon but a systematic characteristic of his poetics. The application of the proposed *Checklist* to “*Lionizing*”, “*The Masque of the Red Death*”, and “*The Thousand-and-Second Tale of Scheherazade*” reveals the recurrent use of rhythmization through syntactic, phonological, and semantic parallelism, grammatical and graphological deviation, text fragmentation, and stylistic convergence. With these devices, the textual form is foregrounded, the aesthetic function is heightened, and prose acquires poetic features. The techniques identified correspond to the dominant characteristics of Poe’s idiolect, idiostyle, and idionarration and corroborate their transgeneric nature. Rather than belonging exclusively to either poetry or prose, these features constitute an integrated system of expressive means that fills Poe’s entire style. Consequently, poetic narrative is regarded as one of the defining characteristics of Poe’s idionarration and, more generally, of his poetics. The findings also contribute to resolving the question posed at the outset of this study. Poe’s literary legacy should not be divided into separate poetic and prose domains, since the same poetic principles organise both literary forms.

A further perspective for exploring Poe’s literary legacy lies in examining his poetics in contrast to those of Ukrainian authors, with the aim of identifying common universal categories. We also consider it worthwhile to analyse the evolution of the author’s poetics across the different stages of his creative career. Identifying the main components of the author’s poetics and developing a methodology for its study within an interdisciplinary framework is also relevant to further research into the poetics of other transgeneric authors.

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