



## **Haunting the Author: Gothic Authorship and Cinematic Adaptation in Bayard's *The Pale Blue Eye***

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<b>ARTICLE INFO</b>	<b>ABSTRACT</b>
<b>Keywords:</b> Gothic adaptation, cinematic authorship, Edgar Allan Poe, Gothic cinema.	The article investigates how Scott Cooper's film adaptation of <i>The Pale Blue Eye</i> reconstructs Edgar Allan Poe as a gothic authorial figure while transforming Bayard's literary narrative into a visual gothic text. Grounded in adaptation theory, gothic film aesthetics, and authorship studies, the article examines how cinematic techniques re-author Poe through mise-en-scène such as lighting, sound, and narrative framing. Using a qualitative comparative method, the study argues that the film operates not only as a literary adaptation but as a cinematic act of authorial myth-making. The findings reveal that Poe is reconstructed as a spectral cultural signifier through visual gothic codes, storytelling strategies, and intertextual memories.
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### **Introduction**

Contemporary adaptations increasingly foreground authors as fictional subjects rather than adapting texts alone. Scott Cooper's *The Pale Blue Eye* exemplifies this shift by transforming Edgar Allan Poe from a literary figure into a cinematic Gothic construct. Unlike conventional adaptations, this film adapts both Bayard's novel and Poe's mythic cultural afterlife, functioning as a layered act of authorship. The article positions the film as a site where adaptation, Gothic aesthetics, and cinematic authorship converge. Rather than evaluating fidelity, the study examines how the adaptation visualizes gothic consciousness, reshapes Poe's mythology, and deploy filmic codes to produce authorial haunting.

### **Aim and Objectives**

This study aims to investigate *The Pale Blue Eye* as a cinematic act of Gothic authorial reconstruction, examining how filmic aesthetics re-author Edgar Allan Poe through visual and atmospheric strategies rather than biographical representation.

To achieve this aim, the research pursues three objectives:

- To examine how the film translates the novel's gothic and detective conventions into cinematic language.
- To analyse the narrative and visual strategies through which Poe is constructed as a Gothic authorial presence.
- To evaluate how mise-en-scène operates as key cinematic strategies in producing Gothic authorship and affect.

### **Research Questions**

1. How does the film translate the novel's Gothic and detective elements into cinematic form?
2. How is Poe reconstructed as a Gothic authorial figure through visual and narrative strategies?
3. What role does mise-en-scène play in producing cinematic Gothic authorship?

### **Theoretical Framework**

This study employs an interdisciplinary framework integrating adaptation studies, Gothic film theory, and authorship studies to analyse the textual and cinematic dimensions of Cooper's film. Adaptation studies, drawing on Hutcheon and Stam, conceptualizes adaptation as both process and product, involving repetition, variation and interpretation. This lens enables an examination of how the film negotiates fidelity to Bayard's narrative while introducing innovative aesthetic and narrative strategies. Gothic film theory, informed by Botting (1996), Punter (2016), and Hutchings (2004), guides the analysis of mise-en-scène. The study focuses on how spatial design, shadow, and silence evoke gothic tension and melancholy, shaping the film's affective and semiotic impact. Authorship studies, drawing on Foucault (1997) and Barthes (1997), situates Poe as both a historical figure and a cinematic construct, highlighting authorship as a cultural and discursive phenomenon. Audience reception and cinematic mediation are emphasized as central to meaning-making in the adaptation.

Together, these perspectives provide a cohesive framework for understanding how Cooper's film reimagines Bayard's narrative, balancing fidelity, creative innovation, gothic aesthetics, and constructions of authorship.

### **Research Design**

This study adopts a qualitative, interdisciplinary approach, combining textual analysis and visual semiotics. The methodology is designed to balance literary and cinematic investigation, aligning with the research objective of exploring Gothic authorship across media.

