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# **Edgar Allan Poe's Arabesque: An Analysis of This Subgenre**

Arabesky Edgara Allana Poea: Analýza tohoto subžánru

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Aneta Benáčková

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## **Anotace**

Arabeska je termín Edgara Allana Poea, aplikovaný na příběhy, které byly symbolické, esteticky příjemné a do určité míry dokonce matematické a mohou být jako takové vnímány vizuálně, slyšitelně nebo dotykem. Řád a jednota struktury příběhu se může promítnout i do architektonického prostoru, do kterého je děj zasazen. Spíše, než zkoumání gotických prvků budou cílem analýzy pouze arabesky jako subžánr v povídkách „Zánik domu Usherů,“ „Jáma a kyvadlo,“ „Maska Rudé smrti,“ „Zrádné srdce,“ „Černý kocour,“ a „Sud vína amontilladského.“

## **Abstract**

Arabesque is a term Edgar Allan Poe applied to stories that were symbolic, aesthetically pleasing, and to some degree even mathematical, and may be perceived as such visually, audibly, or by touch. Order and unity of the structure of the story may be also reflected in the architectural space in which the plot is set. Rather than examining Gothic features, only the arabesque features will be the target of analysis, hence “The Fall of the House of Usher,” “The Pit and the Pendulum,” “The Masque of the Red Death,” “The Tell-Tale Heart,” “The Black Cat” and finally “The Cask of Amontillado.”

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## 1.0 Introduction

Edgar Allan Poe, a strange presence among the second generation of professional American authors, after Cooper and Irving, has captivated generations of readers throughout the world while baffling academics. He shattered expectations and both followed and defied literature traditions from the very beginning. Poe was driven to push the frontiers of literary depiction by his self-proclaimed urge to “conquer or die—succeed or be humiliated.”<sup>1</sup> The biography of Edgar Allan Poe, the enigmatic creator of *The Raven*, the Gothic romance *The Fall of the House of Usher*, and the very first investigative fiction, *The Murders in the Rue Morgue*, is still shrouded in mystery and some scholars like to sensationalize the most puzzling parts of Poe’s life. This thesis presents a fair summary of his career and writings, focusing especially his on arabesque stories. Most of his life was just not spectacular, it was frequently misery, yet it did not stifle or distort Poe’s incredible imagination. However, it is debatable if his creativity was partially fuelled by his personal circumstances. Because he spent most of his first twenty years in and around Richmond, Virginia, besides some essential years in the United Kingdom, Poe is typically identified with the South.<sup>2</sup>

Over the course of his brief and stormy career, Edgar Allan Poe mastered a multitude of literary styles. Poe bucked convention as a storyteller by crafting gothic stories of mystery, horror, and suspense that are still popular one hundred and seventy years later. Poe’s experience of early nineteenth-century American life drove his iconoclasm and impacted his literary legacy. At the beginning of the thesis, a portrayal of Poe’s life and times by considering his geographical, social, and literary circumstances shows how he was influenced by the publishing industry and breakthroughs in science and technology.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Poe, E. A., & Kennedy, J. G. (2006). *The Portable Edgar Allan Poe*. New York: Penguin Books, pg. 11.

<sup>2</sup> Fisher, B. F. (2008). *The Cambridge Introduction to Edgar Allan Poe*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, pg. 11.

<sup>3</sup> Hayes, J. K. (2014). *Edgar Allan Poe in Context*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, pg. 3.

Like many other nineteenth-century authors, Poe produced arabesque stories in addition to his other famous masterpieces. His *Collection of Arabesque and Grotesque Stories* in 1840 follow a writing tradition and, like Johnson, Moore, Byron, and others, who paved the way for this new genre. However, it is unclear if these stories are truly composed in the original style. Some experts debate whether Poe aspired to write in the Arabesque or if commercial requirements of convention in writing directed him to do so.

Poe's contradictory trading of incorporeality and mysticism, crudeness and solemnity, vacuous satire, and grave seriousness, may explain both his vast appeal and his resistance to easy classification. His desire to surprise or perplex drove him to question commonly held beliefs. Poe indicates that the deepest truths are neither remote nor obscure, but rather concealed simply by their immediacy, reversing the normal logic of surface depth links.

Edgar Allan Poe belonged to the Romanticism movement in literature, which emerged in the late 18th century and lasted until the mid-19th century. It was a reaction against the rationalism and formalism that had dominated the literature of the preceding Enlightenment era, and instead emphasized emotion, individualism, and the beauty of nature. Romantic writers often explored the darker aspects of human nature and the supernatural, and many of them were interested in exploring the mysteries of the human mind. They also frequently drew upon medieval folklore and mythological themes in their works. The Romantics were known for their use of vivid imagery, intense emotion, and heightened language, as well as their rejection of traditional literary forms and structures. Some of the other most famous writers associated with the Romanticism movement include William Wordsworth, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, John Keats, Percy Bysshe Shelley, Lord Byron, Mary Shelley, Nathaniel Hawthorne, and Herman Melville.

## 1.1 Edgar Allan Poe: An Introduction

On January 19, 1809, Edgar Allan Poe, the son of travelling theatre performers, was born in Boston. David Poe, Edgar's father, had forsaken his family, though the factors responsible for his withdrawal have never been revealed. The dying widow and her orphaned children, Edgar, and Rosalie were at first supported by the community. After that, Mrs Poe grew sick in December of the same year and died. Rosalie became Rosalie Mackenzie Poe after being taken into the family of Mr and Mrs William Mackenzie. She later resided in the Washington, DC area. After being orphaned in 1811, Edgar became the ward of John and Frances Allan of Richmond, Virginia, who owned a slave plantation, travelling with them to England in 1815, aged 6 years.<sup>4</sup>

Poe attended a private school which was regarded as appropriate for children from rich families at the time, and he appears to have maintained friendly connections with the Allans during this time. John Allan chose to visit Great Britain in 1815 to promote his company's economic interests. Edgar moved to England with his family, first to Scotland, then to Stoke Newington, a rural location near London, where he attended the Reverend John Bransby's Manor House School. Poe's story "William Wilson" would subsequently mention this school and after that, the Allan family returned to Richmond in 1820.<sup>5</sup>

When John Allan's uncle, William Galt, died in 1825. Consequently, life for the Allans altered dramatically. Allan had inherited a large fortune, and Edgar felt that as a foster son, he would get it as well. Allan, on the other hand, was a philanderer, fathering multiple illegitimate children, which would eventually prove fatal for Edgar. Poe's love feelings for a neighbour, Sarah Elmira Royster, were blocked by her father, who may have thought the two were too young to marry. Poe was unaware that their personal letters had been intercepted until long after Sarah Elmira

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<sup>4</sup> Poe, E. A., & Kennedy, J. G. (2006). *The Portable Edgar Allan Poe*. New York: Penguin Books, pg. 3.

<sup>5</sup> Fisher, B. F. (2008). *The Cambridge Introduction to Edgar Allan Poe*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, pg. 12.



had married Alexander B. Shelton, a considerably older and wealthier man who had been approved by her father.<sup>6</sup>

Poe enrolled in the University of Virginia in 1826, where he wrote a comedy but burned the manuscript and gambling debts caused him to fail, and after a squabble with his foster father, he moved to Boston.<sup>7</sup> He enrolled in the US Army as “Edgar A. Perry” and published his first book of poetry, *Tamerlane and Other Poems*, there in 1827. He resigned as sergeant-major after tours of duty in South Carolina and Virginia, and he temporarily attended the United States Military Academy in New York between the publication of two subsequent works of poetry, *Al Aaraaf, Tamerlane, and Minor Poems* (1829) and *Poems* (1831). Poe’s life was tormented by challenges and worries about his limited financial resources more than anything else. Poe transferred his abilities to fiction writing in the early 1830s, receiving no revenue and little notoriety from his poems but nevertheless eager to seek a career as an author. Even though these are the haziest years of his life, he appears to have gone through an extensive and intensive course of familiarizing himself with what constituted best-selling short fiction including European works, which then focused on either horrifying, derived from antecedent Gothic tradition, or comic themes, or combinations of humour and horror. These characteristics were particularly obvious in stories published by *Blackwood’s Edinburgh Magazine*. Poe started making money by writing short tales, which, like many of his poems, have a trajectory from low-key starts to dramatic denouements, either out of a need for money or because he divined the essence of horror fiction. As a result, he adapted the popular horror story, which was notably popular in *Blackwood’s Edinburgh Magazine*.<sup>8</sup>

After being court-martialled and banished from West Point Military Academy, he sought sanctuary in Baltimore with his aunt, Maria Clemm, and began writing fascinating stories for newspapers and magazines; in 1835, he was hired at the *Southern Literary Messenger* in Richmond. He married Virginia Clemm, his

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<sup>6</sup> Fisher, B. F. (2008) *The Cambridge Introduction to Edgar Allan Poe*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, pg. 13.

<sup>7</sup> Poe, E. A., & Kennedy, J. G. (2006). *The Portable Edgar Allan Poe*. New York: Penguin Books, pg. 2.

