

Abstract

The Autopsy of Jane Doe (2016), directed by André Øvredal, is a horror film that was widely acclaimed by the critics and audiences alike, due to the originality with which it tackled horror and manipulated both its Gothic features and the supernatural.

The plot is quite simple, but its underlying implications are far more complex. Two men, father and son, both coroners, are asked to examine the body of a young woman whose origins are unknown. The corpse, named Jane Doe (because its origins are unknown), is supposedly connected with a crime, since it was found partially unearthed in the cellar of a house whose owners appear to have been brutally murdered.

What contributes to render Øvredal's cinematic narrative interesting, is the *mise-en-scène* of certain tropes and references that tie in with the American Gothic tradition. Eerie ambiances, psyches on the verge of disintegration, latent family tension, *doppelgängers*, and the house itself seem to carry echoes of Edgar Allan Poe's tales, such as "The Fall of the House of Usher", "Ligeia" or "The Black Cat". Moreover, we must not forget that at the centre of this visual narrative, lies the inert body of a young woman, recently unburied, an image that is quite recurrent in Poe's literary works.

Within this suggestive framework, the purpose of this paper is to underscore the Gothic influence of Poe's fiction upon Øvredal's film, highlighting the relevance of the feminine presence (connoted with a female monster) as a crucial engine that propels the visual narrative forward, eventually turning a medical act, an autopsy, into a horror tale.

Keywords: André Øvredal, Edgar A. Poe, Gothic, horror, corpse, autopsy, witch.

Edgar Allan Poe's Gothic Revisited in André Øvredal's *The Autopsy of Jane Doe* (2016)

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I am dying, yet shall I live. (Poe, "Morella", 215)

André Øvredal's *The Autopsy of Jane Doe* (2016) was a widely acclaimed horror film, having been being praised particularly for the integrity and simplicity of its screenplay that clearly pays homage to the Gothic tradition. The setting of the film is a morgue with a vintage atmosphere and the intrigue is mainly anchored upon the intimate relationship between father and son, the coroner and his assistant.

The prologue of the film features a violent crime scene, in a small town in Virginia. In a perfectly normal neighbourhood, the Douglas family has been found murdered. According to the police's preliminary observations, the family seemed to have been trying to leave the house for unknown reasons and ultimately they end up all dead. Oddly, in the basement of the Douglas's the police find the half buried body of an unknown young woman. The film gives viewers the impression that they were doing construction works and, by accident, the person in charge of it had come across the female body.

The sheriff (Michael McElhatton) then takes the body of the woman to the city's mortuary house, the Tilden house. Tom Tilden (Brian Cox) and his son (Emile Hirsch) receive the body and, given the sheriff's rush to uncover the girl's identity they are requested to start the autopsy right away. As they go through the body, they come across

some intriguing evidence that, in the long run, will prove that Jane Doe's origins bear traces of the supernatural.¹

Revolving around the Tilden house and the mystery surrounding the autopsy of this unknown girl, the action of Øvredal's cinematic narrative pays homage to the Gothic genre evidencing the influence of Edgar Allan Poe both on the ambience it generates, notably in the way it deals with the feminine presence in the horror context.

The Tilden house as a “region of horror”

The first tale by Edgar A. Poe that comes to mind is indeed “The Fall of the House of Usher” (1839). In terms of its architecture, the Tilden house seems very white and neat on the outside, contrary to the decrepitude with which the narrator characterizes the house of his friend Roderick Usher. However, in the basement it lodges a morgue. In architectural terms, the mortuary galleries of the Tilden's mansion are reminiscent of the “many dark and intricate passages” (Poe 173) of Roderick Usher's manor. Emma (Ophelia Lovibond), Austin's girlfriend remarks that the place “just keeps going” (*The Autopsy of Jane Doe*) as if it were endless and Austin replies that its architecture has been the result of the expansion carried out by three generations of Tildens.

The tarn, which is so symbolic in Poe's *The Fall of the House of Usher* (1839) assumes the form of an oblong mirror placed in one of the corners of the morgue's corridor. This mirror is quite often a frequent focus of the camera throughout the film, thus becoming a tension inducer because at some point it will give the impression that Tom Tilden and his son are not alone in the morgue.

