

short stories. Different from previous death discussed above, most victims of death caused by disease are female, for example, female characters in *The Oval Portrait*, *Berenice*, *Morella* and *The Fall of the House of Usher* all die at early ages, which are not simple embodiment of uncertain destiny or to make people lament through destruction of beauties. Death caused by disease is of particular significance if roles played by males are considered. Allen Poe's love and worship for females have made females in his works beautiful and charming. Death caused by disease is widely different from murder and suicide as disease brings physical damages and withering of appearance gradually. At a later stage, the characteristics of beauty held by women are stripped, and the time beauty dies away is exactly the time death falls. Allen Poe reveals that loss of love from dominant position is fatal and deprivation of beauty equals deprivation of life.

3. Causes of Allen Poe's Thanatopsis The formation of Allen Poe's thanatopsis is influenced by many factors which include both external and internal factors. For example, social historical background, cultural perspective, knowledge structure, hobbies and interests and life experiences all influence his thanatopsis to varying degrees. This chapter shall discuss causes of his complicated and changing thanatopsis from three main aspects.

3.1 Cultural Background Allen Poe enters academic circles as a literary critic. At that time, Washington Irving and Fenimore Cooper enjoyed a high reputation, but Allen Poe held a different idea. Most contemporary writers, including Irving, had been criticized by Allen Poe. He worshiped English literature and believed American excellent works were far behind English works. These strident remarks in fact revealed his worry for American literature and wish for an equal position of American literature as English literature. There're profound origins for his worship for English literature. First, he had a long history with UK. When he was 18 years old, he had moved with his adoptive father John Poe to England and then settled down in London. He had lived in England for five years, during which foreign life had impressed him deeply. The novel *William Wilson* is

set against a lord's house which is used as a school, and the background information "My earliest recollections of a school-life, are connected with a large, rambling, Elizabethan house, in a misty-looking village of England, where were a vast number of gigantic and gnarled trees, and where all the houses were excessively ancient." shows that Allen Poe remembered life then and his worship for English literature began at that time. He had special love for works of English writer Samuel Taylor Coleridge and his romantic theories spreading to the 19th century. When he returned to America, he not only reads lots of English writers' works, but also concludes his own unique explanation through hard work and divided spiritual world of Samuel Taylor Coleridge into three categories. Besides, as a magazine editor, he wished to have the best magazine in America, so he drew upon English magazine.

He is particularly fond of *Fraser's Magazine* and *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*, and the later magazine is popular on both sides of the Atlantic for its issue of appalling articles, of which Allen Poe had mentioned many times in his works. Allen Poe's first novel *Metzengerstein* is no different from popular gothic novels that time, but later he had developed his own styles while inheriting traditional gothic novel's expression of death. His unique style is greatly related to his accumulation of knowledge and interests.

3.2. Knowledge and Interests While studying in University of Virginia, Allen Poe had read lots of literal works and some books on American history. When he studied at West Point, he received military management and learned scientific knowledge on algebra, geometry, physics and chemistry as

the academy attached high importance to education of military theory and scientific knowledge, paid less attention to literature and even forbade students to keep books of novels and poems. It's the study then that made him interested in science. Allen Poe's sensitivity had helped him easily capture slight changes of human's mentality, and the accumulation of scientific knowledge and cultivation of scientific habits had made him show yearn for science and sense, which is of particular use even in works with death theme. At the same time, he's a reader with extensive hobbies; besides works of literature and philosophy, he's also interested in science and cryptology and uses these knowledge to write whodunits; what's more, he also learns some popular pseudoscience, hypnotism and some other knowledge aimed at exploring instincts. He finds that human's sense is the most active and their emotion is the least repressed regarding life and death. Therefore, there're lots of descriptions about mental disorder, telepathy and some other abnormal or special thoughts, by doing so Allen Poe tries to show that glimmer of human's inner soul will be doubled when they face death.

### 3.3. Personal Experiences

Allen Poe, by extraordinary imagination, has described death in great details for us as he has experienced much death in his life. Allen Poe was born in Boston in 1819. His father died in 1810, and the next year his mother Elizabeth Poe died of tuberculosis. When he was three years old, he was adopted by a tobacco supplier John Allen who was from Richmond. His adoptive mother passed away in 1829 and he left home for Baltimore as he broke up with his adoptive father. In Baltimore, he lived with his aunt Maria Ctemm and his sister Virginia and his brother Henry Poe. However, Henry died of intemperance and tuberculosis in August. Allen Poe adored Henry as Henry had rich experiences: he had been a sailor and written poems in newspapers. Therefore, his death influenced Allen Poe greatly. Allen Poe married Virginia in 1836. His wife and aunt had given him great comfort, and they lived a peaceful and happy life even though they're poor. However, good times don't last long. In 1842, Virginia's blood vessels burst when she was singing. Tough her life was saved, she had never been as healthy as before and her disease repeated constantly, which resulted in Allen Poe's fluctuation between desperation and hope. Then he began intemperance. He was found to be insensible on the street of Baltimore on 3, October, 1849, and passed away in the hospital three days later. Then he was buried carelessly in Westminster Abbey. In over forty years, Edgar Ellen Poe had been from Richmond to London, and then back to Richmond. He had described death millions of times in his stories. He had to face death of so many people, Elizabeth, Dave Poe, Fanny Allen, Henry Poe and Virginia, and eventually his own death. In his novel, there're reverence toward death, humorous banter, courage facing death and efforts to go beyond death. In fact, he had recorded all his painful and happy moments into the story and described those common feelings of human beings subtly.

### 4. Conclusion

Leading characters in Allen Poe's works had a soul-striking opposition toward death. In his stories, time of stories and background was diluted on purpose, so he can have profound analysis of soul. To make the impact more intense, Allen Poe had added death in the story. For those who had deviated from correct course, death will be their ending even though they're more sensible than ordinary people and easier to loose self-control. Allen Poe had showed understanding and sympathy for them, but ethics principles will never vanish, so once they go against ethics and make unforgivab