<sup>8</sup> Fisher, B. F. (2008). *The Cambridge Introduction to Edgar Allan Poe*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, pg. 14.

thirteen-year-old cousin, publicly in 1836, although he was possibly previously secretly married to her. Poe rose to prominence in the *Southern Literary Messenger* by penning scathing reviews and thereby making many enemies, but he also improved the journal's literary quality and increased its distribution and renown.<sup>9</sup> Poe lost his job in 1837 due to economic hardships and drunken lapses, so he relocated to New York and finished a novel, "The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym," which was published in 1838.<sup>10</sup>

Poe had moved to Philadelphia during the time, where he penned "Ligeia," "The Fall of the House of Usher," and "William Wilson." Poe conceived designs for a high-quality monthly periodical while working as an editor at *Burton's Gentleman's Magazine* and *Graham's Magazine*. He also published his first collection of stories, *Tales of the Grotesque and Arabesque* (1840), and subsequently wrote "The Murders in the Rue Morgue," the first modern detective story, and "The Gold-Bug," the prize-winning cryptography yarn. His wife had tuberculosis after suffering a haemorrhage in 1842.<sup>11</sup> In 1844, Poe returned to New York and artistically hit his stride, writing stories like "The Premature Burial" and "The Purloined Letter." His poem "The Raven" made him famous in 1845, and he published two more books that year: *Tales* and *The Raven and Other Poems*. However, *The Broadway Review*, a weekly literary journal he had acquired, went bankrupt in early 1846. Poe moved to Fordham, where he continued to compose and care for Virginia until her death in 1847, after her death his drinking consequently increased. He wrote "Eureka" (1848), a broad cosmic prose poem, as well as some of his most famous poems, including "The Bells," "Eldorado," and "Annabel Lee."<sup>12</sup>

Poe had a very active year in 1849. Several of his articles were published by *Graham's Magazine* and the *Messenger*, but the *Flag of Our Union*, a Boston weekly, published most of his writings. Poe had little esteem for this publication, but the substantial fees kept him coming back. "Von Kempelen and His Discovery"

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<sup>9</sup> Poe, E. A., & Kennedy, J. G. (2006). *The Portable Edgar Allan Poe*. New York: Penguin Books, pg. 3-4.

<sup>10</sup> Poe, E. A., & Kennedy, J. G. (2006). *The Portable Edgar Allan Poe*. New York: Penguin Books, pg. 18.

<sup>11</sup> Poe, E. A., & Kennedy, J. G. (2006). *The Portable Edgar Allan Poe*. New York: Penguin Books, pg. 3.

<sup>12</sup> Poe, E. A., & Kennedy, J. G. (2006). *The Portable Edgar Allan Poe*. New York: Penguin Books, pg. 28

(a hoax tale), “Eldorado” and “For Annie” (poetry more positive in content and tone than those generally associated with Poe’s poems), and the satirical tale “Hop-Frog,” all inspired by the California gold rush, were published in the *Flag*. “The Bells” and “Annabel Lee,” two more poems, were finished and sold to Sartain for *Union Magazine*. In late June, Poe left Fordham University for the South, but he paused in Philadelphia, where he appears to have suffered from delirium tremens because of too much drinking. After recovering, he travelled to Richmond to reconnect with old pals. He also became engaged to Sarah Elmira Shelton, his childhood sweetheart who had become a widow, despite her children’s disapproval of the engagement. Poe gave three lectures on “The Poetic Principle”, the first on September 14 in Norfolk and the second on September 17 and 24 in Richmond. He met with John Daniel (editor of the *Richmond Examiner*), who agreed to print altered versions of several of his poetry on multiple occasions.<sup>13</sup>

Poe intended to return to Fordham University and then get married. Because of different reports from people who saw him during his final days in Richmond, what happened next is unknown. On September 27, he allegedly boarded a ship for Baltimore, but no sign of him can be traced until 3 October, when he was discovered delirious in a Baltimore pub. Dr Joseph E. Snodgrass, an old acquaintance, and Henry Herring, Poe’s uncle by marriage, drove him to Washington Hospital, where he was treated by Dr John J. Moran and remained comatose and delirious until his death the morning of October 7 1849.<sup>14</sup>

Poe’s cause of death has never been determined with certainty. Stroke, undetected diabetes or hypoglycaemia, hydrophobia, and progressive poisoning from air pollution are also hypotheses (caused by the then-new technology of gas lighting, which released poisonous fumes). As a result, the author who wrote so regularly about riddles continues to create puzzles even after his death.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Fisher, B. F. (2008). *The Cambridge Introduction to Edgar Allan Poe*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, pg. 20.

<sup>14</sup> Poe, E. A., & Kennedy, J. G. (2006). *The Portable Edgar Allan Poe*. New York: Penguin Books, pg. 31.

<sup>15</sup> Fisher, B. F. (2008). *The Cambridge Introduction to Edgar Allan Poe*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, pg. 21.

Poe was buried at the Poe family gravesite in Westminster Presbyterian Church graveyard in Baltimore, Maryland on Monday, October 8, under the direction of a cousin. Mrs. Clemm did not find out about Poe's death for several days. Several briefs and positive obituaries appeared in the *New York Tribune* on October 9, along with a longer, disparaging piece by *Ludwig* (Rufus W. Griswold). This slanderous story was further expanded and published in Griswold's edition of *Poe's Writings* (1850–56), from which depictions of Poe as a near-immoral, demonic figure has persisted in many circles. In his review of the Griswold edition, Lewis Gaylord Clark insulted Poe's character and literary ability. An account by George Gilfillan was originally published in the *London Critic* on March 1, 1854 and reproduced on both sides of the Atlantic.<sup>16</sup>

Gilfillan praised Poe the writer's analytical and creative powers while brutally criticizing his personal immorality. Poe's supporters responded quickly with more tempered memoirs, including those by Nathaniel Parker Willis, James Russell Lowell, and Sarah Helen Whitman. Other narratives, written by more ardent fans frequently contributed just as much to the obfuscation of the truth about Poe as the slanderous biographies had. In some cases, these narratives have perpetuated false information and misunderstandings about Poe's life, personality, and literary achievements. Some fans have perpetuated the idea that Poe was a heavy drinker and drug user, despite the lack of concrete evidence to support these claims. Others have contributed to the myth that Poe was a tortured and melancholy figure, constantly haunted by his own demons, when in fact he was known to have had a good sense of humour and lively social life. Over a century would pass before a full-length balanced biography appeared.<sup>17</sup>

Poe published about sixty poems, seventy-odd stories, one full novel, a large prose poem of cosmological theory, and hundreds of articles and reviews throughout his brief lifetime. He made several advances in poetry, criticism, and prose fiction that influenced literary culture worldwide. However, Poe's greatest accomplishment as a writer goes beyond his technical or formal breakthroughs. Poe worked in the

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<sup>16</sup> *ibidem*

<sup>17</sup> Fisher, B. F. (2008). *The Cambridge Introduction to Edgar Allan Poe*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, pg. 21.

context of U.S. nation-building and territorial expansion, the rise of a capitalist market economy, the decline of religious authority, the development and secularization of mass culture, and the advent of modern scientific scepticism. Poe perceived the spiritual hole opening in an era dominated by a secular, scientific knowledge of life and death as well as any other writer of his period. “Eureka” might be viewed as a late, desperate attempt to establish a philosophy of spiritual survival from the rules of physics—from the relentless materialism of science itself. He portrayed the problem of the forlorn self, confronting its own mortality and troubled by doubts about a spiritual hereafter, in his most spectacular poetry and fiction.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Poe, E. A., & Kennedy, J. G. (2006). *The Portable Edgar Allan Poe*. New York: Penguin Books, pg. 31.

## 1.2 Poe and His Literary Career

When Poe chose a career as an author in the early 1830s after attending a university, the literary calling was exceptionally much in flux. Not so long sometime recently, the profession was overwhelmed by what Poe would himself call “gentlemen of elegant leisure,”<sup>19</sup> reflecting the standard desire that journalists were people of wealth, who did not require payment for their writings to survive. The scholarly commercial centre of the 1830s and 1840s, be that as it may, greatly expanded, with a circulation of scholarly magazines and the publications of novels growing exponentially and advertising offering the prospect of a scholarly living wage. There was no national advertising for writing per se, but unmistakable regions associated with urban centres such as Boston, Philadelphia, and New York City and in South Richmond became distributing and circulation hubs.<sup>20</sup>

His failure to secure that steady career shows disdain toward his exceptional efficiency and uncovers the difficulty of being a self-sustaining scholarly proficient in this period. His reviews of books also made enemies of powerful people such as Henry Wadsworth Longfellow. In 1845, Poe published a review of Longfellow’s book *Ballads and Other Poems* in the *Broadway Journal*. In the review, Poe criticized Longfellow’s work as derivative and lacking originality. Poe also accused Longfellow of imitating the style of other poets and claimed that Longfellow’s poetry lacked passion and depth.<sup>21</sup> Despite his rehashed disappointments, Poe’s venture into a market-based model of scholarly publications can be seen within the kind of composing he produced over the span of his career, planned to reach the most extensive conceivable audience. His 1835 brief story *Berenice* is characteristic: distributed in *Richmond’s Southern Scholarly Flag-bearer*, it describes the horrifying story of the narrator’s obsession with the adored title character’s teeth and her passing, whereupon the storyteller, in an oblivious state, unearths her carcass and expels her teeth, as it were to discover that she was not dead after all. After

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<sup>19</sup> Kennedy, J. G. (2001). *A Historical Guide to Edgar Allan Poe*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pg. 69

<sup>20</sup> Hayes, J. K. (2014). *Edgar Allan Poe in Context*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, pg. 160

<sup>21</sup> Alphonso, C. (1921). *Edgar Allan Poe; How To Know Him*. Garden City, New York: Garden City Publishing Co., pg. 142

distributing this story and accepting complaints from scandalized peruses, Thomas W. White, the magazine's editor and proprietor communicated his displeasure to Poe, who looked for a commentary position there. Poe reacted, demonstrating his mindful thought of the components of the scholarly marketplace and the mass gathering of people's preferences that it could be in terrible taste. Ofense, the history of all magazines appears doubtlessly that those which have achieved celebrity were indebted for it to articles and if they are or are not in awful taste is small irrelevant. He also replied to Thomas that he must be studied, and these things are perpetually looked after carefully. He proposed to outfit him each month with a story he alluded to.<sup>22</sup>

Beneath the administration of a mass market-oriented scholarly commercial centre, the aesthetic address of "taste" is, as Poe affirms, "little to the purpose." Given that such stories were studied with "avidity," it behoves a scholarly magazine (and creator) to the activity in them, paying greater consideration to circulation numbers – rather than any complaints that may well be enlisted – to gauge success. Poe's celebrated fashion, characterized by his increased tone, overstated plots, and odd subject matter and sent in an extent of the prevalent fiction and idyllic classes over the course of his career, was all portion of a concerted effort to reach the broadest conceivable audience. Poe's self-conscious introduction of his work toward a mass audience can too be perceiver with his grasp of what Meredith McGill calls "the culture of reprinting."<sup>23</sup>