José Duarte highlights the relevance of the tarn-as-mirror in “The Fall of the House of Usher”:

The tarn mirrors the threatening architecture of the house, and this house appears as a ‘real half’ precisely because of its reflection. This reflection in turn forms the other half. It is a

¹ In truth, as father and son get familiarized with the girl on the gurney, they understand that apart from her ability to tamper with the surroundings, she is also immune to fire, hence being hinted in the film that she may be indestructible.

symbolic one that, in a certain way, informs the reader that the house is destined to doom because the tarn is a dead lake where nothing grows. Thus water is transformed into a mirror of premonition for the fall of the house of Usher. (...) The tarn is a symbol of the subterranean realm and, therefore, of the grave where the Ushers are going to be buried (Duarte 65).

Curiously, after the body of Jane Doe starts being examined and cut, the apparently quiet morgue becomes “a region of horror” (180), an expression employed by Roderick Usher’s friend when he enters the vault where Madeline Usher will be entombed. Similarly to the impression that the narrator conveyed regarding the Usher’s vault, the atmosphere in the Tilden’s morgue becomes oppressive and dense in tandem with the intricate mystery behind the death of Jane Doe. Barbara Niedziela and Grzegorz A. Kleparski observe that the narrator of “Berenice” (another Gothic tale written by Poe) lives and interacts in a “self-contained world” (454) and undeniably this expression fits the Tilden’s morgue like a glove, since the morgue constitutes Tom and Austin’s confined space in the course of Ovredal’s cinematic narrative.

Evoking the graphical image of the house of Usher, the Tilden house also seems to be divided into two distinct halves. Actually, in a metaphorical perspective, the visible fissure that forms an unusual scar in the Usher’s mansion symbolizes duality and psychological division in the personality of Roderick Usher. It is described by the narrator of Poe’s short story as “a barely perceptible fissure, which, extending from the roof of the building, in front, made its way down the wall in a zigzag direction, until it became lost in the sullen waters of the tarn” (Poe 173). In the same vein, the Tilden’s house can be said to have two sections: the floors where the family leads a normal life and the basement which was transformed into a morgue and crematorium, the place where the family business is put into practice. In the film, it is implied that most of the times both father and son work downstairs, unveiling the secrets of corpses. The clues that punctuate the film lead the viewer to belief that Austin’s mother led a solitary life; she was the person upstairs, dealing with the world of the living while Austin and his father devoted their lives to the dead.

Although it is insinuated in the film that Austin wants to leave the family house, his father and his job, there is a force that impels him to stay; this indecision has to do with the recent death of his mother as he feels that his father hasn't quite recovered from his grief despite his efforts to look fine. On the evening of the arrival of Jane Doe's corpse, Austin postpones his evening out with his girlfriend Emma just to stay at the morgue and help his father.

The autopsy of the young girl will thread a path full of contradictions. Tom Tilden, an experienced coroner, gets appalled at the findings. During the autopsy, Tom and his son notice that there is no *rigor mortis*, as when they make the V-cut, the blood flows fresh from the girl's body. They also find evidence of several hideous tortures and abuse: Jane's tongue has been crudely cut, her lungs appear to have been burnt, her joints have been broken and she displays strange symbols imprinted on the interior of her flesh.² To make this human enigma more mysterious, the doctors note that the girl seems to have belong to a different epoch: her waist bears the marks of a having worn a corset, she has peat under her nails that can only be found in regions up north, and her origins seem to date back to the seventeenth-century, aspects that turn her into a liable victim of the Salem witch trials.

In the course of this disturbing diegesis, the human body, something so familiar to a coroner, is gradually turned into something eerily unfamiliar as both protagonists try to come to terms with Jane Doe's cause of death. The medical and scientific records show that a body that has undergone those cruel tortures would be mangled, disjointed. Paradoxically, this female upon the gurney has more in common with Sleeping Beauty or Snow White. This female corpse stands in this horror film literally as, borrowing Betty Friedan's expression, "the problem that has no name" (Friedan 15). In this regard, Jane finds herself in a quite similar role to the one played by Madeline Usher, whose condition "baffled the skill of her physicians" (Poe 175).

The "strangeness" (Poe 96) that the narrator finds in Edgar A. Poe's "Ligeia" is hence also manifested in Jane Doe's cadaver.³ There is an uncanny quality that

² These symbols and sigils are highly reminiscent of witchcraft, and in a figurative way, they can also comport the image of Jane Doe's body-as-text.

