

# *Analysis Of Mythological Urbanonyms In Edgar Allan Poe And Thomas Hardy's Poems*

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**Abstract** – This article represents two great writers' poems which describe the mythological cities. Writers' talent of choosing appropriate lexis, comparison and contrast of two poems, their analysis and summary are also analysed in this article.

**Keywords** – Poetry, Describe, Mythical Place, Narrative, Comparison And Contrast.

In Britain, nineteenth-century poetry began with Romanticism and ended in Decadence, with the high Victorian poetry of Tennyson, Browning, and Christina Rossetti coming in the middle. In the United States, meanwhile, Longfellow, Edgar Allan Poe, Whitman, and Emily Dickinson helped to shape the course of nineteenth-century American poetry. Below, we introduce two of the greatest and most representative poems of the nineteenth century written in English, whether in Britain or America.

English literature is much older than the American Literature. American literature is often known as a much more realistic in portraying characters while English literature is known for its wit and portrayal of the theme in plots and characterization. English Literature and American literature are two different notions although American literature was once part of the English literature.

Edgar Allan Poe was born in 1809, in Boston, Massachusetts, US. He was an American writer, poet, editor and literary critic. Poe is best known for his poetry and short stories and is widely regarded as a central figure Romanticism in the United States and of American literature as a whole.

Thomas Hardy was born in England on June 2, 1840. When he was 22, Hardy left for London where he was influenced by the works of Charles Swinburne, Robert Browning, and Charles Darwin. Hardy tried his hand at writing when he was 17. Many of Hardy's poems recall some event in his life, often, it specifically refers to his relationships.

Eldorado by Edgar Allan Poe

'Eldorado' is considered to be one of Edgar Allan Poe's final and best poems. It was published in 1849 in *Flag of Our Union* in Boston, around the time of the gold rush. Poe died six months after he wrote the piece. Since it was written, 'Eldorado' has been

set to music by several composers and even used in the lyrics of popular songs. "Eldorado" is a short narrative poem about a knight who goes on a quest to find the fabled land of Eldorado, a golden paradise.

'Eldorado' references El Dorado, that fabled land in the Americas, which Spanish travelers believed lay in the western part of the New World. Numerous explorers and travelers from Europe – including the English sailor and tobacco enthusiast, Sir Walter Raleigh – went in search of El Dorado, the 'golden land', but they never found it. It didn't exist.

The poem begins with the speaker stating that there was a knight who had spent his whole life journeying through "sunshine and shadow." He was seeking out the lost paradise city of Eldorado, rumored to contain endless amounts of gold. Although he searched for years and years, the knight never found the city.

In the middle of the poem, the speaker describes how the knight's strength was starting to fail him. He was becoming quite old and was about to die. This is when he encounters a shade along the road. This person, or perhaps a ghost of the afterlife, told him that one can only reach Eldorado through death. It requires walking in lands such as the "valley of the shadow of death" from the Bible. [1, p.121]

One of the best known and most graceful Thomas Hardy's poems "When I set out for Lyonesse", recalls his first visit as a young architect to the St.Juliot Rectory and Church in an isolated part of Cornwall. As a young apprentice architect, Thomas Hardy once visited a parish to supervise the restoration of a church. On his return from the parish, people noticed two things about him — a new glow in his eyes and a crumpled piece of paper sticking out of his coat pocket. That paper, it is recorded in one of his biographies, contained the draft of a poem 'When I set out for Lyonesse'. This poem was inspired by a visit to a place which the poet calls Lyonesse. Lyonesse is a mythical place referred to in the legend of King Arthur. The poet's choice to use this setting refers to an actual place that imparts an air of magic and mysticism.

Lyonesse is an English alteration of French *Léoneis* or *Léonois*, a development of *Lodonesia*, the Latin name for Lothian in Scotland. In English adaptations of the French tales, Léonois, now "Lyonesse", becomes a kingdom wholly distinct from Lothian, and closely associated with the Cornish region, though its exact geographical location remained unspecified. The name was not attached to Cornish legends of lost coastal lands until the reign of Elizabeth I of England. However, the legendary lost land between Land's End and Scilly has a distinct Cornish name: *Lethowsow*. This derives from the Cornish name for the Seven Stones Reef, on the reputed site of the lost land's capital and the site of the notorious wreck of the Torrey Canyon. The name means 'the milky ones', from the constant white water surrounding the reef. [7, p.145]