Poe's republishing of his earlier works is related to his Arabesque stories in that many of his previously published tales, such as "The Fall of the House of Usher" and "The Pit and the Pendulum," were included in his later collection of tales that he called *Tales of the Grotesque and Arabesque*. By including his earlier works in this collection, Poe was able to showcase his signature style and cement his reputation as a master of arabesque and macabre. Additionally, the inclusion of these stories in the *Tales of the Grotesque and Arabesque* allowed Poe to connect them thematically and create a cohesive body of work that exemplified his unique literary style. Maybe the

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<sup>22</sup> Alphonso, C. (1921). *Edgar Allan Poe; How To Know Him*. Garden City, New York: Garden City Publishing Co., pg. 142

<sup>23</sup> Kennedy, J. G. (2001). *A Historical Guide to Edgar Allan Poe*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pg. 70

foremost celebrated case of household republishing is Poe's lyric "The Raven", which was, to begin with, distributed under a pseudonym in *Unused York's American Audit* in 1845. In the long run, however, "The Raven" showed up in a host of daily papers and magazines in *Unused York*, Philadelphia, Richmond, and London. Traditional histories of the American creative show the reprinting and robbery as banes of mid-nineteenth-century scholarly professionalism, but proof proposes that numerous creators of the time, including Nathaniel Hawthorne and Poe, effectively sought to reprint. While Poe spoke out against republishing and not paying him, he grasped the practice of reprinting domestic writing. Within the same 1835 letter to White, Poe indicated that famous stories like "Berenice" "find their way into other periodicals, and into the papers, and in this way, taking hold upon the open intellect they increase the reputation of the source where they originated."<sup>24</sup>

In spite of the fact that not one or the other writer nor the unique distributor had gotten compensation for the republished work, the circulation of the content and distribution source title gathered a kind of typical capital (Poe calls it "celebrity," but French humanist Pierre Bourdieu seem have named it "cultural capital") that can be converted into more fabric capital (i.e., higher cost per story or more favourable terms for book distribution for the creator, more prominent deals or more subscriptions for the source distribution) at a few future dates. Poe consistently tailored many of his short stories and lyrics for republishing, utilizing what McGill has called "strategic generality." Composing with a self-consciously overstated style, utilizing routine non-specific forms and intentioned dubious settings, Poe was attempting to saddle – or maybe then fight against – the instruments of the well-known scholarly commercial centre and, in doing so he reflected his venture in a market-based show of literary professionalism.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Hayes, J. K. (2014). *Edgar Allan Poe in Context*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, pg. 161.

<sup>25</sup> Hayes, J. K. (2014). *Poe and the Printed Word*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, pg. 38.



## 2 An Analysis of the Arabesque Subgenre

In the 12th century, the arabesque began to take shape as an ornament with its distinctive features. However, a clear distinction between a traditional tendril and an arabesque can be noticed in the tendril lines' direction.

Poe could have tried to create comparable groupings in Gothic literature by utilizing the terms “grotesque” and “arabesque” as subcategories of Gothic art. For instance, the “grotesque” tales are those in which the protagonist is turned into a parody or satire, as in “The Man That Was Used Up.” The “arabesque” tales, like “The Fall of the House of Usher,” concentrate on a specific, frequently psychological, facet of a character. A distant relative of Poe, Harry Lee Poe, stated that “arabesque” refers to “terror,” which eschews blood and gore in favour of frightening the reader, while “grotesque” refers to “horror,” which is nasty and frequently repulsive. However, it is challenging to precisely define Poe’s intentions for these terms, and it is likewise harder to categorize his stories.<sup>26</sup>

The title “very well describes the stories’ nature,” according to their one-line announcement in the original publication in *Burton’s Gentleman’s Magazine*. However, there is substantial disagreement over the definitions of Poe’s terms “grotesque” and “arabesque”. Poe most likely read Sir Walter Scott’s essay *On the Supernatural in Fictitious Composition*, which utilized such words. Both words allude to a style of Islamic wall decoration, particularly employed in mosques. These oriental decorations exhibit an ambiguity unique to Islamic art in that it is impossible to determine which building was the first and which was the second. Made up of a combination of lines and places, they can only be seen when they are seen together and not alone. To satisfy several possible reading solutions, specific stylistic patterns and their recurrence can be used to generate the arabesque element in literature. These artistic movements are renowned for their complexity. In his article *The Philosophy of Furniture*, Poe used the term “arabesque” in this context.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> Levin, Harry (1971). *Twentieth Century Interpretations of Poe’s Tales: A Collection of Critical Essays: Notes from Underground*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, pg. 24-25.

<sup>27</sup> Poe, Harry Lee (2008). *Edgar Allan Poe: An Illustrated Companion to His Tell-Tale Stories*. New York: Metro Books, pg. 65-66

### 3 Poe's Stories: An Introduction

Poe is an expert on horror and Gothic literature, who has yet to be approached about his fascination with death and its manifestation. In some cases, Poe's dreary and depressing existence cast a shadow over his writings, filling the pages with darkness and despair. He created a universe with a bleak and depressing mood by combining horror and sorrow in his writing. However, it is important to note that Poe's writing is not entirely without humour or satire. While much of his work is indeed dark and melancholy, he also incorporated elements of parody and burlesque comedy in some of his stories, such as "The Devil in the Belfry" and "Never Bet the Devil Your Head."

The German writer E. T. A. Hoffmann had a significant influence on the tales of Edgar Allan Poe. Hoffmann's work was characterized by its use of the supernatural and the fantastic, and he is considered a master of Gothic horror and Romanticism. Poe was also inspired by Hoffmann's use of music and art in his writing. Furthermore, both authors were interested in exploring the darker aspects of human nature and the supernatural, with a focus on psychological horror and the macabre.

Poe's critics have associated his name and writings with German romanticism since the beginning. *Southern Literary Messenger's* editor thought the Poe's story "Berenice" was best to introduce to the readers with the following line: "Whilst we confess we think there is too much German horror in his subject, there can be only one opinion as to his force and style."<sup>28</sup>

And ever since, critics of Poe have typically thought that his stories have a German influence. Some people have in fact disputed it. Poe has spoken himself on the matter as follows:

"I am led to think that it is the prevalence of the Arabesque in my serious tales which has induced one or two of my critics to tax me, in all friendliness, with what they have been pleased to call Germanism and gloom. The charge is in bad taste and the grounds of the accusation have not been sufficiently considered. Let us admit for the

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<sup>28</sup> Cobb, Palmer (1908). *The Influence of E. T. A. Hoffmann on the Tales of Edgar Allan Poe*. Studies in Philology, pg. 11.

moment that the “phantasy pieces” now given are Germanic or what not. But the truth is that with a single exception, there is no one of the stories in which the scholar should recognize the distinctive features of that species of pseudo-horror which we are taught to call Germanic for no better reason than that some of the secondary names of German literature have become identified with its folly. If in many of my productions terror has been the thesis, I maintain that terror is not of Germany, but of the soul.”<sup>29</sup>

His Gothic short stories give a lasting impression of melancholy and horror since they are unlike other American short stories. He is a maestro of mystery and the macabre who stands out for being unique. His poetry and stories are very inventive and feature detailed portrayals. He is a real genius who creates works and expressions of the highest calibre. Poe’s style of writing is uniquely dark. His stories deal with the recurrent themes of death and loneliness. He is brilliant at narrating mysterious gothic tales. Many of his stories are murder mysteries. With his intricate style and subtle tone, Poe successfully commands the reader’s attention and rewards them with cohesive essence.<sup>30</sup>

Poe’s psychological condition and the reasons for his behaviour played a role in the mystery surrounding Poe’s works. Speculation about him is still interesting today. Poe is a talented writer who also infuses his dark, enigmatic, and disturbing nature into his works. Poe included psychologically disturbed individuals in his writings to produce psychological thrillers, which nevertheless make his stories be thrilling to read. Poe not only pioneered a new literary form but also provided inspiration for contemporary horror writers like Stephen King. Readers have contemporary science fiction and detective mystery novels as well as movies in the same genre because of Poe’s distinctive writing style and topic selection. Without Poe, detective, mystery, and science fiction literature and films would not exist.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Cobb, Palmer (1908). *The Influence of E. T. A. Hoffmann on the Tales of Edgar Allan Poe*. Studies in Philology, pg. 11.

<sup>30</sup> González, Beatriz (2010). *A descent into Edgar Allan Poe and his works: the bicentennial*. Peter Lang, pg. 102-103.

<sup>31</sup> ibidem

### ***3.1 The Black Cat***

The main character reveals his murderous crime at the conclusion of the short story “The Black Cat,” which utilizes an unreliable narrator to depict a tale of the unremitting effects of alcoholism. The narrator brags about how his wife shares his well-known empathy and concern for animals. The family owns a big black cat named Pluto, which is the narrator’s favourite pet. The narrator’s obsession with alcohol and his own harshness and perversity grew as the years went by. He mistreats the animals and his wife. The narrator graphically describes how he removes one of the cat’s eyes before hanging the animal up on a branch of his tree. The narrator’s home caught fire the night of the hanging, and everything was destroyed. A neighbour is said to have thrown a cat through a window to alert the occupants of the room to a fire on one plaster wall that was still standing. The narrator was profoundly terrified by this scene and over time started to miss the cat. He took another cat home after seeing a cat resembling Pluto in a dingy pub. Unlike Pluto, who had a pure black coat, this cat had a white patch of hair. This creature gained the narrator’s utter contempt as well, and its overbearing attention to him drove him insane with hate. The cat sped by the narrator and his wife as they walked down the steps into the building’s cellar one day when they first moved in. The storyteller attempted to kill the animal with an axe, but when his wife intervened, he murdered her instead. He made the choice to conceal her corpse within the house, inside one of the cellar walls. He was satisfied with his work and the fact that the black cat appeared to have disappeared after completing his mission. Police officers arrived to extensively search his home four days later. He had no guilt-related feelings, the only assurance was that his wife’s body would never be discovered. He boasted about the cellar’s architectural development as he tapped joyously on the walls. A dreadful wailing cry, nevertheless, sounded from inside the wall at that knocking. The body and the black cat were both inside when the cops took it down, and the one-eyed corpse was gazing directly at the narrator.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Hammond, J. R. (1981). *An Edgar Allan Poe companion: a guide to the short stories, romances and essays*. London: Macmillan, pg. 82.

