



Pedagogická
fakulta
Faculty
of Education

Jihočeská univerzita
v Českých Budějovicích
University of South Bohemia
in České Budějovice

Jihočeská univerzita v Českých Budějovicích
Pedagogická fakulta
Katedra anglistiky

Bakalářská práce

American Gothic Elements in the Works of Edgar Allan Poe

Prvky amerického gotického románu
v díle E. A. Poea

Vypracovala: Radka Matoušková, 3. ročník, Aju-Přu
Vedoucí práce: PhDr. Alice Sukdolová, Ph.D.
České Budějovice 2020

Prohlašuji, že svoji bakalářskou práci jsem vypracovala samostatně pouze s použitím pramenů a literatury uvedených v seznamu citované literatury.

Prohlašuji, že v souladu s § 47b zákona č. 111/1998 Sb. v platném znění souhlasím se zveřejněním své bakalářské práce, a to v nezkrácené podobě elektronickou cestou ve veřejně přístupné části databáze STAG provozované Jihočeskou univerzitou v Českých Budějovicích na jejích internetových stránkách, a to se zachováním mého autorského práva k odevzdanému textu této kvalifikační práce. Souhlasím dále s tím, aby toutéž elektronickou cestou byly v souladu s uvedeným ustanovením zákona č. 111/1998 Sb. zveřejněny posudky školitele a oponentů práce i záznam o průběhu a výsledku obhajoby kvalifikační práce. Rovněž souhlasím s porovnáním textu mé kvalifikační práce s databází kvalifikačních prací Theses.cz provozovanou Národním registrem vysokoškolských kvalifikačních prací a systémem na odhalování plagiátů.

Datum

Podpis studenta

Tímto bych ráda poděkovala vedoucí mé bakalářské práce PhDr. Alici Sukdolové, Ph.D. za všestrannou pomoc, množství cenných a inspirativních rad, podnětů, doporučení, připomínek a zároveň za obdivuhodnou ochotou při konzultacích poskytnutých ke zpracování této práce.

ANOTACE

Hlavním předmětem zkoumání bakalářské práce bude literárněvědná analýza povídkové tvorby předního představitele amerického gotického a hororového žánru E. A. Poea. Práce nejprve představí autora v kontextu americké literatury poloviny 19. století a dále se soustředí na motivy charakteristické pro žánr amerického gotického románu a povídky (temnota, šílenství, zločin a pomsta, utrpení a zármutek, zoufalství) ve vybraných dílech E. A. Poea (*The Fall of the House of Usher*, *The Tell-Tale Heart*, *The Cask of Amontillado*, *The Pit and the Pendulum*). V závěru práce porovná gotické hororové motivy v autorových povídkách s motivy, tématy a poetikou Poeovy básně *Havran* (*The Raven*). Cílem práce je konfrontace povídkové tvorby autora z hlediska motivického rozboru a vytyčení společných motivů a témat ve srovnání s Poeovou básnickou tvorbou.

ABSTRACT

The key subject of the research of this bachelor thesis is a literary analysis of the short stories written by one of the major American Gothic and horror genre representatives E. A. Poe. The first chapter will focus on the author in the context of American literature of the 1840s and then on particular motives that are specific for the genre of the American Gothic novels and tales (darkness, madness, crime and revenge, suffering and grief, despair) in some of E. A. Poe's works (*The Fall of the House of Usher*, *The Tell-Tale Heart*, *The Cask of Amontillado*, *The Pit and the Pendulum*). Final chapters will be comparing Gothic horror motives in the author's tales with the motives, themes and poetics of Poe's poem *The Raven*. The aim of this work is a confrontation of the author's short stories, their motifs and main themes in comparison to Poe's poetry.

Obsah

INTRODUCTION	1
THE GOTHIC AS AN ASPECT OF AMERICAN ROMANTICISM.....	2
The origin of American Gothic.....	2
Differences between American and British Gothic Fiction	4
Features of American Gothic / Dark Romanticism.....	5
THE GOTHIC TRADITION IN EUROPEAN COUNTRIES.....	6
British Gothic.....	6
French Gothic	7
German Gothic	7
EDGAR ALLAN POE – THE KEY REPRESENTATIVE OF AMERICAN GOTHIC.....	8
E. Allan Poe’s biography	8
Features and motifs in Poe’s works	10
The self-conscious technique	14
LITERARY ANALYSIS OF EDGAR ALLAN POE’S WORKS.....	16
The Tell-Tale Heart	16
Plot.....	16
Analysis.....	17
The Pit and the Pendulum.....	19
Plot.....	19
Analysis.....	20
The Fall of the House of Usher	23
Plot.....	23
Analysis.....	24
The Cast of Amontillado.....	28
Plot.....	28
Analysis.....	29
The Raven	31
Epic content.....	31
Analysis.....	31
CONCLUSION	35
SOURCES.....	36

INTRODUCTION

The American writer Edgar Allan Poe belongs to the greatest representatives of the Gothic horror genre in American literature of the 19th century. His works, consisting of many poems and also short prose fiction, can be regarded timeless.

It is not only the timelessness of his works, which impressed me, but also the author's talent and ability to catch the reader's attention in the course of reading. Every word in every line has its purpose and, due to that uniqueness, the story easily draws into it. Melody and musicality, especially of the poems, help the reader to even feel as the main character does, i.e. the reader can identify with the romantic subject while reading. Nevertheless, the emotions and feeling are not exactly the positive ones. Poe is famous for his tone in his works. The atmosphere and the thoughts at all are mostly dark, melancholic and depressing. Madness, grief, misery, fear or death definitely belongs among the most characteristic features of Edgar Allan Poe's works. The author is not afraid of using the dark Gothic themes to let masterpieces see the light.

Last but not least, none of his poems or short stories is long enough to become boring so the reader can feel the tension from the beginning to the very end.

The aim of this thesis is to focus on Poe's life story in the first place. Concerning his life and the time period he lived in, I would like to, consequently, describe the American Gothic (its beginning and key elements or features of this literary tradition and style).

In the second part of the bachelor thesis I would like to focus on some of the most famous works of the author and particularly analyse their structure and contents. Moreover, based on the theoretical analysis and description of the American Gothic, I would like to find its significant features in those works and prove them to be the appropriate Gothic masterpieces.

THE GOTHIC AS AN ASPECT OF AMERICAN ROMANTICISM

The origin of American Gothic

In 1820, one of the British critics, Sidney Smith wrote: "Literature the Americans have none." These words insulted American pride and so it resulted in determination of American authors to prove British and other nations that American literature can be as valuable as any other. It probably initiated the flourishing of American Romanticism in the United States. ¹

Even though American literature during the 19th century did get in touch with British or German literature, it still managed to come up with literature which was based on its own cultural circumstances and background. As a result of this, two directions of literature were developed as a response to British Romanticism. ²

The first one, Transcendentalism, focused on the power of intuition, the feeling of overwhelming optimism and also the conviction that God is a founder of everything via the connection between Him and nature. The major representative of this movement is the so called "Founding Father" of Transcendentalism Ralph Waldo Emerson. ³

However, there were also Waldo Emerson's opponents who did not share the same opinion about the happy and optimistic future of mankind and the world at all. Those opponents were, for example, Nathaniel Hawthorne, Herman Melville and definitely Edgar Allan Poe, who will be discussed later on. ⁴

Based on their visions of the world and attitudes to the future of mankind, American Romanticism turned into a specific dimension of literature filled with darkness – American Gothic. Because of the strong relation with Romanticism and also the pessimistic background, it can be sometimes described as Dark Romanticism. To highlight, the term

¹ SMITH, Loyd. *American Gothic Fiction*. Bloomsbury Academic, 2004. p. 25-47.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.

“Gothic” has never been a specific term. Critics had been thinking how to “mark” this kind of novelty. At the end, they came up with the conclusion to mark it as a *genre*.⁵

Gothic and Romantic literature focus on the same features and issues concerning an emphasis on the human individuality, the human mind, feeling, emotions or imagination. Based on these characteristics, both of the literary traditions vary from neoclassical ideals of reason and logic. Moreover, Gothic and Romantic literatures are also closely related chronologically.⁶

Nevertheless, American Gothic represents the other side of Romanticism, the darker one.