### **Research Methodology**

The research employs a comparative textual and visual analysis of Bayard's novel *The Pale Blue Eye* (2003) and Cooper's film adaptation (2022). The study focuses on:

1. Narrative structures: examining plot construction, characterization, and gothic motifs in text and film.
2. Visual representation: lighting, shot framing, colour palette, and sound design of the film as key parameters of mise-en-scène to examine gothic ambience and cinematic authorship.
3. Authorial construction: investigating the cinematic representation of Edgar Allan Poe as a cultural and literary figure.

### **Literature Review**

Most of the material and resources which have been incorporated in this section, are the part of academic criticism on the Gothic literature, adaptation studies, authorship studies, and gothic films aesthetics. However, as the movie adaptation is a recent work by Scott Cooper, it is important to consider the famous reviews which have been given by films critics and bloggers. Recent scholarship situates Gothic literature as a dynamic, historically responsive, and

transnational mode of narration. Aadil Zeffer and Vani Khurrana in their article *Gothic Genesis: An Overview*, provide a broad historical account of the genre's emergence in the late eighteenth century, beginning with Horace Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto* (1764). They argue that Gothic fiction arose as a cultural response to Enlightenment rationalism, religious uncertainty, and revolutionary upheaval, externalising suppressed fears through motifs of haunted spaces, tyrannical figures, and supernatural intrusion. Importantly, they stress the Gothic's adaptability, tracing its diffusion across English, American, European, and global literatures, and highlighting its thematic continuity into modern and postmodern contexts where concerns with alienation, fragmented identity, and existential dread persist (Zeffer & Khurrana, 2020).

Building on this historical foundation, Minakshi Chauhan in her work *The Evaluation of The Gothic Novel: From Mary Shelley To Bram Stoker* reassesses the Gothic novel's literary legitimacy. She contends that early dismissals of the genre as sensational and aesthetically inferior overlook its symbolic and ideological complexity. Gothic narratives, she argues, dramatise tensions between reason and superstition, morality and desire, and order and chaos, transforming stock figures into allegories of social and psychological conflict. Chauhan's comparative analysis of Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1818) and Bram Stoker's *Dracula* (1897) illustrates how narrative technique, gender roles, and cultural anxieties evolved across the nineteenth century. Shelley's Romantic Gothic interrogates scientific ambition and isolation, while Stoker's late-Victorian Gothic encodes fears of sexuality, disease, and imperial decline, demonstrating the genre's resilience and adaptability (Chauhan, 2024).

Extending the discussion into the realm of cultural transmission, Irina Rața in her work *An Overview of Gothic Fiction*, examines Gothic literature through the lens of translation studies. She conceptualises translation as an ideologically charged act that reshapes meaning, tone, and affect, particularly in genres reliant on atmosphere and culturally embedded notions of fear. Rața argues that Gothic motifs, supernatural intrusion, emotional excess, and liminality, are inevitably transformed in translation, producing new Gothic meanings within target cultures. Her analysis underscores the genre's hybridity, showing how Gothic elements persist across modern genres such as detective fiction, science fiction, and horror, thereby reinforcing its global and transhistorical relevance (Rața, 2014).

Taken together, these studies establish Gothic literature as a historically grounded, critically sophisticated, and culturally mobile form. Zeffer and Khurrana (2020) highlight its origins and adaptability; Chauhan (2024) reassesses its ideological and aesthetic value through canonical texts; and Rața (2014) demonstrates how translation enables its transnational circulation and hybridisation. Collectively, they affirm the Gothic's enduring capacity to articulate psychological fear, social anxiety, and cultural transformation.

Scott Philips's review published in *Forbes* (2023), is a journalistic piece of review rather than just a scholarly article because it gives a full glimpse about the masterly sense of how film has been adapted to make it popular genre of Gothic-crime fiction for the audience. Philips in his review focuses on the pace and setting of the film: slow-growing, gloomy mystery, set against a desolate, snow covered West Point. He discusses the atmosphere, frozen mountains and landscape, dull and pale light, and overall sense of melancholy and dread. Although he does not clearly point out the word "gothic", his way of describing setting clearly, leads towards that direction. Philips (2023) in his review also focuses his attention towards the character of young cadet, Edgar Allan Poe. Philips depicts the character of Poe on the screen as an odd, somber and detached, yet he is a very sharp, intelligent and vigilant observant. If comparison is made

between the young cadet Poe and the classic novelist Edgar Allan Poe, there is a clear relativity as Poe was a popular Gothic-crime fiction writer.

