CHAPTER 2
THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

In this research, I use a number of theories and concepts in my study that are directly related to the main subject, which is the transformation of a traditional poetry into a contemporary concept album. Linda Hutcheon's Theory of Adaptation (2006) serves as the main theoretical framework for this investigation and offers a critical perspective on how "*Annabel Lee* (1843)" was transformed into Alesana's *The Emptiness*. In this sense, adaptation is seen as an act of creative reinterpretation and repetition across many mediums rather than as a question of faithfulness. These ideas facilitate a more thorough comprehension of how the new medium (post-hardcore music) creates a drastically altered emotional and psychological story and how the original lyrical meaning is renegotiated.

2.1 Theory of Adaptation (Linda Hutcheon, 2006)

Adaptation Adaptation is one of the most prominent phenomena in contemporary culture, as stories are continually reimagined across different media. Linda Hutcheon insists that "neither the product nor the process of adaptation exists in a vacuum; they all have a context, a time and a place, a society and a culture" (2006, p. 3). In her influential book *A Theory of Adaptation*, she defines adaptation not as a secondary copy, but as "repetition without replication," a creative act that repeats recognizable elements of a prior work while simultaneously changing them. This perspective allows the present study to focus on how and why Poe's *Annabel Lee* (1849) is transformed in Alesana's *The Emptiness* (2010), rather than judging the album by a narrow standard of fidelity.

For Hutcheon, an adaptation is a "double-coded" work: it carries the memory of its source while also functioning as an independent text. *The Emptiness*, therefore, both recalls Poe's elegiac love poem and exists as a self-standing Gothic concept album. The shift from a static, verbal poem to an auditory and performative medium fundamentally alters the mode of storytelling: the single, reflective narrative voice in Annabel Lee is broken into multiple tracks, voices, and spoken interludes, allowing the protagonist's psychological descent to be experienced through sound, intensity, and musical pacing. In this way, the album does not merely accompany Poe's text, but offers a new emotional and narrative reality that comments on and expands the original.

Hutcheon proposes a tripartite framework in which adaptation can be approached as product, process, and reception. As a product, *The Emptiness* is a new Gothic narrative that introduces structural elements absent from the poem, such as additional characters (the Artist, the Detective, the Murderer) and an extended plot arc, while openly acknowledging Poe as its hypotext. As a process, adaptation refers to Alesana's creative and interpretive choices: they deliberately intensify Poe's melancholic grief into post-hardcore performance, foregrounding psychological collapse, obsession, and moral inversion that are only implicit in the poem. As reception, adaptation highlights the audience's experience, which changes drastically when themes of love and loss are encountered through a time-bound, sonically aggressive concept album rather than through solitary reading; tempo, vocal delivery, and sonic dissonance make the narrator's suffering more immediate and visceral.

This tripartite framework guides the present comparative analysis of Annabel Lee and *The Emptiness*. The focus lies on how narrative structure, characterization, setting, and thematic emphasis are transformed in the adaptive process, and how these transformations produce a darker, psychologically oriented vision of love and grief. In this sense, adaptation is understood as a practice of transformation, creativity, and reinterpretation. Alesana's rewriting, adding characters, altering events, and reframing the emotional core of the story, constitutes a full adaptation in Hutcheon's sense, rather than a simple musical setting of an unchanged poem. Also, To arrange a thorough comparative study, Hutcheon's framework necessitates analyzing adaptation through these three core components:

a. Adaptation as Product: This is the actual creative product that is produced, in this example the album *The Emptiness*. The structural alterations that were not specifically mentioned in the poem, such the addition of new characters and story aspects (such as the detective or the murderer), are the main focus of the analysis. Using Poe's work as its acknowledged hypotext, the record as a product transforms into a new Gothic story (source).
b. Adaptation as a Process: This is a reference to the adaptors' (the band Alesana's) creative and interpretative performance. This study looks at the decisions made during this process, particularly the option to adapt Poe's depressing sadness into the post-hardcore genre's intense performance. The procedure is a purposeful

rereading of the original, highlighting the possibility of psychological collapse that was merely alluded to.

c. Adaptation as Reception (The Experience): This focuses on the audience's experience of the adapted work, which is significantly impacted by the change of medium and modality. Reading a poem is essentially not the same as listening to a concept album, which uses time, tempo, voice intensity, and sound effects. One of the main components of the adaptation's impact is the more immediate and visceral impression of the narrator's psychological suffering made possible by this difference

Through this tripartite framework, the present study examines the structural and thematic choices involved in transforming Annabel Lee into a contemporary auditory narrative, moving beyond simple surface parallels between poem and album. Adaptation is thus understood as a context-bound practice of reinterpretation, where meaning is renegotiated rather than merely transferred. Several key statements from Hutcheon clarify the theoretical starting point of this research. She stresses that "neither the product nor the process of adaptation exists in a vacuum; they all have a context, a time and a place, a society and a culture" (2006, p. 3), and challenges the idea that adaptations are necessarily secondary or inferior: "to be second is not to be secondary or inferior; likewise, to be first is not to be originary or authoritative" (2006, p. 9).