As a proof of that, I would like to quote Leslie Fiedler, a famous American literary critic, who said: "*American fiction became 'bewilderingly and embarrassingly, a gothic fiction, non-realistic, sadist and melodramatic- a literature of darkness and the grotesque in a land of light and affirmation.'*"⁷

The reason why the literature looks this way is simple. America was considered an optimistic country, land of opportunity, that was established on principles of Enlightenment which included the ideals of freedom and liberty. Moreover, America supposedly rejected the burden of its past and also its irrational demands. That all was the cause, the reason, why American literature was different from the European one. The present is repeatedly being chased by the “never-sleeping” past and the whole literature as well. Then there is no doubt why the American literature is so excited and fascinated by the weird beauty of sorrow and darkness.⁸

It reveals the truth that hides in the shadows – the truth about the “American dream”, for example.⁹

⁵ MARTIN, R., SAVOY, E., eds., *American Gothic: New Interventions in a National Narrative*. 1st Edition, University of Iowa Press, 1998. p. 3-19.

⁶ SMITH, Loyd. *American Gothic Fiction*. Bloomsbury Academic, 2004. p. 25-47.

⁷ English III American Literature. *Gothic Literature and Dark Romantics*.

<http://mskellysenglishclassnhs.weebly.com/gothic-literature-and-dark-romantics.html#>

⁸ HOGLE, Jerold. *The Cambridge Companion to Gothic Fiction*. Cambridge University Press, 2002. p. 167-188.

⁹ BOTTING, Fred. *Gothic*. London and New York: Routledge, 1996. p. 115.

Differences between American and British Gothic Fiction

To start with the variety of American and British Gothic fiction, they do not seem to vary at all. There are some features quite specific and common for both of them because the British Gothic provided basic elements which American Gothic later adapted. It involves settings, key conflict, motifs and also narrative situations such as dark and grim atmosphere, supernatural elements with unexplainable events or the feelings of madness and grief. Nevertheless, American Gothic authors explored the theme further and elevated its peculiarity and uniqueness.¹⁰

One of those elements was, for example, replacing typical British haunted castles with old houses (castles were not usual in America).¹¹

Another difference was related to the centre of interest. Gothic fiction placed emphasis on feelings of terror and fear, whereas American Gothic focused more on emphasizing on secrecy and, especially, scepticism toward mankind's nature. This scepticism was one of the key differences between Romanticism and Dark Romanticism (American Gothic, in fact).¹²

The difference might be also seen in the way of expression.

While Romantic authors write about the faith in a higher order and hope in answers about the future, Gothic authors give no answer, they make the reader face the emotional obscurity and to struggle with paradoxes and conflict.¹³

¹⁰ SMITH, Loyd. *American Gothic Fiction*. Bloomsbury Academic, 2004, p. 25-47.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid.

Features of American Gothic / Dark Romanticism

The basic feature describing the literature of American Gothic is definitely its world which is grim, gloomy, and full of secrets and decline. American Gothic saw everything in dark tones. In particular, it was the exact opposite to Transcendentalism. While Transcendentalists wrote about happy future of humankind, about the heaven and good nature of men in general, Gothic authors wrote about human weakness, failure, about hell and darkness.¹⁴

Both classical Romanticists and Gothic authors focused on the individuality. Nevertheless, Gothic conception of a human being was quite different.¹⁵

Dark Romantics, or American Gothic authors, were convinced that human beings were able to be either good or bad. That means they could choose what they wanted to be (good or evil), it was not given to them, or chosen by a higher spirit, before they were born. Another opinion they uttered about mankind was that people in general are weak.¹⁶

They also miss the wisdom and authority and because of that they are not strong enough to resist evil. Based on this weakness they often commit sins connected to self-destruction. Humans were simply represented as weak individuals with lack of wisdom and divinity who are supposed to fall into states of madness, sin and further guilt. Their lives are very often combined with a kind of torture (either the physical and the psychological one).¹⁷

Another typical feature for the American Gothic literature was using contrast. Writers literally played with the contrasts of light and dark, good and evil, or imagination and reality. The example of using a contrast might be the work of E. A. Poe – *The Oval Portrait* (where he used a mirror as a means of reversing).¹⁸

¹⁴ SMITH, Loyd. *American Gothic Fiction*. Bloomsbury Academic, 2004. p. 25-47.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ BOTTING, Fred. *Gothic*. London and New York: Routledge, 1996. p. 122.

THE GOTHIC TRADITION IN EUROPEAN COUNTRIES

The key example of the popular aesthetics of horror in late eighteenth and also early nineteenth century in European Gothic literature was clearly the British one. Nevertheless, other sources of European literature written in this genre deserve to be mentioned.

British Gothic

Both American and British literature have their several “great authors” whose works are regarded Gothic or horror stories.

Ann Radcliffe, a female novelist, the author of well-known work “*The Mysteries of Udolpho*” (1794), was one of the first British authors writing in Gothic genre. Radcliffe’s stories are mostly set in foreign lands, usually with lengthy descriptions of sublime scenery. Unlike other Gothic authors, her mysteries all have kind of natural explanations – she was criticised for that (by Coleridge, for example, a British critic). Nonetheless, Ann Radcliffe had made a finding: ‘gothic’ actually came alive in the thoughts and anxieties of the characters in her stories. Gothic has always been more about fear of the supernatural than the supernatural itself.¹⁹

Few decades later, Gothic was “enriched” with some new conventions. One of those was, for example, Mary Shelley’s scientific form of the supernatural. It can be found in her “*Frankenstein*” (1818), where the creature was experimentally “created” by a young scientist Victor Frankenstein. Another powerful and new Gothic motif, also essential to “*Frankenstein*”, is a sense of encountering a double of him- or herself. Doubles crop up throughout Gothic fiction. Robert Louis Stevenson, another great British author of Gothic stories, used that feature of doubles a lot in his famous novella “*Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*”.²⁰

Finally, I dare to say, the most famous British Gothic work of whole time - Braham Stoker’s “*Dracula*”. There is no doubt that Stoker learned a lot from the vampire stories which had appeared earlier in the 19th century. The story is written in epistolary form in whose

¹⁹ MULLAN, John. (2014, May 15). *The origins of the Gothic*. <https://www.bl.uk/romantics-and-victorians/articles/the-origins-of-the-gothic#>.

²⁰ Ibid.

narration the fear and uncertainty is enacted. Due to Stoker's using fear in such a great measure, "Dracula" exceeded from Gothic to a "horror" story. 21

French Gothic

The French tradition of sentimental adventure stories had already existed since the 1730s. Moreover, they had been equally popular elsewhere, especially in Britain. Those stories generally included much more than just the occasional macabre *frisson*. 22

During the late eighteenth century, the typical French sentimental story of adventure metamorphosed into yet another distinct genre, so called the *roman noir*. This new genre appropriated genre markers from British and German literature, which had had to be translated, while obeying local norms concerning the narrative structure and ideological content. 23

German Gothic

Nearly at the same time as in Britain the vogue for the Gothic reached its very highest peak, in Germany the public devoured a succession of tales and novels telling stories about knight, robbers and ghosts. Due to that, a tripartite genre could be established. The tripartite genre basically thought of as the Räuber-, Ritter-, and Schauerroman. 24

²¹ MULLAN, John. (2014, May 15). *The origins of the Gothic*. <https://www.bl.uk/romantics-and-victorians/articles/the-origins-of-the-gothic#>.

²² HOGLE, Jerold. *The Cambridge Companion to Gothic Fiction*. Cambridge University Press, 2002. p. 167-188.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Ibid.

EDGAR ALLAN POE – THE KEY REPRESENTATIVE OF AMERICAN GOTHIC

During the nineteenth century there were a lot of authors who became the leading representatives of the genre of American Gothic. The significant ones definitely are Charles Brockden Brown, Washington Allston or Richard Henry Dana.²⁵

However, the most famous and well-known author is certainly Edgar Allan Poe.