### 3.1.1 Arabesque Analysis: *The Black Cat*

A fascinating exploration of the human psyche, “The Black Cat” is filled with symbolism and motifs that add depth and complexity to the narrative. Among these arabesque elements that Poe weaves into the story, including the black cat itself, the hanging of the cat, and the mysterious “other cat” that appears later in the story. These motifs help to create a sense of otherness and unease, and the house’s cries add to the gothic atmosphere.

The most obvious motif in the story is the black cat. The unnamed narrator describes his sustained love for animals and how he acquired a cat as a kitten. The cat quickly becomes his favourite, but this love turns to hatred when the narrator begins drinking and consequently becomes increasingly abusive to his wife and pets. Eventually, he hangs the cat from a tree, an act that he later regrets when his house burns down, while the cat’s remains are nowhere to be found. The black cat is a classic symbol of bad luck and superstition, but in this story, it takes on a more complex meaning. The narrator’s love for the cat represents the good within him, while his hatred and abuse of the cat represent his darker impulses brought about by drunkenness. The fact that the cat comes back to haunt him after its death is a powerful symbol of the narrator’s inability to escape his own guilt and darkness.<sup>33</sup>

The hanging of the cat is another motif that Poe uses to horrifying effect in the story comparable to the crucifixion of Christ, just as black men were hung from trees connected with lynching in the South. The hang act itself is shocking and brutal, but it also serves as a metaphor for the narrator’s descent into madness. The fact that he hangs the innocent cat from a tree, a symbol of life and growth, shows the depths to which he has fallen. The hanging of the cat also sets the stage for the rest of the story, as it creates a sense of foreboding and unease that permeates the narrative. The narrator’s guilt and fear over what he has done lead him to become increasingly unstable and paranoid, so the reader is left wondering what other horrors he is capable of.

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<sup>33</sup> Reeder, Roberta (1974). *The Black Cat as a Study in Repression*. The Johns Hopkins University Press, pg. 20.

Finally, the appearance of the “other cat” near the end of the story adds an overall sense of mystery and unease. The narrator naturally believes that the cat is a reincarnation of the original black cat, just as Jesus was resurrected, and this belief is contradicted when he notices that the second cat also has a white mark on its chest. The appearance of the second cat is a powerful symbol of the narrator’s guilt and his inability to escape his past. It also suggests that his cycle of violence and abuse will continue, as the narrator is unable to break free from his own destructive tendencies.

The reader comes across a scheme full of adjectives connected with the main protagonist of the story and the cat but comparatively little linked to his wife. The benefit of this frequent use of adjectives is that they strengthen and make possible for the narrator to vividly describe events seen by readers as very pleasant. While introducing the cat to the reader, the narrator preferred to utilise numerous adjectives that let the reader visualise the cat. This animal was all black, very huge and beautiful, and incredibly sage. Poe used several adjectives, including “red,” “extended,” “solitary,” and “hideous,” in the sentence describing the cat, which reads: “Upon its head, with red extended mouth and solitary eye of fire, sat the hideous beast whose craft had seduced me into murder, and whose informing voice had consigned me to the hangman.”<sup>34</sup>

Psychology or mental condition of the narrator in Edgar Allan Poe’s short story “The Black Cat” as an arabesque is a vast subject to investigate. The human mind is one of the most intricate systems on the planet. As it is impossible to comprehend each brain activity since everyone has distinct thought patterns with varying degrees of complexity. In the narrative, the narrator reverses his psychological state as he deteriorates from a compassionate person to a killer. The narrator’s unconditional and unselfish love for animals would never lead anybody to assume that he could kill his pet, but his drunken transformation forces him to do so. However, black cats relate to bad luck, and because of their association with witches, they are frequently regarded as catastrophic omen. Without a doubt, this gloomy symbolism is intended to presage heinous future events.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> Poe, E.A. (1903). *The Black Cat*. Elegant Books, pg. 14.

<sup>35</sup> Hammond, J. R. (1981). *An Edgar Allan Poe companion: a guide to the short stories, romances and essays*. London: Macmillan, pg. 83.

If the tale is not read critically, the reader may conclude that his hostility stems from his alcohol usage, making him a vicious killer. Furthermore, upon closer examination, the source of his aggression is shown to be his perversity. While blaming drinking, he begins committing horrifying atrocities. His mental state deteriorates to the point that he begins beating his wife and animals for no apparent cause. He described his mood in his confession as “the fury of a demon instantly possessed me.” When he sliced out his cat Pluto’s eye, he said, “I knew myself no longer.” The absence of empathy is the next feature in the category of the main character being a psychopath. When he slices off Pluto’s eye, the narrator shows no empathy, and the fact that he kills the cat strengthens his case even further. His response following the murder might also be considered proof.

Crimes can be committed by anybody, but most of us carry the guilt of the crime, which the narrator did not. In this narrative, his mental condition steadily improves because of his psychological development. The more psychologically unstable he was, the stronger he became.

Another psychological feature of the narrative is that this state is always followed by guilt. Poe discusses in detail how perversity takes root in the human psyche and becomes a part of it. Moreover, the narrator conceals the corpse rather than accepts blame; he is calm and secure during the police examination.

When his wife intervenes as he raises his axe to murder the second cat, Poe writes: “Goaded by the interference into a rage more than demoniacal, I withdrew my arm from her grasp and buried the axe in her brain.”<sup>36</sup> Hence the main character is unable to liberate his soul from the impulse to do wrong. Furthermore, the psychological feature of guilt elicits feelings of disgust or irritation in readers.

The brief narrative does not provide enough material for a higher rate, but the way he murders Pluto might be seen as stimulation. He first slowly carves out the eye, then chooses to hang the cat, and finally impulsively and quickly murders his wife. This harsh behaviour may be interpreted as stimulation, but the data is insufficient to warrant a higher ranking. The parasitic lifestyle is the second component. The narrator provides little information about his profession or lifestyle, and the final

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<sup>36</sup> Poe, E.A. (1903). *The Black Cat*. Elegant Books, pg. 11.

item in this category is the lack of realistic long-term ambitions, for which readers lack unavoidable proof. The narrator relates his narrative in retrospect, which allows him to go over all the previous occurrences. Nonetheless, he accepts no accountability for his conduct. The conclusion might also be viewed as proof because he believes the beast is guilty. Above all, his alcoholism makes any justification fall into the irrational category of demonic.



### ***3.2 The Tell-Tale Heart***

A nameless narrator begins by clarifying that, although they have been unwell recently, they are not furious. They believe that the disease helped them by improving their hearing. The narrator then goes on to recount some prior experiences involving an elderly man, which they believe illustrate their sanity. They claim that initially, they did not despise the elderly man but liked him because he had done nothing to them. They did note that the elderly man had a peculiar, vulture-like eye that gave the narrator a terrible, chilly feeling. It grew so bad that the narrator determined the only thing to do was murder the elderly man so the vulture eye would never glance at them again. The narrator emphasises that they are not insane – after all, a lunatic could not organise a murder. They then describe how pleasant they were to the man every day for the next week and slipped into his room at night.

Unable to murder the old man for seven days as he had his eyes closed – the vulture eye, eventually, forced the narrator to kill the elderly man. He awakens when the protagonist visits the chamber on the eighth night and becomes aware that someone is around and even yells out in terror. The narrator can now see the dreadful vulture's eye, which allows him to murder the man. According to the main character, the disease had substantially improved his hearing to the point that he could hear the elderly man's heart beating in his chest. The sound became louder while he stood there staring at the man and become even louder when he slaughtered him until it was gone. After murdering the victim, the narrator dismembered his body and hid it beneath the floorboards.

The next day, three police officers came to investigate after a neighbour reported hearing an odd noise emanating from the elderly man's residence. The narrator reveals that he let the police officers in because he was certain of his successful concealment of his remains. However, he started hearing the old man's heartbeat under the floorboards. He assumed the police officers were joking when they replied they could not hear it, but as the heartbeat became increasingly rapid, he was forced to confess his crime.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> Poe, E. A., & Kennedy, J. G. (2006). *The Portable Edgar Allan Poe*. New York: Penguin Books, pg. 229-233.

### 3.2.1 Arabesque Analysis: *The Tell-Tale Heart*

Mood and atmosphere are two of the most crucial aspects of the setting in this novel. In his short work “The Tell-Tale Heart”, Edgar Allan Poe expertly conjures a spooky atmosphere as one reads this horror story with the narrator’s denial of being crazy, the description of the old man’s eye, and the use of repetition.

The elderly man and the murdering protagonist both reside in the same house. They live together, so one just assumes they get along well. The elderly man’s evil eye is the only thing standing in the way of their cordial relationship. The atmosphere is similar to that of any other Poe story – dark and serene, which heightens the excitement and the setting of the story is an arabesque, as can be seen in the fact that the narrator “is trapped in an old, dark house without the prospect of escape.”<sup>38</sup> The narrator, a profoundly troubled man, informs us that constant anxiety sharpened his senses. He initially challenges those who believe he is insane although he acknowledges that he is quite anxious, as the tale progresses, his actions make the reader doubt his sanity. Despite the narrator’s denials, his initial statements indicate that he is mad. The rest of the story is set in a terrifying environment because of the denial of insanity. He proudly reveals his well-planned murder strategy with specifics and evocative language.<sup>39</sup>

The most mysterious aspect of “The Tell-Tale Heart” is the narrator’s motivations. From the outset, it is unclear why the narrator is so fixated on the old man’s eye, and why he ultimately decides to kill him. The narrator himself seems unsure of his own motivations, stating that “I loved the old man. He had never wronged me. He had never given me insult.” This ambiguity creates a sense of unease and anticipation, as it is never clear what the narrator is going to do next. The fact that he is so fixated on the old man’s eye suggests that he is projecting his own fears and anxieties onto the old man and that he is unable to escape his own inner demons.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> Sova, D. B. (2007). *Critical Companion to Edgar Allan Poe*. New York: Facts On File, pg. 173.

