

THE IMAGE OF HORROR AS VIEWED IN EDGAR ALLAN POE'S THREE SHORT STORIES (LIGIEA, THE BLACK CAT, THE FALL OF THE HOUSE OF USHER)

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Abstract

Edgar Allan Poe is the father of horror stories. In his three short stories, Ligiea, the Fall of the house of Usher, The Black Cat, he portrays the image of horror in the form of being buried alive or premature burial, Mental Disorder or Madness or Mentally Ill, and Supernatural. Being buried alive can be seen in The Black Cat as well as in the Fall of the house of Usher. Mentally Ill can be found in the Black Cat and in the Fall of the house of Usher. Meanwhile Supernatural image of horror is reflected in Ligiea and in The Black Cat. Being buried alive is illustrated in the way when The Narrator of the Fall of the House help Roderick Usher entombed his twin sister, while in the Black Cat the Narrator buried his wife in the wall to conceal from the police investigation. Mental Illnesses can be seen in the Black Cat when the Narrator suffers from alcoholic addicted. Roderick Usher the character of The Fall of the house of Usher suffers from not only does he live in fear, but also to have lost all interest in every kind of social contact. Supernatural is portrayed in Ligeia, when the narrator's wife, Ligiea, dead, she transforms into Lady Rowena, the new wife of the Narrator.

Keywords: Being buried alive—mentally illness--supernatural

INTRODUCTION

Edgar Allan Poe (1809-1849) was born in Boston on January 19, 1809. He was an American author, poet, editor, and literary critic, who was also associated with the American Romantic movement. First that has to be considered that Romanticism does not mean literature about love affairs. Do not confuse the term, romantic or romanticism with love stories, Harlequin romance, etc. Although love, as in any literary movement, is important in romanticism, the term means something much more different.

Romanticism is a movement in art and literature in the eighteen and nineteen centuries in revolt against the Neoclassicism of the previous centuries.

Romanticism is a term applied to literary movements. In romantics literature there is a tendency to represent life as it is not, that is unrealistic. It is as a product of the imagination rather than that of reason.

Some of the aspects of Romanticism are: The first, faith in the imagination, feeling and intuition are given more important part in life. Rules give way to freedom writing. The second, faith is in the individual, interest in man as an individual with his individual feelings and ideas, thoughts etc. The third, interest in the past, medieval or gothic romances became popular again. Stories from the past with their mysterious settings were taken up again with renewed interest. The fourth, interest in nature and the common man.

In America, the Romantic Movement was widely popular and influenced Americans writers such as James Fennimore Cooper and Washington Irving. Novels, short stories and poems replaced the sermons and manifestos of earlier days. Romantic Literature was personal and intense; it portrayed more emotion than ever seen in neoclassical literature. America's

preoccupation with freedom became a great source of motivation for Romantic writers, as many were delighted in free expression and emotion without fear of ridicule and controversy. They also put more effort into the psychological development of their characters, and the main characters typically displayed extremes of sensitivity and excitement. The works of the Romantic Era also differed from proceeding works in that, they spoke to a wider audience, partly reflecting the greater distribution of books as costs came down and literary rose during the period.

Edgar Allan Poe can be categorized as a dark romantic writer. The characteristics of dark romanticism include an emphasis on human fallibility along with the embodiment of terrifying themes and symbols and the exploration of psychological effects regarding guilt and sin. Along with Dark Romanticism, Transcendentalism was another prominent subgenre during the American Renaissance. Dark Romanticism stems from the pessimistic tendencies in Transcendentalism as well as influence garnered from the previous Romantic literary movement.

The writers choose Edgar Allan Poe's three short stories *Ligiea*, *The Black Cat*, and *The Fall of The House of Usher* as the subject of the study, because of the reasons as follows. The first one, Edgar Allan Poe's was better known for his tales of mystery and macabre. Secondly, His romantic differ to the other romantics writer. Poe's works are also considered as the part of dark romantic genre.

The writers are interested in Poe's work as the part of dark romantic genre. His works represent the highest achievement in the literary genre of the gothic horror stories. According to Bell, Poe's romantic is darker and it can be called pessimistic romantics. His works based on gothic themes that arouse horror in the reader mind. (Bell, 1988, 36-37). Poe was a famous American writer known for writing stories based on gothic themes. Gothic means that the author emphasizes the grotesques, the mysterious, the desolate, the horrible, the ghostly and,

ultimately the abject fear that can be aroused in the reader.