Another point is Philips's focus on the visual side and cinematography of the films. He puts his remarks on the production design, the costumes, and the cold colour palette of the film suggesting that the film is visually stunning and poignant even though the plot seems heavy and gloomy. These remarks show the cinematic parameter of mis-en-scene which are lighting, costume, setting and framing. Despite the positive remarks, Philips also criticizes the slow pacing of the film that the film is too heavy for some audience. What Philips's review does not do is to link and connect these issues to the wider question of genre, authorship or adaptation. The limitation of this kind of review reinforces the need for a more detailed, comprehensive and theoretical analysis, which is provided in the present research and study.

An important and prompt response to Louis Bayard's novel comes from Ada Calhoun in *The New York Times Book Review* (2009). Calhoun, who writes for a broad audience, and her writing appeals to the literary audience who perceive depth and aesthetic dimension her work, represents *The Pale Blue Eye* as a skillfully fabricated historical murder mystery that sheer and cleverly weaves Edgar Allan Poe into the plot as a young plebe at American Military Academy, West Point. The review highlights Bayard's ability to depict the period details and his credibility in eliciting and invoking a bleak, gloomy, snow-bound Hudson Valley setting, which foreshadows and predicts the gothic mood that afterward pivotal and crucial in film adaptation. The reviewer's engagement reflects a scholarly fascination with the textual "game" of positioning Poe as a character. The novel operates as a carefully constructed reimaging of his formative years, balancing playful intertextuality with a measure respect for Poe's literary legacy. In doing so, it mobilizes his association with macabre motif and elaborate narrative structures, while resisting reduction to mere parody or pastiche. Calhoun puts emphasis on mood and setting, and this conceptualize use of Poe's persona and façade supports our argument and thesis statement that both the novel and the film are constructed around a gothic remodeling of authorial identity, in which Poe performs and function as both character and symbol.

Ian Sandwell has published his review named as *The Pale Blue Eye ending explained: Delving into that dark twist*, in *Digital Spy* (2023). Sandwell's guidance to the ending of the film, for instance, is less a review and more than that of a narrative disintegration for the audience who desire clarification after the twist at the end of the film. The article elucidates the final revelation about the Marquis siblings' occult rituals, the illness that urges Lea to pursue supernatural cares, and importantly, the revelation that Augustus Landor is himself the actual murderer, triggered by the rape and later suicide of Landor's daughter. Instead of critiquing the film's artistic qualities, the writing concentrates on clarifying the storyline and explaining why the characters act the way, they do. Although it does not constitute criticism in the strict theoretical sense, this form of analysis nonetheless retains scholarly value for this study. Sandwell's article also makes sure that elements of the ending resonate most strongly with audience, highlighting which narrative elements are perceived as central; Landor's shrouded guilt, the trauma which haunts his daughter, and Poe's final act of pity and compassion.

David Rooney in his review *The Pale Blue Eye Review: Christian Bale Trudges Through the Murk of Scott Cooper's Stodgy Period Murder Mystery* (2022), published in *The Hollywood Reporter*, suggests another angle on the film's reception, mingling the industry demand and awareness with the critical evaluation of the film. In its review of the film the magazine depicts Scott Cooper's film as "capably acted and visually effective", captures the attention to the misty landscape, gloomy and dark interiors and all the aesthetic of winter season, that build the

audience's experience. At the same time, the reviewer is uncertain about the narration, explaining it as to some extent as hard and stiff, suggesting that the film's heavy tone, mood and solemnity, occasionally undermine its suspense. The conflict between appreciation for the film's visual designs and uncertainty about its dramatic cadence, recur through several reviews and is importantly vivid here.