³ Paralleling Øvredal's Jane Doe, Poe's Ligeia also has mysterious origins, and her authentic identity is unknown. This fact endows both female characters with a supernatural aura.

emanates from the young woman's body, because of its contradictory physical condition; although Jane has undergone innumerable tortures, her body remains pristine on the outside. This strange condition lends her a supernatural aura. Near the end of the film, Tom acknowledges that he cannot find the girl's cause of death because apparently there is still a lot of brain activity, hence confirming that Jane is not dead at all. In truth, there seems to be some kind of mysterious energy that keeps her alive.

Even though Jane Doe is only a corpse, and therefore unable to move, she still manages to manipulate the surrounding environment. She interferes with the transistor's emission and she is likewise able to tamper with the lights. Through the radio, the music that appears associated with Jane Doe is precisely the song which comports suggestive lyrics:

My mother told me something that everyone should know
It's all about the devil and I learned to hate him so
She said he causes trouble when you let him in the room
He will never ever leave you if your heart is filled with bloom.

So let the sunshine in, face it with a grin
Smilers never lose and frowners never win
So let the sunshine in, patient with a grin
Open up your heart and let the sunshine in.

The song, written by Stuart Hamblen in the late 50's, and popularized by the Cowboy Church Sunday School, comes through the radio carrying an eerie vibe that seems to suggest that the devil has entered the (autopsy) room and that it will feed upon the darkness that characters hold deep inside of them. These lyrics operate as an admonitory signal that both father and son apparently choose to ignore.⁴ Therefore, and regardless of being a dead motionless body, Jane Doe's voice is metaphorically reproduced via radio; her vivid presence can be felt when "Let the Sun Shine In" starts to play in the transistor. The sound of this vintage music evokes a sort of magical spell. This musicality that characterizes Jane Doe echoes Edgar A. Poe's feminine voices, since both Ligeia and Morella (215) are said to purport a "musical language" (94).

⁴ A chorus of young voices sings this melody, imbuing it with a childish tone. This aspect contributes to reinforce Jane Doe's relationship with the young witches that died during the infamous witch trials that took place at Salem.

The gray and opaque eyes of Jane Doe are also reminiscent of the lifeless eyes of Berenice (Poe 169), another feminine character in Poe's fictional work, and her eyes are also figurative manifestations of the Usher mansion with its "vacant eye-like windows" (Poe171).

Jane Doe's feminine power is symbolically translated by the disheveled long hair spread upon the gurney, invoking a Medusa-like figure. However, instead of transforming men into stone, Jane appears to induce vivid hallucinations that eventually lead them to violent deaths, like the event that struck the Douglas's family. At some point in the film, both Austin and Tom feel like they are being haunted. They hear noises in the mortuary house's hallways and they find that the morgue's drawers where they keep the bodies are empty. Due to the hallucinatory power that emanates from Jane Doe's corpse, they likewise are led to believe that they are trapped inside the morgue. They are convinced that, as a result of a violent storm, the trap door that leads to the upper floor has been damaged by the fall of the old sycamore tree. In a similar logic, they also think that the elevator is out of order due to a power flaw that occurred in the generator. Eventually, the viewer learns that this violent storm announced on the radio never took place because at the end of the film the viewer is informed that it is the fourth straight day of sunshine.

Although male characters seem to be in control, being the coroners in charge of a dead body, a trope that discloses an obvious manifestation of the Male Gothic, the narrative isn't so clear concerning that premise and, at some point, it becomes quite ambiguous. One of the tortures that Jane underwent was having her tongue cut. In the film, it metaphorically signals the presumable supremacy of masculine discourse in comparison to the woman, who is speechless.⁵ Given the circumstances, it is plausible then to assume that Jane might be telling them her story throughout the hallucinations she produces. It is therefore legitimate to infer that Jane Doe's body, although physically immobilized upon the gurney, may be the true narrator of this horror story.

⁵ Coincidentally, there is another corpse at the morgue that has had the mouth sewn up. As it is also a female corpse, the idea that throughout history women have been silenced, comes reinforced in the film.