E. Allan Poe's biography

Edgar Allan Poe was born into an actor family, on January 19, 1809, in Boston. His biological father, David Poe, left the family, and his biological mother, Elizabeth Arnold Hopkins Poe, died of tuberculosis when Edgar was only two years old. He was orphaned along with his older brother, William Henry Leonard, and younger sister, Rosalie. After that, Edgar found a new home in the Allan's family (John and Frances adopted little Edgar).²⁶

After finishing education at a private school, Poe attended the University of Virginia.²⁷

However, he studied there just for one year because of his drinking and gambling issues. As a result of being expelled, Poe joined the army where he used a pseudonym Edgar A. Perry.

After a while, he begged the Allan's to get an appointment at the United States Military Academy at West Point.²⁸

Even though he himself wanted to study there, after a year he was expelled again.²⁹

Not surprisingly, Poe was done with universities and so he began to publish his first works. His first book, *Tamerlane and Other Poems*, had been published with an anonymously name in 1827. After releasing his third book, *Poems*, in 1831, he moved to Baltimore where he started to live with his aunt Maria Poe Clemm and Maria's young daughter, Virginia.³⁰

²⁵ QUINN, Justin (ed.). *Lectures on American Literature*. Karolinum, 2010. p. 66-74.

²⁶ SOVA, Dawn. *Edgar Allan Poe, A to Z*. New York: Facts on File, 2001. p. 9-10.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ SOVA, Dawn. *Edgar Allan Poe, A to Z*. New York: Facts on File, 2001. p. 9-10.

During this time Poe worked as an editor and his productive period of life had begun. In 1836, Poe married Virginia, who was only thirteen years old, with the aunt's approval. Poe and Virginia, along with the aunt Maria, moved firstly to Philadelphia and then to New York City where he worked as an editor on many periodicals.³¹

Unfortunately, only ten years after their marriage, young Virginia died because of tuberculosis. E. A. Poe passed away two years later, on October 7, 1849, in Baltimore (circumstances about his death are still unclear these days).³²

All of those circumstances of his life – the early loss of biological parents, separation from the Allan family, struggling with poverty, alcoholism and, eventually, the death of young Virginia – intensified Poe's so called "Romantic agony" over the great distance between reality and ideal.³³

Edgar Allan's Poe fame and reputation was based on relatively small number of works he had written. That was, especially, thanks to his literary talent and his capability of being original. He did not imitate known novels and horror stories written by German authors, he did quite the reverse. His works are focused on psychic life of characters and on its fragmentation, in particular. It concerns the split between reason and imagination, or between consciousness and the unconscious.³⁴

Even though, these elements could be found in the European Gothic literature, Poe elaborated the European traditional themes to a higher level of abstraction. No one else was able to express the unusual connection between the state of terror and the mental condition, along with emotions, of his heroes in such a perfect way.³⁵

He carried his psychologism and his powerful style, which subjugated the reader's mind and emotions, to perfection and so there is no doubt that he was the "Founding Father" of a literary term called "*mathematics of horror*".³⁶

³¹ SOVA, Dawn. *Edgar Allan Poe, A to Z*. New York: Facts on File, 2001. p. 9-10.

³² Ibid.

³³ CROW, Charles. *American Gothic*. University of Wales Press. Cardiff, 2009. p. 38-39.

³⁴ SOVA, Dawn. *Edgar Allan Poe, A to Z*. New York: Facts on File, 2001. p. 9-10.

³⁵ QUINN, Justin (ed.). *Lectures on American Literature*. Karolinum, 2010. p. 66-74.

³⁶ Ibid.

Nevertheless, E. A. Poe did not actually stand against the most essential gothic elements. His works include those instruments as well. We can find there descriptions of ancient, haunted castles or houses, old-time legends that are retold and also characters appearing as ghosts or spectres returning from the dead.³⁷ However, Poe's literary works are more complex and reflect both the poetics of the American Gothic and dark Romanticism.

Features and motifs in Poe's works

Poe's style of writing and his way of expressing became literally idiopathic. Features, which appear in his works and which prove Poe's extraordinary talent, do not relate to an important moral or existential question, as it could be seen in other American Gothic writers such as Brocken Brown. The aesthetics category rendered and becomes essential in itself as an artistic effect which is typical in Poe's writing. He himself wrote: "the fearful coloured into the horrible: the witty exaggerated into the burlesque: the singular wrought out into the strange and mystical." (letter to T. L. White, 30 April 1845).³⁸

However, this kind of artistic effect cannot be reached without states of hallucination, hypnosis or other psychic and abnormal states which involve feelings of fear, threat or madness.³⁹

The structure of E. A. Poe's narration attracts the reader's attention. It must be admitted that Poe did not become well-known just for his original expression and descriptions of the inner world of characters or the surroundings. He even focused on what the work (a poem, a novel etc.) itself should look like in the way of length. According to him, the work should not be too long. The ideal length of it is not actually specified, however, the requirement is simple – it should be read at one time.⁴⁰

Another feature or attitude of Poe's works is related to science. The author is convinced that science is responsible for the destruction of the world of fables, myths and other different tales. According to his opinion, the only way the world was originally formed was the result

³⁷ CROW, Charles. *American Gothic*. University of Wales Press. Cardiff, 2009. p. 38-39.

³⁸ QUINN, Justin (ed.). *Lectures on American Literature*. Karolinum, 2010. p. 66-74.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

of God's will. The size, the form, the whole unity all exist only because of God. Poe titles the universe "God's plot".⁴¹

Precision of rhythmic patterns also belongs among key features of Poe's works. It all has to be mathematically accurate and it has to follow exact rules. These ones relate to a particular length and rhyming. The length of a line must be adequate and definitely not exceeding. Both stanza and the line should express the contract between the regularity of meter and the passionate expectation of the rhythm of the utterance.⁴²

Moreover, both of them should induce an emotional tension. These all significant features were later appreciated and became a "starting-point" for further incipient works in the European context. Especially surrealists in France appreciated Poe's talent and meant his work as a prototype of the *poète maudit* (cursed poet) capable of rebellion against the philistine and materialist spirit of that time.⁴³

Concerning Poe's poems, dividing the consciousness cannot be omitted. Via dividing it into three different modes, Poe puts an emphasis on one of the modes, *the sentiment* or the feeling of the beautiful. The other modes are *the true* and *the good*. While *the true* relates to questions about what is true and what is false, *the good* includes the moral contemplation of questions about proper ethical conduct. Based on this division, the sentiment of the beautiful should not be put together or mixed with the other modes concerning questions of moral goodness or rational truth.⁴⁴

Based on this attitude towards poetry, Poe became an inspiration in the eyes of some authors pursuing art for art's sake. Charles Baudelaire, specifically, was struck by this poetic position. As Poe himself later wrote, "*under the sun there neither exists nor can exist any work more thoroughly dignified – more supremely noble than this very poem – this poem per*

⁴¹ QUINN, Justin (ed.). *Lectures on American Literature*. Karolinum, 2010. p. 66-74.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ KERKERING, John. Poe and Southern poetry. In: *The Cambridge Companion to Nineteenth-century American Poetry*, ed. Kerry Larson. Cambridge, 2011. p. 193-205.

*se – this poem which is a poem and nothing more – this poem written solely for the poem’s sake.”*⁴⁵

Another key element of Poe’s work can be not only seen or read, but also heard while reading a poem. Thanks to the ability to play with words (and the way they sound), his works are filled with musicality. This is evident thanks to some literary figures he uses, such as alliteration, repetition or rhyme, for example. The second part of this bachelor thesis will focus on the figures of speech in more detail, particularly, in some of his works I have chosen.