Based on the explanation above, the writers choose *The Image of horror* as viewed from Edgar Allan Poe's three short stories, *Ligiea*, *The Black Cat*, and *The fall of the House of usher* as the title of this study.

Horror story, a story in which the focus is on creating a feeling or fear. Such tales are of ancient origin and form substantial part of the body of folk literature. They can feature supernatural elements such as ghosts, witches, or vampires, or they can address more realistic psychological fears.

Horror story is also emerged by the grotesques. A gothic story is ghost story will often have a setting that will be in an old decaying mansion far out in a desolated countryside; the castle will be filled with cobwebs, strange noises, bats, and an abundance of secret faults and corridors, which persecuted virgins, might be running and screaming in terror. The haunted castle is a classic setting of the gothic story. The author uses every literary trick possible to give us eerie sensations or to make one jump if one hears an unexpected noise. The shadows seen menacing in these stories, there are trap doors to swallow up, and the underground passages are smelly up, slimy, and foul, all the effects are created for one reason; to give a sense of the ghostly and supernatural.

Discussion

The Image of Horror as viewed in Poe's works: *Premature Burial*, *Mental disorder*, *Supernatural*.

The Representation of Premature Burial (being buried alive)

Edgar Allan Poe was better known for his tales of mystery and macabre. His works represent the highest achievement in the literary genre of the gothic horror stories. His works based on gothic themes that arouse horror in the reader mind. Horror story is a story in which the focus is in on creating a feeling or fear. In the discussion the writers find three main

image of horror, namely premature buried or being buried alive, mental madness, and supernatural. The images are viewed in his three short stories namely, The Black Cat, Ligiea, and The Fall of the house of Usher.

The Black Cat portrays the image of horror by being buried alive, the narrator (the man) decides to bury his wife behind one of the wall of his house after accidentally killing her. His intention of burying his wife behind the wall is to prevent the police from accusing him of murder.

...The moodiness of my usual temper increased to hatred of all things and of all mankind: while from the sudden, frequent, and ungovernable outbursts of a fury to which I now blindly abandoned myself, my uncomplaining wife, alas, was the most usual and the most patient of sufferers.

One day she accompanied me, upon some household errand, into the cellar of the old building which our poverty compelled us to inhabit. The cat followed me down the steep stair, and, nearly throwing me headlong, exasperated me to madness. Uplifting an axe, and forgetting in my wrath the childish dread which had hitherto stayed my hand. I aimed a blow at the animal, which, of course, would have proved instantly fatal had it descended as I wished. But this blow was arrested by the hand of my wife. Goaded by the interference into a rage more than demoniacal, I withdrew my arm from her grasp and buried the axe in her brain. She fell dead upon the spot without a groan.

This hideous murder accomplished, I set myself forthwith, and with entire deliberation, to the task of concealing the body. I knew that I could not remove it from the house

...

Finally I hit upon what I considered a far better expedient than either of

these. I determined to wall it up in the cellar, as the monk of the Middle Ages are recorded to have walled up their victims. (Poe, 172-173)

Being buried alive also can be found in The Fall of the house of Usher. The story begins without complete explanation of the narrator's motives for arriving at the house of Usher. He mysteriously trapped by the lure of Roderick's attraction, and he cannot escape until the house of Usher collapses completely.

I could not help thinking of the wild ritual of this work, and of its probable influence 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 (previously to its final interment), in one of the numerous vaults within the main walls of the building. The worldly reason, however, assigned for this singular proceeding, was one which I did not feel at liberty to dispute. The brother had been led to his resolution (so he told me) by consideration of the unusual character of the malady of the deceased, of certain obtrusive and eager inquiries on the part of her medical men, and of the remote and exposed situation of the burial ground of the family. I will not deny that when I called to mind the sinister countenance of the person whom I met upon the staircase, on the day of my arrival at the house, I had no desire to oppose what I regarded as at best but a harmless, and by no means an unnatural, precaution.

At the request of Usher, I personally aided him in the arrangements for the temporary entombment. The body having unconfined, we two alone bore it to its rest. (Poe, 828-829) After they buried Lady Madeline, sometimes

afterward Usher hears the terrific sound.