<sup>39</sup> Zimmerman, Brett (2005). *Edgar Allan Poe: Rhetoric and Style*. McGill-Queen’s University Press, pg. 342.

<sup>40</sup> ibidem

Another mysterious element of “The Tell-Tale Heart” is the disorienting narrative structure. The story is told in a disjointed and fragmented manner, with the narrator jumping back and forth in time to create disorientation in the reader. This technique mimics the narrator’s own distorted perception of reality and adds to the overall sense of unease in the narrative.

The fact that the story is told from the perspective of the narrator also adds to the mysterious tone of the narrative. Forced to rely on the narrator’s own interpretation of events, which may or may not be accurate, a sense of uncertainty and anticipation in the reader, as they are never entirely sure what is going to happen next.

The old man’s eye serves as another illustration. The narrator became insane to the point of murder. An arabesque is created by the expert description and attention to the elderly man’s eye. By describing the sight, Poe creates tension and dread. The old man’s eye is the subject of the narrator’s preoccupation, and he likens it to a vulture’s eye. The elderly man’s life is never considered as the narrator describes his murder strategy in further detail. The reader gets a creepy sense when the narrator talks about the elderly man’s eye and expresses his views about it. The eye serves as a powerful symbol of the narrator’s own fear and anxiety, representing the “evil eye,” a common superstition in many cultures, serving as a reminder of the narrator’s own guilt and darkness. The narrator is so fixated on the eye suggests that he is ultimately consumed by his own madness.

The psychological motifs in “The Tell-Tale Heart” serve to explore the inner workings of the human mind and the depths of human depravity. The narrator seems unable to escape his own guilt and darkness, and so he fixates on the eye as a way of deflecting attention away from his own inner demons. The fact that he eventually kills the old man suggests that he is unable to control his own impulses and that he is consumed by his own madness.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> Zimmerman, Brett (2005). *Edgar Allan Poe: Rhetoric and Style*. McGill-Queen’s University Press, pg. 343.

The narrator's distorted sense of reality is another psychological motif that runs throughout the story. By describing the events of the story in a disjointed and fragmented manner, jumping back and forth in time, he creates disorientation, mimicking the narrator's own distorted perception of reality, thereby adding to the overall sense of unease.

The lighting also set a significant part of the mood in the story. Poe notes the chamber as completely dark throughout the narrative. Because it is unclear who is there, one feels uneasy, which has an impact on the plot. One might infer from this that the darkness in space is so pervasive that one might practically feel it. Only the brave would desire to learn the mysteries of the darkness. The fact that it is in the elderly man's bedroom adds to the arabesque's fright factor, this being in one of the locations where you least anticipate someone to make you exposed.

Another instance would be when he told the police what he had done because of the echo of his heartbeat in his head – he did this out of shame over what he had done. The sound that “a watch produces while covered in cotton” is likened to the heartbeat. The elderly man's heart can be heard in the narrator's ears both during and after the murder, which drives him completely insane. As the heart beats louder and louder and louder, it turns into an unhealthy and unnatural impulse which leads to readers perceiving the insane as well; guilt for murdering the elderly man is induced. The sound of the heartbeat becomes a constant reminder of the narrator's guilt, so he becomes increasingly disturbed by it as the story concludes. The fact that he can hear the heartbeat even after he has killed the old man adds to the sense of otherness in the narrative, as it suggests that the narrator's own guilt and fear are consuming him from within.

He bursts and makes an emotional confession to the police authorities as his heartbeat becomes almost unbearably loud. He lost all sense of reason due to the hearing man's heart while his eye is completely forgotten. His dread of the old man following him forever finally drove him to confess his crime. Using fear as a prominent element in arabesque is advantageous and risky. Fear provides boundaries and prevents illogical behaviour. It sharpens one's senses and instincts for survival, including adrenaline. Fear is the impulse that drives one to run or take action, but paranoia can also be brought on by fear. The individual loses the ability to

move, becoming paralyzed. Although fear prevents incorrect conduct, if it develops into a frenzied fixation, it may also impair judgment. Because of anxiety, those who are always fixated on one thing lose sight of reality.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> Poe, E. A., & Kennedy, J. G. (2006). *The Portable Edgar Allan Poe*. New York: Penguin Books, pg. 233.

### ***3.3 The Cask of Amontillado***

“The Cask of Amontillado” is a short story published in 1846. The story is set in Italy during carnival season and tells the tale of Montresor, who is seeking revenge against his acquaintance, Fortunato.<sup>43</sup>

The story begins with Montresor explaining that he has been wronged by Fortunato, but he gives no further details. Montresor then meets Fortunato during the carnival and lures him to his family’s catacombs, where he keeps his high-quality wine collection. Montresor tells Fortunato that he has a cask of amontillado, a rare and valuable wine, and he wants Fortunato’s expert opinion on whether it is genuine. As they make their way down deeper into the catacombs, Montresor becomes increasingly ominous, hinting at his plan for revenge. Fortunato, however, is too drunk to pick up on these hints of danger and eagerly and carelessly follows Montresor. Once they reach the end of the catacombs, Montresor chains Fortunato to the wall and begins to brick him up, alive, behind a wall. As he works, Montresor talks to Fortunato, explaining his motives for revenge and relishing in Fortunato’s slow realization of his fate. The story ends with Montresor finishing the wall and calling out “For the love of God, Montresor!” No reply comes from behind the wall, and Montresor leaves, satisfied with his revenge.<sup>44</sup>

Poe’s use of irony and foreshadowing make “The Cask of Amontillado” a haunting and chilling tale. Montresor plans for revenge are imperceptible because of Fortunato’s drunkenness. Additionally, the fact that the story takes place during carnival season, a time of joy and celebration and drunkenness, contrasts with the dark and sinister events that take place in the catacombs, and excellent site for revenge, betrayal, and deception. Montresor seeks revenge against Fortunato for an unspecified wrong, deceiving Fortunato with the promise of tasting a rare and valuable wine. Additionally, the fact that Montresor can carry out his revenge in the

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<sup>43</sup> Hammond, J. R. (1981). *An Edgar Allan Poe companion: a guide to the short stories, romances and essays*. London: Macmillan, pg. 88-89.

<sup>44</sup> *ibidem*

catacombs, a place where his family's victims are buried, adds a poignant layer of betrayal to the story.<sup>45</sup>

This story is accordingly a classic tale of revenge and betrayal. Poe's use of irony and foreshadowing, along with the contrast between the carnival season and the catacombs, creates a haunting and chilling atmosphere. The story is a timeless reminder that revenge is a nasty game and that the consequences of our actions can be deadly.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> ibidem

<sup>46</sup> Hammond, J. R. (1981). *An Edgar Allan Poe companion: a guide to the short stories, romances and essays*. London: Macmillan, pg. 88-89.

### 3.3.1 Arabesque Analysis: *The Cask of Amontillado*

“The Cask of Amontillado” contains many motifs that give it its unique and mysterious atmosphere. Three of the most prominent motifs in the story are exotic, psychological, and mysterious.

Set in Italy during the carnival season, a time of revelry and excess, the narrator, Montresor, describes the carnival as a moment when “there were no attendants at home; they had absconded to make merry in honour of the time,”<sup>47</sup> thus mixing the working class with the rich during the pleasure of celebration. This description sets the scene for a story that will be filled with intrigue and excess, and it also adds an exotic element to the story. A carnival is a foreign event to American readers, so it adds a layer of mystery and intrigue to the story. The exotic motif is also present in the language and imagery used in the story. For example, Montresor describes his family’s coat of arms as “a huge human foot D’or, in a field azure; the foot crushes a serpent rampant whose fangs are imbedded in the heel.”<sup>48</sup> This description is both vivid and foreign, expressing danger if not vengeance. Additionally, Montresor’s plan to kill Fortunato involves tricking him into believing that they are going to taste a rare and exotic wine, the Amontillado. This wine is not only exotic, but it also symbolizes Fortunato’s downfall. The exotic contributes to the mysterious and suspenseful atmosphere of the story. It adds an element of foreignness and intrigue that keeps the reader engaged and guessing what will happen next.

The psychological motif in “The Cask of Amontillado” is perhaps the most prominent of the three motifs. Told from Montresor’s perspective, it is clear from the beginning that he is a deeply disturbed and vengeful individual. He describes his plan to kill Fortunato as “a thousand injuries of Fortunato I had borne as I best could, but when he ventured upon insult, I vowed revenge.”<sup>49</sup> This statement reveals that Montresor’s motive for killing Fortunato is rooted in not psychological trauma but in

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<sup>47</sup> Poe, Edgar Allan (1993). *The Cask of Amontillado*. Charlottesville, Va.:University of Virginia Library Electronic Text Center, pg. 2.

<sup>48</sup> Poe, Edgar Allan (1993). *The Cask of Amontillado*. Charlottesville, Va.:University of Virginia Library Electronic Text Center, pg. 4.

<sup>49</sup> Poe, Edgar Allan (1993). *The Cask of Amontillado*. Charlottesville, Va.:University of Virginia Library Electronic Text Center, pg. 1.



patient planning for the right occasion to exercise revenge, with bricks previously brought down to build the wall.