Edgar Allan Poe was convinced that the melody and the sound play a key part in the poem as a whole. This thought can be found in his essay “The Poetic Principle”, where he writes, “Contenting myself with the certainty that Music, in its various modes of metre, rhythm, and rhyme, is of so vast a moment in Poetry as never to be wisely rejected – is so vitally important an adjunct, that he is simply silly who declines its assistance, I will not now pause to maintain its absolute essentiality. It is in Music, perhaps, that the soul most nearly attains the great end for which, when inspired by the Poetic Sentiment, it struggles – the creation of supernal Beauty.”⁴⁶

Eventually, the sense of the supernatural forms a substantial part of Poe’s contribution to American gothic fiction. I dare to say that it is a vital feature of a gothic horror story which makes those stories darker and much more terrifying and frightening. E. A. Poe naturally used supernatural elements in his works. The use of those literary instruments might be very well seen or read, for example, in one of his short stories - The Black Cat. I would like to, very briefly, prove this claim of mine. The title itself “The Black Cat” suggests a supernatural element relating to the superstition that a black cat brings bad luck. This belief later actually becomes true. After killing the cat named Pluto, hanging him from a tree branch, the narrator is followed by bad luck. Firstly, his house burned down. Nevertheless, one wall remained and exactly this one had an imprint of the black cat with a rope on its surface.

⁴⁵ POE, Edgar Allan. The Poetic Principle. In: *Selected Writings of Edgar Allan Poe*, ed. Edward H. Davidson. Boston, 1956. p. 254.

⁴⁶ POE, Edgar Allan. The Rationale of Verse. In: *The Complete Tales and Poems of Edgar Allan Poe*. Vintage Books, New York, 1975.

After a few days, another black cat appeared. This cat looked just like the first one, except this one had a patch of white fur on its chest. That patch later represented the “gallows”. In the end, the narrator wanted to kill this cat as well, however, he murdered his wife instead. Every event following the hanging of Pluto might be attributed to the supernatural belief that black cats bring bad luck.

One more explanation regarding the sense of the supernatural and “The Black Cat” can be introduced with the narrator wife’s concern about the colour of the cat, the colour which very often is connected to witchcraft. ... *“my wife, who at heart was not a little tinctured with superstition, made frequent allusion to the ancient popular notion, which regarded all black cats as witches in disguise.”*⁴⁷

In conclusion, I would point out that the sense of the supernatural is maintained in the reader’s mind in the course of the reading process of Poe’s short stories. There is, however, another option of a possible rational explanation of sinister events of Poe’s stories, but still the sense of the supernatural pervades as a more attractive and ambiguous interpretation in the context of the American gothic.

⁴⁷ POE, Edgar Allan. The Black Cat. In: *The Complete Tales and Poems of Edgar Allan Poe*. Barnes and Noble. New York, 2015, p. 531.

The self-conscious technique

“It is the curse of a certain order of mind, that it can never rest satisfied with the consciousness of its ability to do a thing. Not even is it content with doing it. It must both know and show how it was done.” As Arthur Ransome points out, this is the curse of excellence, the author’s own criticism.⁴⁸

The curse, Poe mentioned, is just at the bottom of all public knowledge of technique. Anyone who is as well interested in the way of actually doing a thing as in the thing when completed or done, is exactly the one who is presumptively to come up with a new tool and put it right into the hands of his fellow-craftsmen. Those people may suffer from misunderstanding because of their curiosity. That is the reason why Poe called it a curse – because he was afraid of that while he was actually enjoying it. He learnt that it is like an opportunity for an artist to debauch in technique. However, the spirit is lost.⁴⁹

Edgar Allan Poe was very good at observing of his own personality not to notice his danger. He must have been aware of the risk he had had taken, the risk of dying for Art, as a bigger one than for Life.⁵⁰

During his writing, Poe came up with new things out of a discussion of the old ones. This process of innovation was accompanied with misunderstandings of the readers because they were not able to understand the text which was too much connected with the author undergoing examination. The examination involved Poe’s own inner motives so only he was the one who had been able to understand that in a proper way.⁵¹

Nevertheless, the methods he used, brought him kind of enjoyment or delight.

Poe was more and more interested in this way of writing. Due to that in some of his later works we can find the uncanny atmosphere. The reason for that is not only the interest in

⁴⁸ RANSOME, Arthur. *Edgar Allan Poe: a critical study*. London, 1910. p. 63-85.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Ibid.

this way of writing itself, but also the detailed description of the observation of other authors' methods.⁵²

However, what actually is the self-conscious technique? Generally, it is a process which is used by authors who are very well aware of the purpose and the key aim of their work. However, a lot of works have been written by authors without this particular knowledge. Those authors based their stories on the memory of their moments of inspiration. They simply put their thoughts into words.⁵³

The curse, regarding the self-conscious technique and Poe's own attitude toward a style of writing, involved a special demand. Edgar Allan Poe required that a poem or a story should be one throughout, not just in framework, but also in the detail, in a sentence and in a word as well.⁷

As far as Poe's accuracy is concerned, he was convinced that a novel should not be too long to read. Quite the reverse, a work should be read during one period of time, with sustained attention. Another feature of his preciseness included the process of his writing. He was interested not only in simple writing, but also in re-writing as well. He believed that re-writing may help him to avoid a possible disagreement with his works.⁵⁴

*"Conscious of his own consciousness, is a little drunk with free-will; and the result is the momentary vision of a calm-browed person sitting between earth and heaven weighing and choosing with mathematical precision invisible and imponderable things."*⁵⁵

According to Ransome, we may comprehend it as a following the nucleus for a poem or a tale, with a cautious observation, as it came to Poe's mind.⁵⁶

Poe completely followed his inspiration and was firm that the first shadowing of the effect, which was about to be "constructed", should govern every word he wrote down into his notebook.⁵⁷

⁵² ROYLE, Nicholas. *The Uncanny*. Manchester University Press, 2003. p. 145.

⁵³ RANSOME, Arthur. *Edgar Allan Poe: a critical study*. London, 1910. p. 63-85.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ RANSOME, Arthur. *Edgar Allan Poe: a critical study*. London, 1910. p. 63-85.

LITERARY ANALYSIS OF EDGAR ALLAN POE'S WORKS

The Tell-Tale Heart

Plot

The story is opened by an unnamed narrator who addresses the reader and claims that he is just nervous, but not mad. He wants to tell a story in which he will defend his state of being, however, he will not confess to having murdered an old man. The reason for killing was because of the man's pale blue eye. Nevertheless, the narrator still keeps on saying that he is not a madman.

Every night, he visited the old man's bedroom and, in secret, watched the man sleeping. The other day, in the morning, he behaved as if nothing had happened and everything had been normal. When a week passed by, the narrator came to a conclusion, just like that, that was the high and right time to kill the old man.

As the narrator arrives late on the eighth night, the old man suddenly wakes up and starts to cry out. After a while, he can hear a dull pounding that he interprets as the old man's horrified heartbeat. Scared that neighbours may hear the old man crying, the narrator kills him. After this act he hides the dead body, very precisely and carefully, under the floorboards in the bedroom. At the time he is done with that, at four o'clock, he hears a knocking at the door. Two police officers were standing behind the door. The narrator opens the door and invites the men to come in. As the police officers walking around in the house, the man tries to appear and behave "normal". He even leads them into the old man's room. Because of the man's "normal" acting, the policemen believe that he is actual innocent. Nevertheless, the narrator starts to hear a low thumping sound as the one reminding the heartbeat of the killed old man. He panics because he is convinced that the police officers have to hear that sound as well. Being filled with agony and paranoia, he confesses to the murder and shrieks at the policemen up the floorboards.

Analysis

One of the key elements of gothic horror story is quite obvious – death, here connected with a violent murder. The story begins with the narrator’s confession in which the murder, the death, is mentioned for the first time. That indicates that the whole plot will be told in a dark and gloomy atmosphere.

We can find more gothic features in the text, apart from the murder and the tone. Madness, for example. Despite the narrator’s emphasis on the fact that he is not mad, it is evident that it is not true at all. The proof of this assumption can be found in one of the rhetorical questions in the very beginning – “... *but why will you say that I am mad?*”⁵⁸. If someone were really normal and definitely not mad, he would never ask a rhetorical question about being mad at all. Another evidence of the narrator’s madness and therefore his unreliability is mentioned at the end. When the police officers are sitting in the old man’s bedroom, the narrator starts to be paranoid and is convinced of hearing a heartbeat – “*It was a low, dull, quick sound—much such a sound as a watch makes when enveloped in cotton*”⁵⁹. Nevertheless, it was not a sound of a heart, but of his conscience, as the reader is to find out in the end.