The review *The Pale Blue Eye DP Masanobu Takayanagi on Creating a Distinctive Look for Scott Cooper's Candlelit Mystery Starring Christian Bale* by Edward Douglas, published in *Mande Net*, provides a technical approach about the film through an interview with the cinematographer of the film, Masanobu Takayanagi. He describes that how he and Cooper fabricate the silent, wintry colour palette of the film to reflect both the apparent setting of the film and the emotional indifference of the characters of the film. Takayanagi brings into notice the use of dark light, shadow, and fog to construct depth, as well as the importance of location choices in establishing the film's bleak, gloomy and gothic mood. His comments confirm that the gothic atmosphere was the product of intentional visual planning, with the unsaturated colour palette of the film, darkness, and misty exteriors reinforcing *mise-en-scène* as central to meaning in the adaptation. The interview also highlights the collaborative nature of this aesthetic, where cinematography, production design, and costume combine together to produce a coherent vision of coldness and decay. As a practical rather than theoretical source, it provides "behind-the-scenes" evidence that the film's melancholic outlook was intentionally constructed.

Jordan M. Poss, historian and novelist, gives a personal but incisive critique of Bayard's novel in her blog. She appreciates its poetic style, gothic atmosphere, and historical detail, but argues that the final twist undermines the narrative by violating Ronald Knox's "Ten Commandments" of detective fiction, especially the rule that the detective must not be the criminal and must not conceal clues. Poss's discomfort spots the novel's intentional compromise of detective "fairness" in favor of tragic, emotionally charged resolution. This tension between gothic affect and detective expectations is central to both novel and film. Her critique supports the argument that the adaptation translates this structural choice into cinematic aesthetics, creating a hybrid of detective fiction and gothic tragedy that provokes questions about authorship, justice, and narrative ethics.

*The Pale Blue Eye* demonstrates three overlapping theoretical frameworks: Adaptation Studies, Authorship and Gothic Film Theory. Firstly, adaptation studies give the conceptual framework to understand how Bayard's narrative is transmuted and transformed into cinematic language. Robert Stam puts emphasis on adaptation consider as an intertextual conversation rather than a hierarchical translation. It also highlights how Cooper's film negotiates with Bayard's novel, conceptualizes its gothic effect into visual and auditory form. Linda Hutcheon puts emphasis on adaptation as both the creative product and process. Further, it accentuates the film's dual role as it is considered as a cinematic text on one hand and on the other hand a meta-commentary as an adaptation itself.

Secondly, gothic film theory permits us to analyze how Cooper's *mis-en-scène* in the film produces gothic effect. Peter Hutchings (2004, p.112) puts forward his idea that gothic cinema often establishes environment as active agenda of horror, the spaces that menace and sabotage the characters who resides in them. In *The Pale Blue Eye*, West Point has been displayed as gothic space which is desolate, bleak and cursed by death. The film's cinematographic strategy, its dark palettes, lurking shadows and its melancholic soundscape, transform Bayard's metaphor into sensory experience, aligned with David Punter's description of gothic as a mode that summon and conjure "spectral presence" from cultural memory.

Thirdly, authorship studies anticipate the perspective through which Poe's cinematic reconstruction can be understood. Michael Foucault's concept of the "author-function" is valuable here, as it transfers the focus from the historical individual to the divergent role the author plays within a text. Cooper's film establishes Poe not as a plebe at West Point, but as a proto-author whose identity is haunted by his future literary output. The film's intertextuality, especially the utterance of "Nevermore", functions not as playful inclination but as spectral incursion, ghosts from Poe's future that haunt the narrative present. In this way, the film aligns with Roland Barthes's declaration of the "death of the author", proposing that Poe's authorship is less a product of individual genius than of cultural and narrative forces that construct him as a gothic signifier.