She also defines adaptation as "an announced and extensive transposition of a particular work or works," which may involve a shift of medium or genre, or a change of frame and perspective, while insisting that "proximity or fidelity to the adapted text should not be the criterion of judgment or the focus of analysis" (2006, p. 7). Finally, Hutcheon describes the appeal of adaptation as lying in "repetition with variation… the comfort of ritual combined with the piquancy of surprise" (2006, p. 4), and famously condenses this idea as "adaptation: repetition without replication" (2006, p. 176). On this basis, the study employs Hutcheon's concepts of adaptation as product, process, and reception to investigate how the intrinsic narrative and structural elements of Poe's poem are reconfigured in Alesana's lyrics, and how these reconfigurations generate a darker, psychologically oriented version of the original love story.

2.2 Previous Related Studies

This study references various previous works in adaptation studies and Gothic literary analysis. Reviewing these sources helps us properly situate our research within the academic conversation, showing how it both builds upon existing knowledge and offers its own unique contribution to the comparative study of poetry and music. The first relevant study is by Syukrina Rahmawati and Isnaini Yulianita Hafi (2020), whose work, *Transformasi Musikalisasi Puisi: Kajian Atas Tiga Puisi* (The Transformation of Poetry Musicalization: A Study of Three Poems), investigated how classic Indonesian poems are translated into songs. Their research, which utilized concepts of transmutation and intertextual relationships, concluded that the act of musicalization drastically alters the poem's atmosphere and 'soul' to align with the chosen song format and the target audience's context. This finding holds significant relevance for the current study, as it directly validates Linda Hutcheon's core argument that adaptation, particularly through a transmedial shift, inevitably results in a fundamental alteration of the source text.

The second study by Marcus Green (2018), titled *The Voice of the Dead: Gothic Poetry and Post-Hardcore Adaptations*, This study is key because it investigates the conscious decision by modern bands, like Alesana, to take Gothic themes from Poe and other 19th-century writers and transform them into lyrics focusing on madness and psychological instability. Green argues that this practice is a deliberate stylistic choice within the post-hardcore genre to resonate with modern listeners' anxieties. Therefore, his findings directly support our analysis of the genre-driven thematic changes in *The Emptiness*. And the third relevant study is a contemporary journal article by Clara Benson (2022) titled *Fragmented Narratives and Psychological Unrest: A Study of Concept Albums in the Post-Millennial Era.* Benson Investigates how modern concept albums within aggressive musical genres (like a *post-hardcore* music genre) effectively utilize a fragmented narrative structure, through the strange-disjointed songs, a shifts in perpectives, and spoken interludes, to reflect and convey states of psychological distress, Benson argues thatn the technique of fragmentation functions like 'aural analogue' for the narrator's unstable and deranged mind.

2.3 Analyzing Music Lyrics in a Literature and Adapted Context

Music lyrics as adaptation song lyrics, like poetry and drama, can be read as literary texts, but not all uses of poetry in music are equally complex. Simple poetry

musicalization often sets an existing poem to music with minimal change, treating the poem mainly as material for performance rather than as a narrative to be reimagined. Meanwhile, this study focuses on cases in which lyrics function as full adaptations, transforming the source text's narrative and thematic structure instead of merely "illustrating" it in sound. Linda Hutcheon's theory of adaptation is central to this approach. She defines adaptation as "repetition without replication," emphasizing that although certain motifs or themes may recur, their meanings shift according to the new medium, context, and creative intentions. In this sense, an album like Alesana's *The Emptiness* is not treated as a straightforward musicalization of Poe's Annabel Lee, but as an adaptive rewriting that reconfigures the poem's elegiac love story into a darker, psychologically driven gothic narrative.

In this study, the lyric texts are taken from official album releases to ensure accuracy and consistency with the intended narrative. These primary materials are supported by secondary sources, such as artist interviews, scholarly discussions of Poe and Gothic adaptation, and criticism on concept albums, in order to provide a broader interpretive framework. The lyrics are examined for thematic concerns, imagery, and narrative strategies, with particular attention to how romantic grief in Annabel Lee is intensified and distorted into obsession, guilt, and madness in *The Emptiness*.

When song lyrics adapt a prior text, the analysis concentrates on changes in narrative structure, characterization, thematic emphasis, and symbolic imagery rather than on musical arrangement alone. Hutcheon's tripartite model of adaptation as product, process, and reception guides this reading: as a product, the concept album constitutes a new and independent work that expands or alters Poe's material; as a process, adaptation involves deliberate creative decisions to reshape plot, character, and setting in ways that exploit the expressive possibilities of post-hardcore music; and as reception, the adapted lyrics invite contemporary listeners, many of whom may not know the original poem, in order to experience familiar themes of love and loss through the lens of psychological horror.

Hutcheon's (2006) framework conceiving adaptation as product, process, and reception guides interpretation:

A. As a *product*, the lyric becomes a new, independent artistic work, often expanding or altering the source material.

B. As a *process*, adaptation involves creative choices reimagining character, plot, or setting to suit the expressive tools of music.

C. As *reception*, lyrics invite audiences to experience familiar themes in radically new ways, emotionally and interpretively.

Hutcheon contends, “Neither the product nor the process of adaptation exists in a vacuum: they all have a context, a time and a place, a society and a culture” (Hutcheon, 2006:3).