Concerning death and madness at all, we should also focus on the reason for the killing. There is no excuse for any murder, though, this one was somehow more extreme. The narrator took the old man’s life just because his eye. The eye, a “vulture eye” as the narrator described it, irritated the narrator and just because of this reason the old man was murdered. “*I think it was his eye! yes, it was this! One of his eyes resembled that of a vulture – a pale blue eye ...*”⁶⁰. From my point of view, this is an accurate example of someone being a madman.

Nevertheless, there is one more thing connected to the old man and his murderer. As the Gothic and romantic stories might sometimes include the element of a contrast. “The Tell-Tale Heart” is no exception. The contrast can be found in the relationship, between the narrator and the old man, and the act of murder. Even though the narrator had loved the old

⁵⁸ POE, Edgar Allan. The Tell-Tale Heart. In: The Complete Tales and Poems of Edgar Allan Poe. Barnes and Noble. New York, 2015, p. 498.

⁵⁹ Ibid, p. 501.

⁶⁰ Ibid, p. 498.

man, the had never argued, the narrator took the old man's life. *"I loved the old man. He had never wronged me. He had never given me insult. For his gold I had no desire. I think it was his eye! ..."*⁶¹

As it was said before, Poe claimed that a story or poem should be read "in one breath". That means the story should not be too long for a reader to get bored. And this kind of Poe's accurately precondition fits to The Tell-Tale Heart. The whole plot is described in a few pages. Even though, it is obviously quick and easy to go through it, a reader can live through it as well. And that is why Edgar Allan Poe ought to be appreciated; for the skill to make the reader feel the emotions and the whole gloomy atmosphere while reading only several pages.

⁶¹ POE, Edgar Allan. The Tell-Tale Heart. In: The Complete Tales and Poems of Edgar Allan Poe. Barnes and Noble. New York, 2015, p. 498.

The Pit and the Pendulum

Plot

The story of The Pit and The Pendulum is told retrospectively so after that all of that actually happened. It begins with the narrator being sentenced to death during the time of the Spanish Inquisition. At this time, being sentenced to death meant to be executed by the most painful and horrible means.

After losing our narrator's consciousness, the narrator wakes up in a dungeon lying on the floor. When being capable of getting up, he decides to explore the place of his location. He uses a piece of his clothes to measure the size of the dungeon. One bottom of the cloth is stuck into the wall. The narrator starts walking around the place, with the other bottom of the cloth, and counting every simple step. After a while he becomes tired and falls asleep.

When he wakes up, the narrator sees a loaf of bread and glass of water next to him, and continues with exploring. As he crosses the room, suddenly he hits the floor. Even though most of his body has fallen on solid ground, his face stays unharmed, over an abyss which, as the narrator concluded, is situated in the centre of the dungeon. To explore its depth, the narrator throws a piece of stone in the pit and times its descent. He is convinced that the pit might function as an infamous kind of punishment, typical one for the Inquisitors.

After another short sleep, he is awake, back in the dungeon, and finds the place has been illuminated. Thanks to the light he can see that the dungeon has a square shape. Moreover, the narrator can detect himself being tied down to a kind of a contraption and being limited to using just one hand, the left one. In further exploration, he can see a plate of meat, which lures a great of number of rats to come from the pit. Then he looks up on the ceiling where a picture of Father Time has been drawn. Though, Father Time does not have a scythe, but a pendulum which slowly begins to descend toward the narrator.

As the pendulum with its sharp bottom edge is coming closer, he is trying to find out how to escape. Then an idea came to his mind. Putting the meat over the belts, which are tying him down, makes the rats bite through them and let him escape from the pendulum's dangerous swing.

When he gets up, the pendulum comes back to the ceiling, and he is convinced that guard must be watching and be aware of every narrator's motion.

Suddenly, the prison's walls start to heat up and begin to move in toward the pit. The narrator knows that the walls force him to fall into the pit which means his death. When the place is getting smaller and smaller, the walls stop and cool down. Nevertheless, in the fear of death, he begins to lose his consciousness and begins to faint into the pit. Fortunately, a mysterious man saves him from the very fall. General Lasalle, the saviour, with his French army takes over the place in order to put an end to the Inquisition.

Analysis

From the very beginning it is entirely obvious that *The Pit and the Pendulum* is accurate example of a Gothic horror short story. Death is actually mentioned right in the first sentence of the story which proves the story to be dark and gloomy. *"I was sick – sick unto death with that long agony; ..."*⁶²

Poe's work is unlike the others. While vast majority of his short stories or poem end sadly, this one is hopeful and ends with kind of happy-ending. The hope is represented in the eventual rescue by the French General and also in the strategy of narration. While the narrator describes his inner emotions, mostly full of fear, chaos and agony, he is also capable of rational and precise recounting of the place and also thinking with a clear mind.

Notwithstanding, there is no doubt, apart from the very end, that the atmosphere and the whole background of the story is full of darkness, agony and death.

Concerning agony, we should point out that it relates to not only the physical torture but also the psychological terror. Not knowing where the person is located, what comes next or, for example, how to stop the pendulum – all of these questions and more of them definitely cause a psychological torture. In that case, I would say, the psychological agony was much worse than the physical one. Neither the pendulum nor the moving walls hurt the narrator in the end. The only physical impact might have been caused by the heat coming from those walls or by his still fainting and falling down on the floor.

⁶² POE, Edgar Allan. *The Pit and the Pendulum*. In: *The Complete Tales and Poems of Edgar Allan Poe*. Barnes and Noble. New York, 2015, p. 443.

Even though no one actually died in this story, death was still present around the main character. Primarily, the narrator was sentenced to death by the Spanish Inquisitors, which points out there is an historical background of the story even though a fictitious one. In the dungeon, where he woke up afterwards, the death was also present. In the walls, in the pit and also in the picture above him. Also the rats with their rat eyes might be a symbol of death. All of it makes the background and the atmosphere so dark and depressing.

The story takes place in a dark, gloomy place full of grief and violent memories stuck in the walls around and the main character was sentenced to death, even though he can still keep thinking rationally. Apart from fainting and dreaming while sleeping, the narrator is capable of keeping his mind clear. Being tied on a wooden plank and being aware of a pendulum which is slowly swinging towards the person, many people would panic and, soon or later, would accept the fate. Our narrator, however, was determined not to accept the fate to die, he wanted to live and to do so he had to be concentrated, without starting to panic. Due his cool mind and determination to survive, he came up with an idea to put the spiced meat on his body, on the belt actually, stop moving and let the rats eat the meat along with the belts. When the rats were finished, he could escape and be free for a moment. Nevertheless, the pendulum stopped swinging, but the walls started to shrink and heat up. In this moment, however, the narrator was not able to think rationally. He knew he was going to die, there was no chance to get away from the certain death so he was prepared to fall into the pit.

Concerning the place of setting and the narrator's actual state of being, I would like to mention Manuel Aguirre's *The Closed Space: Horror Literature and Western Symbolism*, where the author focuses on those topics a bit.

In the book, Aguirre mentions that one of the mystery devices is the appearance or disappearance or crime or haunting in a space locked or otherwise inaccessible - the mystery of the closed room and what it may conceal, and also the mystery which fits to "*The Pit and the Pendulum*" where the main protagonist does not know where he is and how the place actually looks like.⁶³ Another device, relating to the place of setting, is the escape attempt from being imprisoned in that place which fits to this story as well.

⁶³ AGUIRRE, Manuel. *The Closed Space: Horror Literature and Western Symbolism*. Manchester University Press, 1990. p. 112.

The author also points out that the essential aspect of literature of terror is the infinite partition of space, time, action and purpose until the means eventually becomes the end. That means that one single enterprise is divided into minor acts, each a precondition for the next one – the world is actually defined as an endless series of obstacles, and human action as a torturing fight to overcome one by one.⁶⁴

Aguirre sums up this thought as says: “As the Gothic develops, its characters spend more and more time and effort trying to reach the door and the light.”⁶⁵

One more topic, also relating to “*The Pit and the Pendulum*” and “*The Closed Space*” - the difference between romance and Gothic hero. While the romance hero eventually accepts the fate, the Gothic one resists and tries to fight until the very end. In addition, Manuel Aguirre is convinced as says that the romance was concerned with the betterment and self-realisation of the exemplary character and, through this, of the world itself; whereas the Gothic, with the preservation of what the character deems his self, and with the preservation of the normal world.⁶⁶

Last but not least, to prove this story to be the accurate Gothic story according to Poe’s poetic requirements, I would like to also focus on the length of *The Pit and the Pendulum*. After reading the story, there is no doubt that it precisely fulfils his demands on the length of a short story. It is not long at all and so it can be easily read in a few minutes.