### **Analysis**

Adaptation has long been considered a complex negotiation of meaning, culture and ideology, rather than just transformation from one medium to another. Scott Cooper's *The Pale Blue Eye* has been adapted from Louis Bayard's novel of the very name, leads this negotiation towards gothic dimension. The film does not only narrate and retell Bayard's story, but it re-author Edgar Allan Poe, transforming his persona into a spectral figure, whose identity is based on and constructed through mise-en-scene, narrative retelling and reframing, and intertextual haunting. This analysis argues that Cooper's film employs as a cinematic act of Gothic authorial reconstruction, portrays Poe not only as a historical subject but also as, in Michael Foucault's terms, an excursive, fabricated character produced by the narrative and its cinematic strategies.

Fred Botting puts forward the idea that the Gothic is not merely a genre but a mode of cultural expression, that proliferate on haunting, and the blurring of demarcation between the real and the imagined (Botting, 1996, p. 8). Bayard's novel establishes Poe within this gothic tradition by implanting him in a detective narrative permeated with death, melancholy and psychological terror. Although Bayard's novel's gothic atmosphere is basically textual, dependent on metaphors, personification and the imaginative powers and recreation of the readers. By contrast, Cooper's film transcodes and transfers these literary devices and signifies into cinematic strategy, by depicting condense colour palette, lighting, and sound effects to engage the audience in a sensory experience of gothic apprehension. Therefore, Linda Hutcheon's notion of adaptation exemplifies adaptation as a process that indulges the audiences across the media, by creating a "knowing and engaged" viewer, who identifies the traditions of both gothic literature and gothic cinema.

By examining how *The Pale Blue Eye* reestablishes Poe as a gothic authorial figure, the analysis demonstrates that adaptation is not merely a matter of fidelity to a source text, but a process of re-authoring. The film does not simply adapt Bayard's novel, but adapts Poe himself, transforming Poe into a cinematic construct whose identity is made and produced through mise-en-scene, narrative framing, and intertextual haunting. In Cooper's film Poe has been produced such a specter; a figure haunted by his future literary output, constructed as a gothic authorial presence through cinematic strategies.

In addressing the research questions, the analysis was divided into three parts. The first part analyzed the way the film translates Gothic and detective convention into cinematic language, by focusing on the transformation of Bayard's novel into mise-en-scene. The second part analyzed the reconstruction of Poe as a Gothic authorial figure. In third part. The third part explores the role of mise-en-scene in establishing cinematic Gothic authorship, analyzing how lighting, sound, and spatial design construct Poe's identity as a spectral author.

## **Part I: Translating Gothic and Detective Convention into Cinematic Language**

Adaptation is not merely simple matter of transposing content from one medium to another medium; in fact, it is a process of transformation, negotiation, and re-inscription. In case of *The Pale Blue Eye*, Scott Cooper's film adaptation (2022) of Louis Bayard's novel *The Pale Blue Eye* (2006), depicts how gothic and detective convention can be considered as re-authoring through cinematic language.

### **1. The Gothic Atmosphere**

Louis Bayard's novel manifests its gothic atmosphere primarily through prose, depending on metaphors, personification, and the imaginative participation of the reader. The narrator, constable and detective Augustus Landor gives description about West Point: "A colder, more solitary spot I have ever known. The wind comes slicing down from the hills with a blade's intent, and the river is a slab of gray, a tombstone for the drowned" (Bayard, 2006, p.12). This example shows the gothic mode as defined by Fred Botting, "sensationalist aesthetic" (Routledge, 1996; 2nd ed. 2014), that combines external landscape with internal psychological dread and terror. The implication of horror here is not in physical violence rather in the atmosphere and environment itself, summoned through language that permeates the gothic environment with the symbolism of death.

Cooper's film transforms this textual gloom into sensory experience through mis-en-scene. The cinematographer of the film, Masanobu Takayanagi's implication of a faded colour palette of the film dominated by steel blues, manifests Bayard's metaphor of the river as a tombstone. The sound intensifies this effect; the sad howl of the wind and the dreadful creaking of barren trees are not incidental but emphasized, creating what Peter Hutchings calls a "Gothic space", an environment that actively frightens and undermines the characters.