Throughout the story, Montresor's mental state deteriorates further as he lures Fortunato into the catacombs. He becomes increasingly obsessed with his revenge, and he begins to exhibit signs of paranoia and delusion. For example, he hears "the jingling of the bells" on Fortunato's cap as a sign of his impending doom. This detail highlights Montresor's unstable mental state and his irrational beliefs. The psychological motif is also present in the relationship between Montresor and Fortunato. Although Montresor claims that Fortunato is his friend, deep resentment and envy are felt between the two men. Montresor is jealous of Fortunato's wealth and social status, so he kills him to "punish" him for his success. Overall, the psychological motif adds a layer of complexity to the story. It forces the reader to question the reliability of the narrator and to reconsider the true motives behind his actions.<sup>50</sup>

One of the mysterious symbols in the story is the cask of Amontillado itself. The wine certainly constitutes a rare and exotic treasure, but it also serves as a symbol for his impending doom. Montresor uses the promise of the Amontillado as bait to lure Fortunato into the catacombs, where he will be trapped and killed through slow starvation. The fact that the wine is never actually tasted adds to the sense of mystery surrounding the story and makes the reader wonder what exactly is inside the cask. Poe also uses foreshadowing to build suspense and create a sense of mystery. For example, when Montresor tells Fortunato that they are going to the catacombs to find the Amontillado, he warns him about the dampness of the tunnels and suggests that they should turn back. This warning serves as a subtle hint that something is not right and that danger lies ahead.

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<sup>50</sup> Poe, Edgar Allan (1993). *The Cask of Amontillado*. Charlottesville, Va.:University of Virginia Library Electronic Text Center, pg. 2.

Finally, Poe's use of ambiguity adds to the sense of mystery in the story. For example, the real reason for Montresor's hatred of Fortunato is never fully explained. We know that Fortunato has insulted him in some way, leaving the reader wondering what exactly Fortunato did to Montresor and why it was so unforgivable.<sup>51</sup>

In conclusion, the mysterious motif in "The Cask of Amontillado" is an important part of the story's overall atmosphere and contributes to the sense of unease and tension that builds throughout the narrative. By using symbols, foreshadowing, and ambiguity, Poe creates a story that is both suspenseful and thought-provoking, leaving the reader with lingering questions about the true motives and intentions of the characters, all while the journey down beneath ground brings the unfortunate Fortunato from fortune to a slow and dreadful death among bones of previous generations of the death.

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<sup>51</sup> Poe, Edgar Allan (1993). *The Cask of Amontillado*. Charlottesville, Va.:University of Virginia Library Electronic Text Center, pg. 1.

### ***3.4 The Masque of the Red Death***

A short story, first published in 1842, takes place in France during a time of great plague, known as the “Red Death,” which ravaged the kingdom. Prince Prospero, a wealthy and arrogant nobleman, believes that he can create his own world within the castle walls and escape the Covid of an earlier age. He is dismissive of the suffering of the people outside and confidently believes that he can control his own destiny. However, his arrogance and delusions of grandeur are ultimately his undoings.<sup>52</sup>

Once inside the castle, Prince Prospero throws a masquerade ball, with each room painted and decorated in a different colour. The partygoers are dressed in elaborate costumes and masks, enjoying the festivities, and completely ignoring the danger and suffering outside the castle walls. However, as the night wears on, the hourly striking of a massive ebony clock in the westernmost room always had a sobering effect on the revellers, so at the stroke of twelve, a figure dressed in the blood-dabbled grave clothes of a plague victim comes among the crowd. The partygoers are struck with fear, yet Prince Prospero reassures them that the figure is merely a prankster and orders his guards to seize him. This figure, however, proves to be elusive, moving through the castle and eluding the guards. Each time he appears in a different room, the partygoers become more and more afraid, and many of them die from the virus. Despite Prince Prospero’s attempts to calm his guests, the uninvited guest’s presence and the growing death toll create a sense of foreboding throughout the castle. As the night progresses, the figure finally reaches Prince Prospero himself, who becomes enraged and attempts to attack the figure. However, Prince Prospero falls to the ground and dies, and the figure reveals itself to be the embodiment of the Red Death.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> Bell, H. H (1973). *The Masque of the Red Death: An Interpretation*. South Atlantic Bulletin, pg. 101-105.

<sup>53</sup> *ibidem*

“The Masque of the Red Death” symbolises the inevitability of death and the futility of trying to escape it. Prince Prospero’s attempt to flee the disease and create a utopian world among people of wealth within his castle walls is ultimately doomed to fail. The presence of the Red Death at the masquerade ball serves as a reminder that death by disease is always present and so no one can escape it.<sup>54</sup>

The use of colour throughout the story is also essential. Each room in the castle is decorated in a different colour, starting with blue and ending with black. This progression mirrors the stages of life, from birth to death. The use of colour also creates a dreamlike atmosphere, adding to the sense of unreality and foreboding that pervades the story.

Overall, “The Masque of the Red Death” is a haunting and atmospheric story that explores themes of death, fear, and the human condition. It is a reminder that no one can escape death and that attempting to do so is ultimately futile. Poe’s use of symbolism and imagery creates a dreamlike world that is both beautiful and terrifying, so it adds to the story’s sense of foreboding. Ultimately, this is a cautionary tale that serves as a reminder of the fragility of human life and the inevitability of death.<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> *ibidem*

<sup>55</sup> E. A., & Kennedy, J. G. (2006). *The Portable Edgar Allan Poe*. New York: Penguin Books, pg. 37-42.

### 3.4.1 Arabesque Analysis: *The Masque of the Red Death*

Firstly, the psychological motif in “The Masque of the Red Death” is also to the story’s meaning. The characters in the story are representative of different aspects of the human psyche, and their reactions to the concealed Red Death reveal the darker sides of human nature. Prince Prospero, the protagonist, believes that he can escape the Red Death by retreating to his castle and isolating himself from the outside world by not catching the contagious disease. He believes that he can control his own destiny and that his wealth and status will protect him from the disease. However, as the night wears on and the masked uninvited guest appears, Prince Prospero becomes increasingly consumed by fear. Poe writes, “But from a certain nameless awe with which the mad assumptions of the mummer had inspired the whole party, there were found none who put forth a hand to seize him.”<sup>56</sup> The use of the word “awe” suggests that the partygoers are in the grip of a powerful emotion, one that overrides their reason and causes them to behave irrationally.<sup>57</sup>

The psychological motif is also present in the character of Prince Prospero himself. He is an arrogant nobleman who believes that he can control his fate. Dismissive of the suffering of the people outside his castle, he believes that he can create his world within its walls. However, as the night wears on and the uninvited guest appears, Prince Prospero’s delusions of grandeur begin to crumble. He becomes increasingly consumed by fear and ultimately dies, a victim of his arrogance and delusions.

The mysterious motif is also present in the story. The story is shrouded in mystery and ambiguity, with many details left unexplained. This serves to create a sense of unease and uncertainty, reinforcing the themes of misunderstood disease, mortality and inevitability. For example, the nature of the Red Death itself is left ambiguous. It is described as a “fatal pestilence” that causes “sharp pains, and sudden dizziness, and then profuse bleeding at the pores.”<sup>58</sup> The symptoms of the disease are gruesome and terrifying, but the reader is left uncertain as to the actual cause of the Red Death. This ambiguity serves to emphasize the mysterious and unknowable nature of the

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<sup>56</sup> Poe, Edgar Allan (2020). *The Masque of the Red Death*. Good Press, pg. 9.

<sup>57</sup> E. A., & Kennedy, J. G. (2006). *The Portable Edgar Allan Poe*. New York: Penguin Books, pg. 37.

<sup>58</sup> Poe, Edgar Allan (2020). *The Masque of the Red Death*. Good Press, pg. 3.

virus. An uninvited ill guest, who is dressed in robes resembling the Red Death, is a mysterious figure who moves through the castle, causing fear and panic. Poe writes, “The figure was tall and gaunt, and shrouded from head to foot in the habiliments of the grave. The mask which concealed the visage was made so nearly to resemble the countenance of a stiffened corpse that the closest scrutiny must have had difficulty in detecting the cheat.”<sup>59</sup> The reader is left uncertain as to the identity and motivations of the guest, adding to the sense of unease and uncertainty in the story. It is often interpreted as a poor and infected man wishing to kill off the rich people isolated in the castle. That is why it is set in France, home of the vengeful French Revolution where rich people were guillotined by the poor.

The next of the most prominent motifs in the story is exotic. The use of archaic language, ornate descriptions, and the medieval setting creates a sense of timelessness and reinforces this sense of otherworldliness and adds to the story’s dreamlike quality, emphasizing the allegorical nature of the story. The story takes place in a castle that is decorated in a variety of colours, each room representing a different stage of life. The use of exotic colours and the lavish descriptions of the castle create a dreamlike atmosphere that is both enchanting and unsettling. For example, Poe writes, “The panes here were scarlet—a deep blood colour. Now in no one of the seven apartments was there any lamp or candelabrum,”<sup>60</sup> This description creates an otherworldly environment that seems almost magical, but also adds to the sense of foreboding that pervades the story. Secondly, the exoticism motif highlights the decadence and extravagance of Prince Prospero and his guests. The descriptions of the castle’s seven rooms, each decorated in a different colour and style, reflect the opulence and excess of the wealthy elite. The masquerade ball, with its elaborate costumes and masks, reinforces the theme of excess and the desire to escape the harsh realities of the poor people locked outside the castle.

“The Masque of the Red Death” uses several terror motifs to create a sense of dread and suspense. The story explores the themes of death, mortality, and the inevitability of fate. The setting of the story is also used to create a sense of terror. The protagonist, Prince Prospero, has secluded himself and his closest friends in

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<sup>59</sup> E. A., & Kennedy, J. G. (2006). *The Portable Edgar Allan Poe*. New York: Penguin Books, pg. 83.

<sup>60</sup> Poe, Edgar Allan (2020). *The Masque of the Red Death*. Good Press, pg. 4.

a fortified abbey, where they plan to wait out the Red Death. The abbey is described as “a strong and lofty wall girdled it in,”<sup>61</sup> which creates a feeling of claustrophobia and confinement, perfect for spreading a virus. The fact that Prospero has invited only his closest friends to the abbey suggests a sense of exclusivity, which further adds to the sense of terror.