Poe engages with some interesting themes in 'Eldorado'. These include dreams, journeys, and death. The latter is something that even the knight, in all his bravery and determination is unable to avoid. His journey is one that stretched on for far longer than he would've liked, but still, he sought Eldorado and the wealth that he'd find there. His dreams were unattainable, something that many people, including the poet, would likely be able to relate to. [3, p.164]

In the poem "When I set out for Lyonesse" the poet talks about the journey to the place and the uncertainty of what would happen there. The theme of the poem is hope, perseverance and patience. He states that no prophet would be able to say what he would see there or what his journey is all about. However, on his return to his land, people noticed a change in him.

The beginning of the poems close to each other, however, 'Eldorado' by Edgar Allan Poe is a four stanza poem that is separated into sets of six lines or sextets whereas Hardy's "Lyonnesse" consists of three stanzas. Both of the heroes make a long journey where they encounter dark and bright, cold and sunny days hoping to find a better place.

Gaily bedight,  
A gallant knight,  
In sunshine and in shadow,  
Had journeyed long,  
Singing a song,  
In search of Eldorado.

In these lines of 'Eldorado,' the speaker introduces a "gallant knight." The knight is said to be "Gaily bedight." This strange word is not in everyday use and refers simply to "being dressed." He is dressed gaily or in colorful clothing. He is also stereotypically knightly in his bravery.

The man is going on a trip through "sunshine and shadow," through dark places and bright, cheerful places. Already, he has been journeying for a long time. But, he is still in high spirits. He is looking for the lost city of Eldorado.

Eldorado is commonly thought to have been a city located in South America. Explorers have been seeking it out for over 500 years to no avail. The main allure of the place was that it was meant to be entirely made of or containing vast riches of gold. There are also some legends that speak of the city as a social paradise.

With this information, it is easy to see why the knight has been traveling for a long time. It is likely that he will be traveling for a lot longer and will never get where he is going.

*When I set out for Lyonnesse  
A hundred miles away,  
The rime was on the spray;  
And starlight lit my lonesomeness  
When I set out for Lyonnesse  
A hundred miles away.*

In these lines we see that the poet set out for Lyonnesse which was situated a hundred miles away. It was winter and the weather was cold. The shine in the night sky helped him when he was lonely. He had no idea what would happen during his stay at Lyonnesse. Though Lyonnesse is a mythological lost land, beginning with these lines, the poem appears to take the reader on a trip.

The reader learns that the trip will cover about 100 miles by train. Initially, the poetic speaker was lonely, probably dreading his time away from home and his comforts. On the other hand, no fortune teller or magician could have foretold what would happen while he was there. The speaker can hardly believe what occurred himself.

In the following lines, the poets describe the procedure of their journey, events and situation the heroes confront. While travelling uncertainty covers heroes that they doubt whether they found a land of their dream. They have no idea what will happen during their stay at these places.

But he grew old—

This knight so bold—  
And o'er his heart a shadow—  
Fell as he found  
No spot of ground  
That looked like Eldorado.

This seems to be coming true as in the second stanza; the speaker starts that the knight "grew old." His journey did not come to an end as he had hoped. Instead, he is still traveling and now is near death.

Darkness, which is a constant image in this text, falls over the knight's heart. It blocks out any light and hope that might've remained there. It is caused entirely by the fact that there is "No spot of ground / That looked like Eldorado."

*What would bechance at Lyonnesse  
While I should sojourn there,  
No prophet durst declare;  
Nor did the wisest wizard guess  
What would bechance at Lyonnesse  
While I should sojourn there.*

The poet expresses his unsurity about what would happen at Lyonnesse. He says that he doesn't know what awaits him at Lyonnesse. The poet says that even a prophet or a 'wisest wizard' would fail to predict the experience accurately and vividly. Never telling what did transpire, the reader is fully aware that this was a grand event in the poetic speaker's life. However, he does not explain himself. In order to oversee the whole process, the poet stays at the Parish for a little while. The poet is not aware at all that he is going to have a life-changing experience at the Parish. However, during that short period of time, he notices some changes happening. These are inner changes which he is not expecting at all. The poet is not prepared for all this. He feels that he cannot guess even for the slightest minute that he will be experiencing all this.