The Gothic atmosphere is further implicated through spatial, interior and exterior design. West Point is demonstrated as desolated, with freezing cold exterior and dark gloomy interior. The barracks of the cadets are shown as cold, symmetrical and lacking warmth, while the academy is surrounded with chaotic woods, shadow-driven and suffused with threat. This spatial contrast reflects the gothic tension between order and chaos, civilization and wilderness. Therefore, gothic horror often emerges from the disintegration of boundaries, and Cooper's mise-en-scene visually validates this disintegration by juxtaposing rigid military order with chaotic terror of the natural world.

### **2. The Detective Element**

Bayard's novel illustrates its detective narrative through Landor's internal monologue. His deductive reasoning is intellectual, reflective and deeply intertwined with his own grief. He meditates: "The truth is not a single thread, but a rope, twisted from many strands: a lie overheard, a button misplaced, a tremor in a voice, that should be steady" (Bayard, 2006, p. 25). These lines show the classic detective motif of deductive reasoning, where the mystery is deciphered inside the detective's mind. The reader is given permission to access Landor's thinking process, making the investigation a kind of psychological atonement.

Cooper's film embodies this process, transforming the deductive reasoning into an alliance between Landor and Poe. A core scene where Landor encounters Poe for the first time in Benny's tavern, shows this dynamic alliance:

[Landor] "Why do you think that the man who cut Leroy Fry's heart out was a poet?"

[Poe] "Well... The heart is a symbol or it is nothing. Now take away the symbol and what do you have? It's a fistful of muscle of no more aesthetic interest than a bladder. Now, to remove a man's heart is to traffic in symbol. And who better equipped for such labor than a poet?"

[Landor] “Awfully literal-minded poet, it would seem...”

[Poe] “Oh, you cannot pretend that this act of savagery did not startle the literary resonances from the very crevices of your mind. Lord Suckling’s charming song, “I prithee send me back my heart Since I cannot have thine” Or... Or the Bible even, “Create in me a clean heart, O God. A broken and a contrite heart thou wilt not despise.”

[Landor] “Then we might just as easily be seeking a religious maniac”. (Cooper, 2022)

The conversation between Poe and Landor constructs the role of Poe and Landor. Landor personifies empirical logic, his stout serious physical appearance represents deductive reasoning, while Poe resonates as Gothic interpreter, his literary wordiness permeates the investigation with macabre poetry. These contrasting characters visually represent the two spheres of the investigation process: one, the logical and rational, and the other, the Gothic. This adaptation choice made by Cooper, depicts Stam’s concept of adaptation as dialogic (Stam, 2005, pp. 1–52). The film negotiates with the novel by developing a new cinematic language for a mystery and detective work, deeply rooted in character interaction and the visual contrast used in the film. Thus, the mystery and detective narrative becomes performative, presented through dialogues, gesture and mis-en-scene rather than internal monologues.

### **3. Performance Styles**

The reciprocity between Christian Bale and Harry Melling’s acting lies at the core of the *The Pale Blue Eye* of detective tradition and conventions. Bale’s temperate physical presence depicts Landor’s detachment from the world, his body language is marked by self-control and preciseness. In contrast, Melling performs in an exaggerated manner with vocal cadence, depicting Poe’s vibrant sensibility. This demarcation between Landor and Poe is not incidental but intentional and intellectual, as it represents two modes of knowledge. Landor’s logic is based on deductive reasoning and keen observation, while Poe’s gothic sensibility is visible through imagination and intuition. This contrast depicts the double lineage of mystery and detective fiction. Poe’s own *Dubin* stories acknowledges the detective as both logical and rational analyst with imaginative power, a person who solves mysteries by the combination of logical insight with creative and imaginative power.