⁶⁴ AGUIRRE, Manuel. *The Closed Space: Horror Literature and Western Symbolism*. Manchester University Press, 1990. p. 113.

⁶⁵ Ibid. p. 113.

⁶⁶ Ibid. p. 114.

The Fall of the House of Usher

Plot

The story is told by an unnamed narrator.

On a dull, dark and soundless day, the nameless narrator came across the house of Usher. He knows this place, the house, from his childhood when he played there with the master of the house, Roderick Usher. Observing the house, the narrator finds it gloomy and mysterious. It seems like the house has absorbed all the evil, decay and darkness from the trees and ponds around it. Even though there are several decayed places on the house, the structure itself seems to be quiet solid.

The narrator received a letter where his friend, Sir Roderick Usher, had requested his company. He wrote about his physical and also emotional bad condition and because of that the narrator came as soon as possible.

Before coming inside, the narrator mentions that the Usher family has never flourished so only one member of the family has left from generation to generation.

Coming inside, he can find the interior just as gloomy and dark as the outside. When the narrator walks into Roderick' room, he notes his friend much different than he remembers. He is actually shocked how it is even possible that his friend had changed in not a long period of time. Usher seems to be paler, with no energy and obviously ill (physically and mentally), which he also admits. He tells the narrator that he suffers from nerves and that he is afraid and, moreover, that his senses are heightened. Nevertheless, Roderick is not the only one ill. Also his sister, Madeline, has taken ill with a mysterious sickness, catalepsy.

For several days the narrator tries to cheer up Roderick by many ways, however, with no success. Roderick eventually admits that the house itself is unhealthy and that is the reason for his illnesses.

His sister, Madeline, soon passed away and Roderick decides to bury her. He is afraid that doctors might dig up her dead body in order to examine her, and determined to not let them do it. To do so he wants to bury her in a temporary tomb below the house.

As they are putting her body in the tomb, the narrator notes that she has rosy cheeks and he also realizes that Madeline and Roderick were twins.

After few days, Roderick becomes more crazy and mad than he actually was before. One night, the narrator was not able to fall asleep. Roderick knocks on his door in a hysterical condition. He came in the narrator's room and immediately leads the narrator to the window. There was a bright-looking gas around the house. The narrator naturally tells Roderick that it is nothing supernatural, but just a natural phenomenon. To calm Roderick down, the narrator decides to read a book by Sir Launcelot Canning, "Mad Trist". As he goes on reading, he suddenly hears sounds which correspond to the ones in described in the story. Firstly, he ignores that. Soon, however, the sounds become more distinct and precise so it is hard to ignore them. Moreover, the narrator finds Roderick slumped over his chair muttering. He says that he has been hearing those sound for several days. He is also convinced that they have buried Madeline alive and that she is standing right behind the door. Suddenly, the wind blows open the door and, really, Madeline is standing there in white robes with blood spots on it. At the time, she attacks Roderick and due that, he dies of fear.

Shocked and scared, the narrator runs away from the house. As he is far enough, he turns around and sees the house cracking, crumbling to the ground.

*... and the deep and dank tarn at my feet closed sullenly and silently over the fragments of the "House of Usher".*⁶⁷

Analysis

The Fall of the House of Usher is typical and accurate example of a Gothic short story. Not only fulfilling "Poe's requirements" but it also possesses typical Gothic elements at all.

The surroundings of the house is dreary, mysterious and everything seem to be in a decayed state of being – the house itself, the trees around, the pounds. According to the narrator's description, we can find the house basically haunted and even unhealthy (as it is described at the end of the story). Moreover, not only the outside, but also the interior is described in a dark tone. There is simply no sign of light at this place.

⁶⁷ POE, Edgar Allan. The Fall of the House of Usher. In: *The Complete Tales and Poems of Edgar Allan Poe*. Barnes and Noble. New York, 2015, p. 313.

Concerning the sickness, we should focus on every simple individuality it relates to. The first one I would like to talk about, is Miss Madeline, Roderick's sister. Her disease is called catalepsy, a physical illness. This disease can be manifested by going into a coma or being paralyzed. Due to that state, Roderick buried her sister alive – because she looked dead, though, she was not. *"A settled apathy, a gradual wasting away of the person, and frequent although transient affections of a partially cataleptical character were the unusual diagnosis".*⁶⁸

The author's obsession with the fear of being buried alive (The Premature Burial - a short story), as it happened quite frequently in reality when the medical conditions of patients looked desperate, it was hard to identify death back in the 19th century.

Compared to that, Roderick Usher is predominantly mentally ill. The narrator refers to Usher as a hypochondriac. Being not mentally stable, it could lead to Roderick believing he is seriously ill when in reality he is not. *"I could not help thinking of the wild ritual of this work, and of its probable influence upon the hypochondriac, when, one evening, having informed me abruptly that the lady Madeline was no more, he stated his intention of preserving her corpse for a fortnight, in one of the numerous vaults within the main walls of the building".*⁶⁹ Another illness relates to his senses. He suffers from hypersensitivity. Both of these health issues lead to the last one – madness. Roderick Usher is a typical example of a mad man. Madness is actually a key symbol of the whole story. Never leaving the haunted, supernatural, house might be one of the reasons for instability of Roderick's mind. The house basically plays with his mind. And because of being mad and crazy, he buries his sister alive. Though she looked as dead, due to her physical illness, she was not. This deed leads into Roderick's death in the end of the story. He is tortured by his own fear and by the guilt of Madeline's burial, which ends up with his death. *"...and in her violent and now final death-agonies, bore him to the floor a corpse, and a victim to the terrors he had anticipated".*⁷⁰

⁶⁸ POE, Edgar Allan. The Fall of the House of Usher. In: *The Complete Tales and Poems of Edgar Allan Poe*. Barnes and Noble. New York, 2015, p. 304.

⁶⁹ Ibid, p. 308.

⁷⁰ POE, Edgar Allan. The Fall of the House of Usher. In: *The Complete Tales and Poems of Edgar Allan Poe*. Barnes and Noble. New York, 2015, p. 313.

Actually, there might be another explanation for putting his sister in the tomb. Roderick maybe knew that his sister had not been dead in fact, but he still insisted on burying her. And why? He admitted that he cannot live without her. And because of her illness, which did not let her move and act as a normal healthy person, he rushed her death which lead to his own, however, suicidal one. If this assumption is correct, it only corresponds to the fact that Roderick Usher was absolutely mad.

Moreover, his madness is also emphasized with the language the author used. Roderick keeps on shouting and repeating questions (just like the ones at the very end of the story). *“Not hear it? – yes, I hear it, and have heard it. Long – long – long – many minutes, many hours, many days, have I heard it – yet I dared not – oh, pity me, miserable wretch that I am! – I dared not – I dared not speak! We have put her living in the tomb! Said I not that my senses were acute? I now tell you that I heard her first feeble movements in the hollow coffin.”*⁷¹

... *“Do I not distinguish that heavy and horrible beating of her heart? Madman!”*⁷²

... *“Madman! I tell you that she now stands without the door!”*. He basically seems to be “not normal” overall, right from the narrator’s arrival.⁷³

The last sick entity, I would like to mention, is the house itself. Its walls are damaged and all interior requisites look gloomy. Moreover, from my point of view at least, I believe that the house is unhealthy also because of the Usher family itself. Houses tend to be connected with the family living there, and this one is not an exception. And since the Usher family’s members suffer from any kind of diseases, the house has the same fate. It is the element of decayed aristocracy.

Last but not least, we cannot forget to mention that the story is told in a place which seems to be quiet medieval-like. As it was said before, the building is in desolate condition, looking

⁷¹ POE, Edgar Allan. The Fall of the House of Usher. In: *The Complete Tales and Poems of Edgar Allan Poe*. Barnes and Noble. New York, 2015, p. 313.

