standing but about to collapse’ which links directly to analysis that Poe was
writing to highlight that reason could not provide a stable, unified identity.
Thus far, this essay has sought to discuss the theme of double/duality in Poe’s
*The Fall of the House of Usher*, with particular emphasis on the psychological and
religious elements. However, what has been demonstrated is that although both
psychological and religious conceptions of duality are identifiable in the text,
they are unlikely conscious and more likely a product of Poe’s context, namely,
the Enlightenment period. Given this context and use of duality, it has been
argued that it is more likely Poe was interested in portraying the unsuccessful
nature of reason in regards to human identity.

Given that Poe uses duality to display the inadequacy of reason it is unsurprising
that the mental state of the narrator deteriorates throughout the story. To
elaborate, throughout the text the narrator is depicted as a rational, reasonable
character that Roderick calls on to most likely provide some advice and guidance
to his own current mental state. When character Roderick is ‘listening to some
imaginary sound’ with ‘mad hilarity in his eyes’, the narrator is presented as
rational, the one who leads him away from this disillusion ‘with a gentle
violence’33. However, the narrator, to whom the reader identifies, appears
increasingly unstable, such as when he notes that the twins’ illness had begun to
‘infect’ him and he becomes overwhelmed with ‘a thousand conflicting
sensations, in which wonder and extreme terror were predominant’34. As Carr
notes, the narrator begins to recognise the greatest threat to order, the uncanny.
Each time the narrator becomes aware of the uncanny, it is demonstrated by ‘a
moment at which the narrator surrenders to a panicky distrust of reason,
returning to rationality only as a refuge from the grotesqueness of the ‘facts’35.
Walker also comments that;

‘On the night of the catastrophe the narrator experiences the same depression
and terror which had oppressed Roderick throughout the tale, and it becomes

33 Edgar Allan Poe, “The Fall of the House of Usher”.
34 Edgar Allan Poe, “The Fall of the House of Usher”.
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