### **4. The Dialogic Nature of Adaptation**

By personifying Landor’s internal monologue into dialogue with Poe, Cooper’s film depicts Stam’s concept of adaptation as dialogic (Stam, 2005, pp. 1–52). *The Pale Blue Eye* not only transforms Bayard’s novel into cinematic language, but also engages in conversation with it, by modifying its detective traditions and convention according to the medium. Linda Hutcheon puts emphasis that adaptation establishes a “knowing and engaged audience” who identifies the tradition and convention of both literature and film (Hutcheon, 2006, p. 123). In *The Pale Blue Eye*, the audience is invited to praise the transformation of deductive reasoning from internal monologue to collaborative performance.

## **Part II: Reconstructing Poe as a Gothic Authorial Figure**

Cooper’s adaptation not merely portrays Poe as a plebe at West Point, but also reconstructs him as an archetype, a spectral figure whose identity is possessed by his future literary output. This process is aligned with Michael Foucault’s concept of “author function,” whereby the author cannot be considered as a sturdy historical subject rather author is a digressive product produced by the text itself (Foucault, 1977, pp. 113–138).

### **1. Poe as an Author of Darkness**

Louis Bayard’s novel exemplifies Poe’s future authorship through his personality. In a conversation in the novel Poe shares his thoughts with Landor: “I have a sympathy for the night,



Mr. Landor. Its mysteries are my true domain. The day is for facts, but the night is for truth” (Bayard, 2006, p.67). The example characterizes Poe as someone who is keen of darkness, suggesting his literary engrossment with death, melancholy, and the supernatural. Thus, the novel locates Poe’s authorship within his persona and personality traits, proposing that his future as author would be emerged from his aesthetic style. Cooper’s film raises this trait into a fundamental authorial principle. In one of the film’s scenes Poe delivers the line: “I do consider death to be poetry’s most exalted theme”, with his face half-illuminated and half-covered with shadow (Cooper, 2022). This line functions as an artistic dictum, showing Poe’s fascination with death, portrayed Poe’s Gothic authorship. The mis-en-scene is pivotal here because the lighting visual demonstrate Poe’ duality, portraying his character as an investigator who negotiates between light and dark. His persona is not defined by biography rather by the role he portrays in the text – the gothic author whose obligation is eloquent with death and darkness.

## **2. Authorial Haunting**

Louis Bayard’s novel exemplifies intertextual suggestion to connect Poe’s present emotions to his future work. Poe murmurs, “Nevermore...it has certain finality, does it not?” (Bayard, 2006, p. 201). This line demonstrates an inclination towards Poe’s poem, *The Raven* (1845) invites the reader to identify the intertextual connection. This intertextual connection relies on the reader’s prior knowledge of Poe’s literary canon. Cooper’s film transfers this intertextual connection into a moment of haunting. Poe’s word “nevermore”, depicts a spectral interference, a phantom from Poe’s future haunting the narrative present. Poe is plagued by his own future authorship, his identity fabricated as a spectral figure of cultural memory. Poe in Cooper’s film is presented as a spectre, as his utterance of “nevermore” is an intentional reference, where his future literary authorship resides.

## **Part III: Mise-en-scene and Cinematic Authorship**

In Cooper’s film, lighting, sound and building design are not just an aesthetic choice but are hypothetical in nature.

### **1. Lighting as a Character’s Insight**

Bayard’s narrative simultaneously explains Poe in terms of Poe’s himself association with death and darkness: “I have a sympathy for the night...The day is for facts, but the night is for truth” (Bayard, 2006, p. 67). The narration places Poe’s identity within metaphor, interconnecting his sensibility to the Gothic tradition of darkness and shadow. Cooper’s film transforms this metaphor into a continuous visual strategy. Poe is continuously framed in light-dark contrast, his countenance partially blurred by shadow, even in well-lit rooms. This cinematic technique embodies his divided self: the plebe restricted and bound by military discipline against the emerging poet of the macabre. In *The Pale Blue Eye*, the lighting becomes a visual metaphor for Poe’s gothic sensibility, proposing that his authorship is deeply rooted to a psyche contend with darkness. Poe’s genius is constructed in shadow, and his authorship produced through the mise-en-scene.