⁷² Ibid, p. 313.

⁷³ Ibid, p. 313.

fairly ancient. Also thanks to Poe's perfect description of the surroundings and the dreary atmosphere, it all represents the key elements of a typical Gothic horror story.

Poe stuck to his principles and therefore even "The Fall of the House of Usher" is written in only several pages which complies his remains of the length of a short story.

The Cast of Amontillado

Plot

The story begins when the narrator, Montresor, is saying that he has been insulted by Fortunato and therefore he wants to revenge. To do so, without putting himself at risk, he misuses Fortunato's passion for wine.

Thanks to the carnival season, Montresor comes across Fortunato in disguise. Then he starts telling Fortunato that he has received something which could pass for Amontillado – a light Spanish sherry. He also points out that if Fortunato has no time to taste it, he can easily ask someone else, Luchesi, an apparent Fortunato's competitor. No need, Fortunato is determined to go to Montresor's vaults to taste it.

The vaults are covered with nitre all around. Due to nitre, Fortunato starts coughing. The narrator, Montresor, offers to go out. Thought, Fortunato refuses and even asks for a glass of wine as an antidote to the cough. Exploring the deep vaults, the men can discover a great amount of bones and dead bodies of the Montresor family. The narrator also mentions his family's motto – "*nemo me impune lacessit*" – "*no one attacks me with impunity*".

As they are going on, Fortunato suddenly makes a hand signal, a secret signal of the Masons. Even though Montresor alleges that he is actually a Mason, he did not notice the signal. Fortunato does not believe him to be a Mason so he wants Montresor to prove it. In order to prove it, Montresor show his participant his trowel, which makes Fortunato laugh. The men continue down into a crypt whose walls are decorated with human bones. On one of the walls, there is a small recess, where the Amontillado is being stored, according to the narrator. Fortunato is getting more and more intoxicated and Montresor misuses that condition to chain him to a stone.

After the finishing the chaining, the narrator begins to build stone layers to wall up the entrance. The only thing, that Fortunato can do, is to scream, though, uselessly. Nevertheless, when Montresor is almost finished, Fortunato starts laughing as if this whole is being a joke. Eventually, after a final desirous scream, "*For the love of God, Montresor!*", there was nothing but silence. When it is over, Montresor says that his heart suffers from an illness caused by the dampness of the catacombs. His whole work was accompanied by a sound of the jingling Fortunato's bells.

For fifty years, as he writes, no one has disturbed the bones down there. He ends it up with a Latin phrase – *“In pace requiescat!”* - *“May he rest in peace.”*

Analysis

“The Cask of Amontillado” can be with no doubt regarded a Gothic short story. It contains a lot of key elements characteristic for this genre.

The predominant part of the story takes place in a secret room in Montresor’s family catacomb. The place is obviously dark and scary. Beyond that, the walls around contain human bones and the vault is also full of nitre which makes one of the main character cough a lot. *“The nitre!” ... “It hangs like moss upon the vaults. We are below the river’s bed. The drops of moisture trickle among the bones.”*⁷⁴

As we could see in “The Fall of the House of Usher”, for example, another key feature of Gothic genre is a kind of decay. Here, as well as in “The Fall of the House of Usher”, the decay relates to the place, where it is all happening, and also the people themselves. While the decline of the place is represented by bones exposed in the wall in the tomb, the human decline might be in the act of the murder, as I suppose. When someone is capable of a murder, he must be somehow damaged in the inside, in his own soul.

While reading a Gothic story, it is obvious from the very beginning that something bad is going to happen. There is always a foreshadowing of a bad ending. “The Cask of Amontillado” is no exception. In this story is even a real item where foreboding is shown – the Montresor’s family coat of arms. It shows a foot which is crushing a snake while the snake is biting the foot. The picture represents the family’s motto – *“No one insults me with impunity”*. Not surprisingly, the family demands a revenge when any of its members is insulted. In this case, Fortunato is the snake, while the foot represents Montresor.

Nonetheless, not only a foreshadowing but also the setting and the atmosphere might indicate a bad ending. In this case it specifically relates to the catacombs, vaults that become graves, tombs and the whole motif of imprisonment which is connected with the romantic sense of revenge.

⁷⁴ POE, Edgar Allan. The Cask of Amontillado. In: The Complete Tales and Poems of Edgar Allan Poe. Barnes and Noble. New York, 2015, p. 735.

I would like to focus on the characters in more detail. Firstly, the narrator, Montresor, is described as a typical Gothic protagonist. He is emotionally isolated as typically Gothic protagonists are. The reason for his isolation is the determination to revenge. The desire to kill might be also caused because of a jealousy. *"You are rich, respected, admired, beloved; you are happy, as once I was. You are a man to be missed. For me it is no matter."*⁷⁵

The narrator does not seem to care about his action, about what a bad thing he is actually doing. He just wants to revenge, no matter what, no matter how bad it is to kill someone. Secondly, even though one of the man kills the other one, they both have something in common. They might be even found as doubles or as two sides of a single person. They both have passion for wine. Their speech is as similar as their bantering. And, last but not least, both of them screamed in the story.

Lastly, the characters' names are not ordinary after all. There is an irony in them. Fortunato actually means to be blessed or to have fortunate. Yet, the man had not fortunate at all. Montresor, on the other hand, means a treasure. It can relate to what he values the most, and that is clearly the pride of his family.

Like the other short stories (analysed above), even this one is obviously short, though, full of tension and violence.

⁷⁵ POE, Edgar Allan. The Cask of Amontillado. In: The Complete Tales and Poems of Edgar Allan Poe. Barnes and Noble. New York, 2015, p. 735.

The Raven

Epic content

During one bleak December night the nameless narrator is reading a book when he suddenly hears a tapping at the chamber door. He whispers to himself that it is only a visitor and that he can wait until tomorrow. The narrator does not want to open the door because he cannot find release in his sorrow over the death of his beloved Lenore. As the tapping continues, the narrator decides to, eventually, go open the door. However, behind the door there is nothing but the echoing sound of the word "Lenore".

Going back to his room, he can hear the tapping again. He thinks that it is caused by the winds outside. While opening the window, a raven enters and immediately sits on a bust of Pallas above the door. The bird's deadly appearance amuses the narrator, who is asking for the raven's name. Nevertheless, the only response he receives is "Nevermore". The narrator does not understand that. The raven does not say anything more until the narrator tells himself that it will leave him tomorrow like the rest of his friends did. After that, the raven says "Nevermore" again.

The narrator starts to be scared of the bird and of the only word it can say. Sitting in front of the raven, the narrator keeps on thinking what the word might mean. As the narrator is thinking, the raven continues to look at him constantly. He starts to be convinced that the raven is an evil prophet. Therefore, he asks the raven if he will again see Lenore... in Heaven. Nevertheless, the raven says again only the one word "Nevermore". The narrator starts to lose his temper and demands that the raven go back into the night, where he came from, and leave him alone. Not surprisingly, the raven says, "Nevermore", and still sits on the bust of Pallas. Step by step, the narrator feels that he is losing his mind and that his soul will leave the raven's shadow *nevermore*.

Analysis

The Raven is probably the most iconic Gothic poem written by Edgar Allan Poe. Gothic genre, as it was already mentioned in this bachelor thesis, is characterized by supernatural elements, elements of mystery and "dark mood" full of emotions and feelings such as madness, fear, grief or death itself. Moreover, Gothic genre according to Poe is enriched

with deep thoughts and also with musicality of the verse. And all of these features are contained in the poem.

To start with, the atmosphere and the whole setting of the place and the time, it is all happening, has typical Gothic (but also romantic) features such as darkness, midnight or mystery. The poem begins with the words, "*midnight dreary*" ... "*weak and weary*", which also indicates a gloomy and mysterious mood and it also might foreshadow that something obscure is going to happen. The narrator is thrilled, filled with terrors and his heart is beating. He is telling us that he has lost a beloved woman, Lenore. Then he suddenly hears a tapping, however, there is no one behind the door. Therefore, he thinks that it might be the ghost of his dead love. This also contributes to the fact that supernatural things are probably going to happen.