The use of colour is also a significant terror motif in the story. The rooms in the abbey are decorated with different colours, each representing a different stage of life – early childhood, childhood, adolescence, youth, maturity, ageing and old age. Red, yellow, and blue are the three primary colours in art because they may produce all other colours when mixed in a specific proportion. The first chamber is blue, and the second is purple, which is a combination of red and blue and the complementary colour to yellow. The third chamber is painted green, which is the result of combining blue and yellow colours as well as the complementary colour of red. The fourth is furnished in orange, a product of red and yellow as well as the blue is complementary. There has been no colour resemblance or proximity between the first four compartments. Instead, just two of the three fundamental colours are blended at a time to create an opposition to the remaining colour. Because of the contradiction, the above together naturally creates a highly weird impression for readers. The fifth colour is white, which is obviously distinct from the other rooms’ colours. The sixth colour is violet, and the arrangement abruptly shifts from dazzling white to dark. The final chamber is completely dark, and the entire apartment is decorated in black, with black tapestries, black flooring, an ebony clock, and others. Furthermore, there is a repeating abrupt turn, so no one knows what colour the following room will be. The seventh and final room, however, is decorated in black and red, which symbolizes death and blood. The presence of these colours creates a sense of foreboding and suggests that death is an inevitable part of life.<sup>62</sup> Poe used the odd colour arrangement and optical effects to create a strange atmosphere at the

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<sup>61</sup> Poe, Edgar Allan (2020). *The Masque of the Red Death*. Good Press, pg. 3.

<sup>62</sup> Hammond, J. R. (1981). *An Edgar Allan Poe companion: a guide to the short stories, romances and essays*. London: Macmillan, pg. 76-77.

beginning and force the entire story to a peak at the end, demonstrating his versatile handling of colour and his exceptional synaesthesia skills.<sup>63</sup>

The use of masks is another significant terror motif in the story. At the masquerade ball held in the seventh room, all guests wear elaborate masks that conceal their identities. The masks are described as being “fantastic” and “horrible,” which adds to the sense of terror and mystery. The fact that the guests wear masks also suggests deception and hidden motives.

The clock in the seventh room is also used to create a sense of terror. The clock is described as “ebony,” which suggests a dark and foreboding final passage of time just before death. The clock also chimes at irregular intervals, which adds to the sense of unpredictability and unease. When people arrived at the abbey, they brought both life and death into the enclosed space. As a result, the ticking of the clock creates a sensation of anxiety and despair, and it constantly reminds those who engage in the ball of how little time they have left. For the sake of the clock, their lives have been divided into minutes and seconds. This is why they are afraid of the clock and strive to ignore it. As a result, every time the clock strikes, people are reminded that time is ticking away and that they cannot live forever. Furthermore, waiting for death is a dreadful and inescapable process. The fact that the clock strikes when the masked figure appears also suggests a sense of fate and inevitability. The final terror motif in the story is the figure of the Red Death itself. At the end of the story, the masked figure is revealed to be the Red Death, which has infiltrated Prospero’s abbey despite his efforts to keep it out. The presence of the Red Death creates a sense of terror and finality, suggesting that death is an inevitable part of life and that no one can escape its grasp.<sup>64</sup>

The story’s escapees are all organised in one location, which is the Gothic element of Poe’s work. The author then narrows the space even further: the most important colours and noises, as well as all of the terror aspects, are essentially focused in the seventh chamber. The colours are static, but the sounds change with the passage of

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<sup>63</sup> Jiaxin, Zhang (2022). *Colors and Sounds in the Masque of the Red Death*. *Art and Performance Letters* 3.1, pg. 60-61.

<sup>64</sup> Jiaxin, Zhang (2022). *Colors and Sounds in the Masque of the Red Death*. *Art and Performance Letters* 3.1, pg. 61-62.



time and are dynamic. The story does not spend much time describing the direct death force, but by combining static and dynamic aspects, the air of death is gradually infiltrated into the character's fate, and the concealed death force is disclosed at the end.<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> *ibidem*

### ***3.5 The Pit and The Pendulum***

“The Pit and the Pendulum” is one of the most famous short stories by Edgar Allan Poe, first published in 1842. It tells the story of an unnamed Protestant narrator who has been sentenced to death during the Spanish Inquisition, and his subsequent experiences in a dungeon as he awaits his unknown form of execution. The story is known for its use of sensory details and vivid imagery, as well as its exploration of themes such as overcoming fear, terror, and the struggle for survival in the face of seemingly insurmountable obstacles.

The story begins with the narrator awakening in a dark cell, with no knowledge of how he got there or what his fate will be. As he begins to explore his surroundings, he discovers that he is in a dungeon, with no means of escape. He is eventually forced to confront his impending execution, as he is tied to a table and a large pendulum, resembling a scythe, begins to descend towards him. The narrator manages to escape the pendulum by smearing some of his food on the ropes binding his wrists, causing the many rats to chew through them and free him. However, his trials are far from over, as he is then forced to navigate a maze-like series of tunnels, avoiding deadly pits and other traps, before finally emerging into the light of day and being rescued by French troops.<sup>66</sup>

Throughout the story, Poe uses sensory details and vivid imagery to produce a sense of terror and claustrophobia in the reader. The darkness and hopelessness of the narrator’s situation are contrasted with the bright, colourful visions that he experiences while on the brink of death, suggesting that the struggle for survival may lead to profound spiritual transformation. The story also explores themes such as the power of the human spirit to overcome adversity, the nature of fear and terror, and the human desire for freedom and autonomy. The narrator’s struggles to escape from prison and avoid execution reflect these themes, as he fights against seemingly insurmountable odds to regain his freedom and live yet another day.

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<sup>66</sup> E. A., & Kennedy, J. G. (2006). *The Portable Edgar Allan Poe*. New York: Penguin Books, pg. 43.

Overall, “The Pit and the Pendulum” is a masterful work of horror fiction that uses sensory details and vivid imagery of terror and claustrophobia. It explores themes such as fear, terror, the struggle for survival, and the human desire for freedom and autonomy, and remains a classic of the horror genre to this day.<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>67</sup> Hammond, J. R. (1981). *An Edgar Allan Poe companion: a guide to the short stories, romances and essays*. London: Macmillan, pg. 78.

### 3.5.1 Arabesque Analysis: *The Pit and The Pendulum*

“The Pit and the Pendulum” employs exotic motifs to create a sense of dislocation and unfamiliarity in the reader. The use of Gothic architecture, religious iconography, and exotic language all add to the overall eerie atmosphere of the story, while the sensory details serve to heighten the intensity of the narrative. The story remains a classic of the horror genre to this day and stands as a testament to Poe’s skill as a writer.

One of the main arabesque depictions in the story is the use of the dungeon itself. The narrator is placed in a dungeon because he has left the Catholic faith and joined Protestantism.<sup>68</sup> The use of Gothic architecture is evident in the description of the dungeon where he is being held. It has massive walls, some thirty or forty feet high, adorned with numerous rusty iron rings and staples. As a foreboding and oppressive environment, it is designed to intimidate and disorient the prisoner. The dank and musty smell, the absence of light, and the sense of being trapped create an overwhelming feeling of terror that the narrator cannot escape. The arabesque architecture also is directed to intimidate the process of imprisonment, as it is not a common sight in everyday life.

Another motif in the story is the use of religious iconography. The narrator describes the dungeon as having “lurid flames” that are “emitted from the braziers, together with occasional gleams from the red eyes of the black-robed judges.”<sup>69</sup> The black-robed judges, a mysterious motif in the story, are dressed in traditional Catholic garb. The judges are described as “phantasmagoric,” adding to the sense of otherworldliness as representatives of Christianity yet showing no compassion. This description creates an image of a dark and sinister environment that is heavily influenced by religious imagery. The use of black robes for the judges and the mention of flames and gleaming eyes may allude to the presence of the devil and add

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<sup>68</sup> Hammond, J. R. (1981). *An Edgar Allan Poe companion: a guide to the short stories, romances and essays*. London: Macmillan, pg. 79.

<sup>69</sup> E. A., & Kennedy, J. G. (2006). *The Portable Edgar Allan Poe*. New York: Penguin Books, pg. 49.

to the overall. Religious iconography is used to create a sense of mystery and unknown forces that are beyond the control of the narrator.<sup>70</sup>

The use of exotic language is prevalent as the narrator describes the instruments of torture as “strange, unearthly machines” and the dungeon as a “vast and awful gulf.” These descriptions create an image of a world that is beyond the realm of the familiar addition to the sense of unease and disorientation that the narrator experiences.

The story takes place during the Spanish Inquisition, and the Protestant narrator is clearly not from the same religious background as his Catholic captors. The use of Gothic architecture and religious iconography creates a sense of dislocation and unfamiliarity to the Americans Poe wrote for that adds to the terror and anxiety described by the narrator.

Poe also employs sensory details to create an immersive and visceral reading experience. The narrator describes the pendulum as “a blade gleaming and streaming in the air” and rats as “famished vultures” that “darted, with fierce eyes and taloned claws.” The use of these sensory details also serves to heighten the psychological atmosphere in the story. For example, the “blade gleaming” threatens the prisoner as a sharp and deadly weapon, while the description of the rats as “famished vultures” adds to the sense of repulsive unease that the narrator experiences. The pendulum is another means of horrifying execution. The narrator knows what the pendulum will do to him and cleverly evades its ultimate purpose. The narrator actively works to avoid execution which adds to the excitement of the story. The pendulum is described as “a wide, shaven razor,” that would not kill the narrator in one full swoop but would require multiple cuts to complete the job.