As a matter of fact, in one of the initial scenes of the film, there is a significant detail that albeit its discretion, it is of utmost importance to prove the theory that Jane Doe might be in control: When the police arrive to the Douglas's house, there is a movement of the camera that lends the viewer the sensation of seeing someone awakening or getting up. This scene, despite of being almost imperceptible, plays an important role in confirming the identity of Jane Doe as being a witch.⁶ One must bear in mind that her body had been partially unearthed (probably by virtue of the construction works the Douglas's were carrying out in their basement) and she has been awakened, thus being again in possession of her powers. This particular scene seems to convey the perspective of the young mysterious girl, and it is therefore legitimate to assume that she will continue in this position throughout the whole film. In fact, it can be argued that it is Jane Doe's corpse that propels the cinematic narrative forward, unveiling the Gothic premises that sustain the film.⁷ Anne Williams in her work *Art of Darkness: The Poetics of Gothic* (1995) acknowledges that the Gothic genre fundamentally revolves around the family, its hidden tensions and secrets (Williams 45), a context within which we can easily frame both Poe's *Ushers* and Øvredal's *Tildens*.

Indeed, Jane Doe can be said to elicit the return of the repressed. The confinement in the mortuary house sets up the right environment for Tom Tilden to confront the issue he is so afraid to tackle: the premature demise of Mrs. Tilden, Austin's mother. Interestingly, Tom Tilden used to call his wife Ray. This detail assumes a striking significance because this association confirms Austin's mother as a bearer of light, blatantly contrasting with his father who, in turn, seems to be relegated to the shadows.

⁶ It is worth to point out that this movement of the camera seems to operate a kind of change in the visual narrative. In fact, in an original way, the director of the film seems to lend Jane the camera, and by doing so, from that moment on she exerts control over the course of the diegesis.

⁷ By means of a clever plot twist, Jane Doe can be said to be in control of the cinematic narrative because by controlling male thought and imagination, she is given a voice. Overall, the autopsy is her narrative, her story being communicated through the film. Although she doesn't have the tongue, a fact that renders her incapable of telling a story (even if she were alive), by appropriating male discourse she is able to do it, hence causing a fissure in the classical structures of the Male Gothic. By operating this subversion, Øvredal surreptitiously aligns his cinematic narrative with the Female Gothic instead.

However, the viewer learns that Austin's mother commits suicide because she was depressed, and his father acknowledges that he was not able to detect the signs of his wife's disease. Later on, in a scene where father and son are together, hidden inside the lift, Tom confesses rather helpfully,

If I'd known, I would have helped her. (...) I mean she was always so bright, so happy. To think that she was carrying around all that pain, all that unhappiness every day. I should have seen it, but I didn't. (*The Autopsy of Jane Doe*)

The over-analytical narrator

In Poe's tales that concern women, one often comes across with a kind of over-analytical narrator, meaning a narrator that has a tendency to over-analyze women, most of the times, as if they were objects. In "Berenice" this disturbing tendency is quite evident, as this passage illustrates: "(...) and I had seen her - not as the living and breathing Berenice, but as the Berenice of a dream - not as a being of the earth (...) not as thing to admire, but to analyze (...)" (Poe 168).

Tom Tilden will assume a similar analytical attitude towards Jane Doe's puzzling body. Obsessively, he tries to come up with a logical solution to the contradictions that haunt it. However, as this analysis is intimately connected to the autopsy that is being performed, it acquires darker undertones, which under a symbolic framework, can be equated to a sort of male intrusion in the feminine body almost as if it were a kind of rape or torture.

Apart from being meticulous and displaying noticeable deduction qualities, Tom Tilden's personality has flaws. In fact, during the whole autopsy process Tom Tilden appears to be in denial. How could he have missed his wife's sadness? Symbolically, he drove away from the light, from the joys of life to commune with the dead. He ignored his wife's symptoms despite being a clever and quite intuitive coroner. In this sense, his "sherlokian" abilities somehow appear only to be applicable to the dead. He seems unable to figure out the problems of those who are alive. His wisdom appears only acute when applied to corpses.

In the film, the viewer is informed of Tom's insensitive attitude towards his wife when he tells Austin that the last time he went to the cinema was on his mother's birthday; they went to see *The Notebook* and he fell asleep. His disregard for his wife is really blunt in his observation; however, he seems aloof, not noticing that his behaviour revealed a great amount of indifference towards Austin's mother's feelings. This male indifference and disregard towards women is a common trait of Poe's male narrators.