### **2. Sound s Gothic Authorship**

Louis Bayard’s narrative depends on metaphor to stimulate sound. Landor explains the wind as “slicing down from the hills with a blade’s intent” (Bayard, 2006, p. 12), symbolizing a hostile atmosphere. Cooper’s film reconstructs this metaphor through mournful sound. The wind is intensified; its melancholic howl remains a constant presence. The scratching of barren trees, the woeful chords of Howard Shore’s score, and the unexpected silences portrayed key moments, all donate to a soundscape of terror and dread. In this respect, sound design here operates as what Peter Hutchings (2004, p.112) exclaims a “gothic space”: an atmosphere that diligently

undermines and threatening. The sounds are integral to the film's construction of Gothic affect. As Poe utters the word "nevermore," the sound collapses into silence. This strategy elevates the literary allusion into an innate haunting, casting Poe as a spectral authorial figure.

### **3. Spatial Design and Architecture: Order versus Chaos**

Louis Bayard's novel demonstrates West Points as a Gothic landscape, depicting it as "a colder, more solitary spot" (Bayard, 2006, p. 12). Cooper's film transforms this explanation into spatial design, diverging the unbending architecture of the academy with the unruly and chaotic woods, where religious rituals are performed. The symmetry of the cadet barracks, lack of warmth, imply military order. The Marquis' drawing room, where Landor reveals the conspiracy, is classically lit by the candle light and diligently decorated, representing the intellectual aesthetic, "Your family. Your family... have been quite a puzzle. I could never get a fix of who was in command. One time or other I suspected each of you. It never occurred to me that it might be someone who wasn't even alive. Father Henri Le Clerc. Finest of witch hunters, until he became the hunted... Your daughter, she suffers from a falling sickness, does she not? She copes because she is in contact with someone. Someone who instructs her. Him" (Cooper, 2022). This dialogue, unique to Cooper's adaptation, dramatizes the Gothic tension between order and chaos: the orderly, candlelit drawing room becomes the site where hidden disorder, occult practices, illness, and spectral influence, is unveiled.

By difference, the woods are depicted as shadow driven, unruly and submerged with menace, depicting gothic terror of the whole atmosphere. This spatial difference retains the gothic pressure between civilization and wilderness, chaos and order. Moreover, this spatial contrast validates the film's hypothesis: Poe's authorship is built by depicting gothic experience, produced through the interconnection of order and chaos.

### **4. Mise-en-scene as Thematic Argument**

The films's mise-en-scene concerns not merely an aesthetic but as thematic hypothesis. Spatial design, sound, lighting effects collectively produce Poe's persona as a Gothic authorial figure. The interplay of dark and light manifest his insight; the sound indulges the audience into Gothic affect, and the spatial design exemplifies his authorship trapped between order and chaos. This cinematic strategy is interlinked with Barthes declaration of the "death of the author" (Barthes, 1977, p. 142). Poe's authorship is not depicted as impetus genius, but as a product of cultural memory and narrative power. The mise-en-scene produces his identity, transforming him into a spectral figure, whose authorship is constructed through cinematic strategies.

### **Conclusion**

Scott Cooper's *The Pale Blue Eye* (2022) is a Gothic adaptation that re-authors Edgar Allan Poe. Throughout its creation of gothic atmosphere, its reconstruction of detective tradition and conventions, and its reconstruction of Poe as a spectral authorial figure, the film portrays the way the adaptation can function as an act of cultural memory. By putting together Bayard's novel, Cooper's mise-en-scene, and theoretical frameworks from Hutcheon, Stam, Foucault, and Barthes, the film *The Pale Blue Eye* positions Poe not as a historical plebe but as a spectral figure, whose identity is produced through the carefully selected cinematic strategies.

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