After that, the strange and unaccountable things are going to happen. The unnamed narrator, the lyrical subject as we can call him in a poem, hears a tapping at the window. He opens the window and suddenly a black raven flies into the chamber and perches above the narrator's chamber door, upon a bust of Pallas. Then the bird says the word "Nevermore". At the time the narrator lets the bird come in, we can find in the text typical Gothic features like fear or dread, "*..., long I stood there wondering, fearing, doubting, dreaming dreams no mortal ever dared to dream before; ...*".⁷⁶

On top of that, the raven is actually another Gothic feature. Those birds, because of their appearance, are very often associated with death, grief and evil. Moreover, the mystery and bleakness of the only word, it can say and repeat, also supports the mysterious and supernatural mood. Therefore, narrator starts to think that the raven is an evil prophet sent to tell him that he will never meet Lenore again, not even after his death.

Still sitting and observing the bird, the narrator slowly begins to lose his mind and another Gothic element comes to the light, the madness, "*But the Raven still beguiling my sad fancy into smiling, Straight I wheeled a cushioned seat in front of bird, and bust and door; ...*".⁷⁷ I assume that the narrator is losing his clear mind and is becoming a bit mad because the

⁷⁶ POE, Edgar Allan. The Raven. In: The Complete Tales and Poems of Edgar Allan Poe. Barnes and Noble. New York, 2015, p. 69.

⁷⁷ Ibid. p. 70.

place the raven is sitting. The ominous bird is sitting on the bust of Pallas who was a goddess of wisdom. While it is sitting there, shrouding the symbol of wisdom, therefore the narrator is losing his wisdom and becoming madman. And, obviously, the mysterious and nothing-to-say word “Nevermore” also supports the state of insanity. Last but not least, I would like to point out one more fact, typical for Poe as well, and that is a contrast. While the raven is black, as a symbol of death, the sculpture of Pallas is white, the colour of hope. Based on this contrast and the fact that the raven is sitting on the bust, we might say that death beats wisdom.

As it is coming to its end, the narrator wants to be alone, he wants to get rid of the bird, “*Get thee back into the tempest and the Night’s Plutonian shore!*” ... “*Leave my loneliness unbroken! – quit the bust above my door!*”⁷⁸. Nevertheless, the bird is still sitting, observing the man in the chamber who now knows that his soul will never recover anymore and so the soul “*shall be lifted – nevermore!*”⁷⁹

Unlike the other works mentioned in this bachelor thesis, this one varies. Obviously, it is its literary form which differs. The Raven is a poem, while the rest analysed works were short stories. Thanks to that, in the poem there is more to analyse, not just the Gothic elements themselves.

Poe was an extraordinary writer not just for his ability to write gripping, a bit nightmarish stories and poems but also for his talent to write it with a melody and language which foster the emotions and the whole atmosphere.

In this case, to highlight the sound of a raven, Poe uses words containing the letter “r”. Moreover, the letter “r” does not sound well, it rather indicates a gloomy and scary mood. And to do so, Poe uses rhetorical figures such as alliteration, “*weak and weary*” ... “*quaint and curious*”; inner rhyme, “*lore – door – more*” ... “*dreary – weary*”; assonance, “*And the silken, sad, uncertain rustling of each purple curtain... “*”; or the very famous refrain itself, “*Nevermore*”.

⁷⁸ POE, Edgar Allan. The Raven. In: The Complete Tales and Poems of Edgar Allan Poe. Barnes and Noble. New York, 2015, p. 71.

⁷⁹ Ibid, p. 71.

Not only the sound reminding of a sound of a raven can be found in the text but also a sound of a mechanism of a clock. That is created by regular rhyme, metre and length as well (the poem is only one hundred lines long – just as a poem should be according to Poe).

CONCLUSION

In the theoretical part of my bachelor thesis, I have tried to describe the genre of the American Gothic from its origin, through its expansion to the European countries and, eventually, to the most well-known American representative of the genre, Edgar Allan Poe. I focused on the biographical details of the author and I also mentioned his distinctive features concerning the American Gothic and his works.

Relating to the mentioned European countries, I have also pointed out the differences between American Gothic and British Dark Romanticism.

In the literary analysis, I focused on Edgar Allan Poe's prose, the short stories, in which I tried to prove the usage of the specific Gothic elements such as death, fear, madness or grief. Moreover, I tried to point out Poe's demand on the literary form, such as the length of a story, its onomatopoeic structure and figurative language that includes the metaphorical, rhythmical and symbolic elements connected to the theme ascribed to the tradition of American Gothic.

I analysed the poem "The Raven", in which I also focused on Gothic elements. As well as mentioning those elements, I wanted to interpret the poem in more detail. Focusing on simple rhymes, lines and words, my intention was to prove that the words used in the poem were chosen with a specific aim – to imitate a sound of the bird and to emphasize an inconvenient atmosphere and mood.

To sum up, both short stories and the poem contain the key elements specific and characteristic for Gothic genre and for Edgar Allan Poe as the founder of American Gothic. However, the poem includes more than "just the elements", it is fulfilled with rhetorical figures, rhyme and more, which makes is the whole effect and experience of the poem much stronger.

SOURCES

Primary sources

POE, Edgar Allan. The Black Cat. In: *The Complete Tales and Poems of Edgar Allan Poe*. Barnes and Noble. New York, 2015, p. 531-538.

POE, Edgar Allan. The Fall of the House of Usher. In: *The Complete Tales and Poems of Edgar Allan Poe*. Barnes and Noble. New York, 2015, p. 299-313.

POE, Edgar Allan. The Tell-Tale Heart. In: *The Complete Tales and Poems of Edgar Allan Poe*. Barnes and Noble. New York, 2015, p. 498-501.

POE, Edgar Allan. The Pit and the Pendulum. In: *The Complete Tales and Poems of Edgar Allan Poe*. Barnes and Noble. New York, 2015, p. 443-454.

POE, Edgar Allan. The Cask of Amontillado. In: *The Complete Tales and Poems of Edgar Allan Poe*. Barnes and Noble. New York, 2015, p. 733-738.

POE, Edgar Allan. The Raven. In: *The Complete Tales and Poems of Edgar Allan Poe*. Barnes and Noble. New York, 2015, p. 68-71.

Secondary sources

AGUIRRE, Manuel. *The Closed Space: Horror Literature and Western Symbolism*. Manchester University Press, 1990.

BOTTING, Fred. *Gothic*. London and New York: Routledge, 1996.

CROW, Charles. *American Gothic*. University of Wales Press. Cardiff, 2009.

HOGLE, Jerold. *The Cambridge Companion to Gothic Fiction*. Cambridge University Press, 2002.

KERKERING, John. Poe and Southern poetry. In: *The Cambridge Companion to Nineteenth-century American Poetry*, ed. Kerry Larson. Cambridge, 2011.

MARTIN, R., SAVOY, E., eds. *American Gothic: New Interventions in a National Narrative*. University of Iowa Press, 1998.

POE, Edgar Allan. The Poetic Principle. In: *Selected Writings of Edgar Allan Poe*. ed. Edward H. Davidson. Boston, 1956.

POE, Edgar Allan. The Rationale of Verse. In: *The Complete Tales and Poems of Edgar Allan Poe*. Vintage Books. New York, 1975.

QUINN, Justin (ed.). *Lectures on American Literature*. Karolinum, 2010.

RANSOME, Arthur. *Edgar Allan Poe: a critical study*. London, 1910.

ROYLE, Nicholas. *The Uncanny*. Manchester University Press, 2003.

SMITH, Loyd. *American Gothic Fiction*. Bloomsbury Academic, 2004.

SOVA, Dawn. *Edgar Allan Poe, A to Z*. New York: Facts on File, 2001.

Electronic sources

MULLAN, John. (2014, May 15). *The origins of the Gothic*. <https://www.bl.uk/romantics-and-victorians/articles/the-origins-of-the-gothic#>

English III American Literature. *Gothic Literature and Dark Romantics*.

<http://mskellysenglishclassnhs.weebly.com/gothic-literature-and-dark-romantics.html#>