Family tension and secrets that surface from the past are indeed a popular trope among Gothic novels and tales. In the Tilden's case, this "family evil", as it is referenced in "The Fall of the House of Usher" (Poe 174), is the darkness that lurks within the individual. It is Tom Tilden himself who remarks that, "Everybody has secrets. Some just hide it better than others" (*The Autopsy of Jane Doe*).

This darkness pervaded his wife on the inside, but Tom admits that he was unable to see it on the outside. Curiously, he assumes a similar attitude towards Jane because he claims that she seems to be a victim of the Salem Trials, a young innocent girl who was turned into something evil by the torturers. By refusing to acknowledge that Jane might be indeed an evil witch, Tom chooses once more to hide beneath a kind of denial, the same denial that prevented him from helping his wife and ultimately save her life.

Metaphorically, Austin's mother was the one that was able to let the sun shine in (like the lyrics of the music seem to invite), while the male members of the Tilden family were immersed in their dark duties. Logically, there is a remarkable contrast between the upper floors, where light can permeate the windows and the lower floors whose architecture is sinuous and does not let any light in. The access is made through the lift (which has a key) and a trap door. The latter symbolizes the entrance to a kind of Hades realm, a realm where the dead bodies are scrutinized, kept, and cremated.

The presence of the Tilden's family cat, Stanley, in the mortuary space, also invokes another of Edgar A. Poe's tales, "The Black Cat" (1843). In this short story, the narrator clearly equates the female presence with the cat. Indeed, both deaths his wife's and her cat are related. Both corpses are murdered and afterwards walled up by the narrator. The story ultimately revolves around revenge, since the cat comes back from the realm of the dead just to point the finger at his cruel owner, who ends up in prison for the crimes he committed. So does Jane's story, since it seems to re-

appropriate the trope of revenge, claiming a kind of historical justice for the suffering that was inflicted to her. In this light, the cat appears in Øvredal's film not only as a reference to Poe's short story, but also as an indicator of witchcraft and also as a harbinger of female vengeance. Charlotte-Rose Millar discusses witches historical association with cats, observing that "(...) imagining the witch as a cat presented her as a malevolent, lewd creature" (Millar 71). The author also remarks regarding cats, that they "were suggestive of witchcraft and diabolism in the early modern period" (71).

Mimicking the plot of "The Black Cat", Stanley is also found half-dead and very wounded inside an air conduct. Interestingly, the scene where Austin finds the cat is already part of the hallucinations caused by Jane Doe, which point to the fact that the cat might not be wounded at all. If that is the case, the cat will end up dying at Austin's father's hands, who decides to strangle the animal so as to spare it from its suffering. When Tom Tilden takes the dead cat in his arms, he feels the need to tell his son that the cat belonged to Mrs. Tilden, wearing an expression that reveals both guilt and a sort of redemption.

Anne Williams stresses that Male Gothic narratives are generally related to the horror generated by a supernatural feminine entity and as so they are characterized by males wanting to exert control and power over that force that threatens to put down the patriarchal formula (Williams 104-105). Here we have a description of what *The Autopsy of Jane Doe* is about. In fact, the female body, that later also becomes an alien body, threatens to shake Tom Tilden's beliefs and starts feeding on the guilt he feels because he couldn't save his wife from the claws of depression. Certainly, there seems to be an underlying connection between the death of Austin's mother, Austin's father's guilt and the revenge perpetrated by Jane Doe.

Paralleling the story of Øvredal's film, the unnamed female protagonist of "The Oval Portrait" (1842) does not have a name and is likewise doomed to become an object of analysis; in this specific case, she is transformed into an object for the husband to paint. The narrator insinuates that the naive girl accepted to be the painter's wife ignoring the fact that he had already "a bride in his Art" (Poe 550). The narrator's depiction of this woman as "all light and smiles" (550) quite resembles Tom Tilden's portrayal of his wife as being a ray of light. And again, emulating what happens in the plot of "The Oval Portrait", Tom Tilden's devotion to his work reveals to be more