In the next lines, we can see both comparison and contrast between the poems. The heroes reach the threshold of the end of their journey and something changes. However, one of them is desperately sad for failing to find a land in his dream whereas the other is satisfied from his journey.

And, as his strength  
Failed him at length,  
He met a pilgrim shadow—  
'Shadow,' said he,  
'Where can it be—  
This land of Eldorado?'  
'Over the Mountains  
Of the Moon,  
Down the Valley of the Shadow,  
Ride, boldly ride,'  
The shade replied,—

'If you seek for Eldorado!

The knight's strength, which has taken him so far is on the verge of failing him. But then, something changes. He meets a "pilgrim shadow."

There are no details about who this person is or where they are making their pilgrimage. The poem's tone is so haunting that it is very likely this person is not alive. Perhaps, they are a ghost the knight has encounter on his new journey, into the afterlife.

The knight does not address the mysterious nature of this person and instead asks him his most pressing question, "Where can it be— / This land of Eldorado?"

The reply the "shade" gives him is less than helpful, but it does allude to the knight's current state of being. It also speaks to the larger theme of the poem, the futility of pursuing one's dreams. At first, the directions seem like they might lead somewhere. The being tells him that he has to go "Over the Mountains," But then, it takes another turn. The mountains are on the moon. He must then ride "Down the Valley of the Shadow." In regards to the mountains, they, too, are connected to something outside the poem's immediate purview. The place, "Mountains of the Moon" was thought to be the source of the Nile River. The "moon" aspect came from their snow-covered peaks.

From these lines, a reader can interpret the knight's search to be one that is entirely futile. Eldorado is a place one can only reach through death or one that will bring death down upon the explorer.

*When I returned from Lyonesse  
With magic in my eyes,  
All marked with mute surmise  
My radiance rare and fathomless,  
When I returned from Lyonesse  
With magic in my eyes.*

The poet describes what happened on his return. On his return from the parish, people noticed two things about him- a new glow in his eyes and a crumpled piece of paper sticking out of his coat pocket. He also had the radiance which is rare and fathomless. Some places welcome us with a 'mute surmise'. Visit to such places are really rewarding and illuminating! In the poem 'When I set out for Lyonesse' the poet narrates using the repetition of the word Lyonesse several times. This is called anaphora. He wrote his poem with three stanzas which represent the **before** the trip, **during** the time there, and the **journey home**. Lyonesse is mentioned twice in every stanza. This promotes the idea of the time he spent on this trip was more than real, possibly heavenly. Whereas in "Eldorado" Edgar Allan Poe uses the metaphor of a knight seeking the lost city to speak on the futility of dreams and lifelong pursuits.

In summary, 'Eldorado' is a short narrative poem about a knight who goes on a quest to find the fabled land of Eldorado, a golden paradise. The knight grows old without ever having found Eldorado. The poem is a moral warning to those seeking earthly gain through gold (which is what the land of Eldorado represents). The only reward is heavenly rather than earthly, and will be gained through death. It is significant, in this connection, that the shade which speaks with the knight is described as a 'pilgrim shadow' (emphasis added): it suggests a religious quester rather than one who goes in quest of gold. The fact that it is a

‘shade’ suggests a ghost, someone who has passed over to the spiritual world, and who comes back to communicate – or possibly to warn – the knight that he should pursue spiritual rewards rather than monetary ones.

In the poem ‘When I set out for Lyonesse’ the poet Thomas Hardy tries to put us in awesome wonder by writing with ease on a simple theme – a journey to Lyonesse which is the mythical birthplace of Sir Tristram, in England. It is believed to have been submerged by the sea. In the poem it is used as an imaginary place. The poem is suggestive of the spiritual benefit of visiting some places. We see how the poet goes through a major change in his life when he was least expecting it. Thus, it is true that miracles do happen. Moreover, no one can predict their happening. After his journey to Lyonesse, his eyes were bright with happiness. It was his experience which no one can measure it was revelation of life, his happiness was silent to everyone. All could understand that he was filled with a rare and immeasurable radiance. The poem is a very insightful piece of work that tells us how things happen to us when we least expect them and that no matter what we plan, there is another plan for us by God which no one can predict. The poem is also an autobiographical allegory where the poet was in search of his love that resulted into fulfillment. The mythical Lyonesse thus becomes here a land of joyfulness and contentment.

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