“Now 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 dare 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 feeble first movements in the hollow coffin. I heard them —many, many days ago—yet I dared not — I dared not speak! And now—to-night—Ethelred—ha-ha!—the braking of the hermit’s door, and the death — cry of the dragon, and the clangor of the shield — say, rather, the rending of her coffin, and the grating of the iron hinges of her prison, and her struggles within the coppered archway of the vault! Oh! Whither shall I fly? Will she not be here anon? Is she not hurrying to upbraid me for my haste? Have I not heard her footstep on the stair? Do I not distinguish that heavy and horrible beating of her heart? Madman!’ —here he sprang furiously to his feet, and shrieked out his syllables, as if in the effort he were giving up his soul---“MADMAN! I TELL YOU THAT SHE NOW STANDS WITHOUT THE DOOR!”

As if in the superhuman energy of his utter there had been found the potency of a spell, the huge antique panels to which the speaker pointed threw slowly back, upon the instant, their ponderous and ebony jaws. It was the work of the rushing gust—but then without those doors there did stand the lofty and enshrouded figure of the lady Madeline of Usher. There was blood upon her white robes, and the evidence of some bitter struggle upon every portion of her emaciated frame. For a moment she remained trembling and reeling heavily inward upon the person of her brother, 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.

From that chamber, and from that mansion, I fled aghast. (Poe, 833-834).

The Representation of Madness or Mental Disorder

The following image of horror that Poe viewed is the mental disorder or madness. The image also viewed in the two works *The Black Cat* and *The Fall of the house of Usher*. The works of Edgar Allan Poe are famous for featuring dark themes, violence, and psychologically unstable characters. In the *Black Cat*, the narrator attempts to kill his cat but murders his wife when she tries to defend the animal thus madness is represented through the narrator’s lack of sufficient reasoning for committing murder. Furthermore the narrator commits and successfully conceal murder, but get caught because of their own insanity.

Madness or Mental Disorder is also found in *The Fall of the House of Usher*. In the story there are three insane people crammed together in a huge, secluded mansion. From the three persons (characters), Roderick Usher is the clearest to show the madness even the narrator of the story tells the reader that he had been summoned by his old friend Roderick Usher, who suffers from a mental illness and demands his companion’s help. Further the narrator tells the reader that Roderick Usher looks terribly pale, and unhealthy. He can only endure a certain amount of sensual stimulation anymore, and he seems to have an aura of distress. His mental disorder can be found also in his behavior. Not only does he live in fear, but also to have lost all interest in every kind of social contact. He has not left his house for the past years, and his sister Madeline has been his only company in this time – span. This hints that he might have lost interest in every kind of activity, just like his sister. His behavior seems odd, both lethargy and loss of interest in activities are symptoms of major depression. He is not

only become isolated and lethargic, he also suffers from sadness and great mental agony. Roderick's thoughts seem to be haunted by fear and death, the fear of his own death. Moreover, his thoughts about death are more than a mere expression of fear one could argue that Roderick Usher is experiencing delusions or even hallucinations.

The representation of supernatural as the image of horror

In Ligeia, the supernatural is clearly seen. An unnamed narrator opens the story by claiming not to remember the circumstances in which he met his beloved, the lady Ligeia. The figure of Ligeia is immediately linked to an indistinct, dream-like feeling, and in this way she becomes connected also to all longing or sense of loss. The list of descriptors such as, her quietness, her ability to sneak up on the narrator, her low voice, and pale skin create a powerful impression of Ligeia and all of these features combine to create an image of ghostly, ethereal woman. Ligeia's eyes are an important symbol of the story, because they provide a warning sign of the supernatural, superstitious side of the narrator. Wherever Ligeia's eyes appear in the story, the narrator is under a kind of spell –they fascinate him. The supernatural idea also appears when Ligeia dies and he marries his new wife, Lady Rowena. Grief and the absence of

Ligeia has transformed the narrator's experience of love. He is unable to love Rowena.

CONCLUSION

To sum up, Edgar Allan Poe is the father of horror stories. In his three stories, The Black Cat, The Fall of the House of Usher and Ligeia, the image of horror portrayed in the form of being buried alive or premature Burial, Mentally ill or Madness and Supernatural aspect. In the Black Cat, the image of being buried alive portrayed when the narrator entombed his wife and his cat in the wall. Being buried alive also can be seen in The Fall of the house of Usher when Roderick entombed his twin sister in the wall. Meanwhile mentally ill or madness of the narrator illustrated the black cat in the way he takes to mistreating not only the other animals but also his wife. The supernatural image of horror is also can be seen in the Black Cat. The cat's name is Pluto, which could refer to the Greek's mythology and religion as the god of the underworld. Besides, the Black Cat as witches in disguise as the narrator's wife says. In Ligeia, the supernatural qualities begin to wither on her death bed and the narrator suffers a horrible realization of what he is about to lose.

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