precious than his wife, and hence this distant behaviour culminates with her death. In Poe's short story, the narrator confesses, "And he was a passionate man (...) who became lost in reveries; so he would not see that light" (Poe 550). Tom Tilden eventually perishes because he is not able to let the sun shine in (like the lyrics in the eerie song invite), a metaphor for both his wife and light. Likewise immersed in the darkness of the morgue, when Austin refuses to go out with Emma, symbolically he is also exchanging life for darkness, because he clearly prefers to invest his time on the examination of the body of a dead girl rather than interacting with one that is alive.⁸ Emma also reprimands him because he is always postponing his departure from the Tilden mansion so as to move with her somewhere else. Although he tells her "I don't want to be Austin the morgue worker" (*The Autopsy of Jane Doe*), his words don't sound really true; they have instead the impact of a fragile excuse. Later, in the film, by virtue of the hallucinations caused by Jane Doe, Tom Tilden kills Emma with an axe, because he is under the impression that she is one of the corpses that returned to life. By the end of the film, the viewer understands that this event appears in the narrative as only a symbolic reference. Emma isn't actually killed in the Tilden's mansion. In truth, she has not returned to the morgue to meet up with Austin; by sensing Austin's lack of interest in their date, she will never go back to the morgue, as it had been previously arranged. The viewer becomes aware of this fact because there are only three dead bodies taken out from the Tilden's basement: Jane's, Tom's and Austin's.

Conclusion

The film seems to indulge the premise that everything and every person possess a darkness within. The Tilden house, displaying a white and pristine appearance, bears a morgue and a crematorium within; Tom Tilden, a coroner who is respected and seen as competent by the community, is consumed by an unbearable guilt inside; Tom Tilden's wife also hid a darkness inside her, despite being described as a ray of light; and ultimately Jane, so beautiful and innocuous on the outside also gathers darkness and

⁸ This abandonment of the female foreshadows Austin's refusal to integrate his *anima* in Jungian terms. By embracing this choice, he becomes a younger *doppelgänger* of his father. Therefore, by refusing to leave with Emma, he is unknowingly sealing his death sentence.

evil inside her. In a metaphorical dimension, when Tom and Austin Tilden open the body of Jane Doe they are lifting the lid of a fleshy Pandora box, and inviting evil to cause havoc.

At some point, Austin seems to acknowledge this power that emanates from Jane Doe's body, as he affirms, "You can't say she is just a body" (*The Autopsy of Jane Doe*). This statement confirms that the narrative is being embraced by a feminine energy; both masculine characters are no longer under control and patriarchal power is violently fractured. This collapse of male power is metaphorically conveyed in the film when Tom Tilden believes the old sycamore tree has fallen to the ground and, as a consequence, blocked the cellar door, leaving him and his son locked inside the morgue, as the generator has no power to make the lift work. If in "The Fall of the Usher", the tarn operates as a paradigmatic symbol, as the waters are dark and cannot mirror life; in the Tilden's house, the element that symbolically anticipates the impending fall of the family is the tall sycamore tree that stands outside the house. The tree symbolizes patriarchy, male authority instituted, and therefore by falling (even if it only happens in the Tilden's hallucination) it fully incorporates Jane Doe's vengeance. The phallic symbol becomes divested of its power and hopelessly falls to the ground. In this context, Jane Doe's capacity of causing hallucinations may be said to equal Morella's otherworldly talents as the "powers of her mind were gigantic" (Poe 214).

In the end, after his father's demise, Austin tries to reach the cellar trap that leads outside. Bearing in mind the sinister lyrics of the song, it is legitimate to believe that Austin is, in a figurative way, trying to let the sunshine in; however, it seems to be too late. Both he and his father have chosen darkness over light and, as a result they will meet death as a symbolic punishment. As the young coroner's assistant is confronted with a hallucination of his father standing beside him, he falls down over the stair rail and dies. Eventually, the house becomes a vault where father and son end up dead.

As it happens in "The Fall of the House of Usher", the house fulfills its role as tomb. Both father and son, mirroring Roderick and his twin sister Madeline, die in their comfort zone that is paradoxically also disclosed as their "region of horror", the place where a "family evil" flourished and took full bloom. The devil, by the hand of an unnamed witch, has profaned the house, hence revealing its lodged fears and secrets, and letting the sun finally shine in.

In the last scenes of the film, the police find Jane Doe's body untouched, leaving the spectator baffled. Was Jane Doe able to restore herself through the sacrifice of both father and son? Or, even more intriguing, it leaves the viewer wondering whether the autopsy has ever really taken place in the Tilden's morgue.

Tom's wife, like the passive woman of "The Oval Portrait", didn't represent a challenge, but Jane Doe, if envisioned as a kind of evil double of Ray, truly did. Once more, Poe's premise is summoned, as the death of a beautiful woman seems to be more enticing than entertaining one who is alive.

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