“The Pit and The Pendulum” evokes intense feelings of terror in its readers. The terror motifs in the story are intricately woven into the plot and the descriptions, making it an effective piece of horror literature. The arabesque motifs in the story also include the psychological effects of potential torture that the narrator evades cleverly. The constant threat of a new form of execution and the uncertainty of his evasion create an atmosphere of dread and horror. He is forced to confront these threats and avoid the vicious means of execution, adding to the psychological terror

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<sup>70</sup> E. A., & Kennedy, J. G. (2006). *The Portable Edgar Allan Poe*. New York: Penguin Books, pg. 43.

of the story. The narrator's sense of time and space is also contributing to the overall arabesque nature of the story. The pendulum, which swings back and forth above him, moves to a predictable rhythm much like the predictability of arabesque artwork. The narrator also describes the dungeon as a sense of disorientation and uncertainty until the narrator manages to rationally figure out a tactic of evasion.<sup>71</sup>

The psychological motif of introspection and self-reflection appears when the narrator is forced to confront planned torture by Catholic inquisitors. He has little time to on his life or to question whether he deserves the punishment that he is facing. This lack of introspection makes this horror story a plot of action rather than of reflection.

The final terror motif is the use of suspense. Poe masterfully creates suspense throughout the story, building up to the final moments of the narrative. The constant threat of the pendulum, the uncertain fate of the narrator, and the successful use of the rats to loosen the ropes tying him down all contribute to the suspenseful atmosphere of the story. The reader is kept on edge, unsure of what will happen next, adding to the overall sense of terror and dread.

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<sup>71</sup> E. A., & Kennedy, J. G. (2006). *The Portable Edgar Allan Poe*. New York: Penguin Books, pg. 43.

### ***3.6 The Fall of the House of Usher***

“The Fall of the House of Usher” is a haunting tale set in Scotland of the downfall of a noble Scottish family and the ominous atmosphere that surrounds their crumbling estate. The story is narrated by an unnamed protagonist who has been summoned by his childhood friend, Roderick Usher, to visit him at the family estate. As the story unfolds, the narrator is drawn into a web of mystery and terror that culminates in the destruction of the Usher family and their home, so the double meaning of “House of Usher” is evident in the title.<sup>72</sup>

The Usher family is described as cursed, and their lineage is marked by tragedy and decay. The narrator notes that the Usher family has always been plagued by an inherited “mental disorder” that has caused them to become increasingly isolated and paranoid. Roderick Usher is the last remaining male member of the family, and he is consumed by his fear of death and the decay that surrounds him. The setting of the story is also the decaying family estate in Scotland, which echoes the Usher family’s decay. The house is described as “melancholy” and “ghastly,” with “cracks and fissures” running through the walls. The house is surrounded by a “black and lurid tarn,” which adds to the ominous atmosphere of the story.<sup>73</sup>

Gothic elements contribute to the overall atmosphere of horror and terror. The use of darkness, decay, and death is prevalent throughout the story. The narrator notes the “atmosphere of sorrow” that surrounds the house is “oppressive,” expressing the weight of this atmosphere as the story unfolds.<sup>74</sup>

The most striking element of the story is the relationship between Roderick Usher and his twin sister, Madeline, the second living Usher family member who is still alive. The two are described as being inseparable, and their bond is portrayed as almost supernatural. The narrator notes that Madeline’s “disease” is the same as Roderick’s. The two seem connected on a deep and mysterious level. As the story progresses, Madeline is not dead as Roderick had falsely claimed, but is instead alive

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<sup>72</sup> Hammond, J. R. (1981). *An Edgar Allan Poe companion: a guide to the short stories, romances and essays*. London: Macmillan, pg. 69-71.

<sup>73</sup> *ibidem*

<sup>74</sup> *ibidem*

but buried alive in a vault beneath the house. This revelation adds to the overall sense of horror and terror in the story and strongly contributes to the tragic downfall of the Usher family. The story's climax comes when Madeline escapes from her tomb and attacks Roderick, causing the physical collapse of the house as well as the destruction of the Usher family. The final scene of the story shows the narrator fleeing the scene, leaving behind the ruins of the once-grand estate.<sup>75</sup>

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<sup>75</sup> Hammond, J. R. (1981). *An Edgar Allan Poe companion: a guide to the short stories, romances and essays*. London: Macmillan, pg. 69-71.



### 3.6.1 Arabesque Analysis: *The Fall of the House of Usher*

The story explores the themes of decay, death, and to a lesser extent the supernatural, and is filled with exotic, terror, psychological, and mysterious motifs rooted in decadent ancestry. These motifs work together to create an atmosphere of horror and dread that builds to a chilling climax.

One of the most prominent unnatural motifs in the story is the house itself. The Usher family estate is described as “melancholy” and “ghastly” a mansion in a state of decay. The house is in addition surrounded by a “black and lurid tarn.” The house and its surroundings symbolize a part of Europe’s decaying aristocracy so the Usher family’s story ends in complete horror:

“During the whole of a dull, dark, and soundless day in the autumn of the year, when the clouds hung oppressively low in the heavens, I had been passing alone, on horseback, through a singularly dreary tract of country; and at length found myself, as the shades of the evening drew on, within view of the melancholy House of Usher.”<sup>76</sup>

This arabesque aspect in the story is the Usher family themselves – the mysterious nature of the Usher family history as cursed, and their lineage is marked by tragedy and decay. The narrator notes that the Usher family has always been plagued by a “mental disorder” causing them to become increasingly isolated and paranoid. The true nature of this disorder is unclear and how it affected the Usher family over the years. Roderick Usher, the last remaining member of the family, is consumed by his fear of death and the decay surrounding him. The Usher family also seems to have cross-bred, leading to mental illnesses. Roderick Usher is the most prominent example of this psychological topic of the story. Consumed by his fear of death, his mental state is depicted as fragile and unstable. These descriptions suggest that Roderick is experiencing some form of mental breakdown, and this breakdown is reflected in the decay of the Usher family estate. It is also understandable when his twin sister is prematurely entombed and regarded as dead.

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<sup>76</sup> Hayes, Kevin J. (2002). *The Cambridge Companion to Edgar Allan Poe*. Cambridge University Press, pg. 180.

The relationship between Roderick and his twin sister, Madeline, is another example of a psychological motif in the story. The two are described as being inseparable, and their bond is portrayed as almost supernatural, and the reader is left to wonder about the true nature of their connection. The narrator notes that Madeline's "disease" is the same as Roderick's, and it is suggested that the two are somehow linked on a deeper genetic level. The narrator is drawn into the Usher family drama despite his own reservations, and his curiosity and fascination with the family's history ultimately led to his own mental breakdown. The narrator is also depicted as being in a state of confusion and disorientation throughout the story, as he struggles to understand the events that are unfolding around him.<sup>77</sup> He describes fumes leading to his confusion and the general smell of decay.

The terror motifs in "The Fall of the House of Usher" contribute to the story's overall sense of horror. Poe masterly uses the atmosphere of darkness and shadow in the story. The narrator notes that the "atmosphere of sorrow" that surrounds the house is "oppressive."

The concept of constructiveness is used as a symbol of order and stability, while arabesque represents chaos and instability. The character Roderick Usher is obsessed with the idea of constructiveness, which he associates with rationality and logic, as opposed to the arabesque, which he associates with madness and disorder. Throughout the story, the physical state of the House of Usher reflects the mental state of its inhabitants. Roderick Usher's obsession with constructiveness leads him to believe that the house is physically deteriorating due to the presence of the arabesque, which he sees as a form of the disorder. Furthermore, the character of Madeline Usher is described as possessing a wild and unpredictable spirit, which is symbolized by the arabesque.

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<sup>77</sup> Hammond, J. R. (1981). *An Edgar Allan Poe companion: a guide to the short stories, romances and essays*. London: Macmillan, pg. 69-70.

## 4 Conclusion

Edgar Allan Poe was a complex and fascinating literary figure who made an indelible mark on American literature. This thesis has explored various aspects of Poe's life and work, including his biography, literary career, and most important – the analysis of the arabesque subgenre.

Born to a family of actors, Poe lost both of his parents at a young age and was subsequently raised by foster parents. Throughout his life, Poe struggled with poverty, illness, and personal demons, yet he managed to produce some of the most influential works of literature in American history. Through his various careers in the military, journalism, and writing, Poe demonstrated a keen intellect and a talent for storytelling. His literary works, which often explored themes of arabesque, horror, mystery, and the supernatural, continue to captivate readers to this day. Despite his short life, Poe's contributions to literature have been immense, and his influence can be seen in numerous literary genres, including horror, science fiction, and detective fiction. Through examining Poe's biography, we gain a greater appreciation for his genius and the challenges he overcame to achieve literary success. Through his early work as a literary critic, Poe demonstrated his keen intellect and understanding of the craft of writing.

Poe's literary works, including short stories, poetry, and essays, explored his use of complex literary devices such as arabesque, symbolism, irony, and allegory helped elevate his works to the status of literary classics. Additionally, I have examined several of Poe's most famous works, including "The Fall of the House of Usher," "The Pit and the Pendulum," "The Masque of the Red Death," "The Tell-Tale Heart," "The Black Cat," and "The Cask of Amontillado."

Poe used the arabesque technique in many of his short stories to create an atmosphere of mystery and suspense. This technique involves intricate and ornamental descriptions of the setting, characters, and events that evoke a sense of beauty and elegance, but also of strangeness and otherworldliness. Through his use of arabesque, Poe was able to create a unique style of storytelling that captivated readers and left them on the edge of their seats. He was able to convey complex

emotions and ideas through his descriptions of seemingly mundane objects and actions, which added a layer of depth and complexity to his stories.

Poe's arabesque stories are considered classics of the horror and suspense genres and continue to be read and studied to this day. His influence can be seen in the works of many other writers who have adopted similar techniques to create their own unique styles. Among the authors, those influenced by Poe included, for example, the Irish writer Oscar Wilde, whose "The Picture of Dorian Gray" (1890) was possibly inspired by Poe's short story "The Oval Portrait." In both the central motif of these works is the influence of art on human life. Another author who was influenced by Poe's work is considered to be the Scottish writer Robert Louis Stevenson with his novel "The Curious Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde" (1886). Among the contemporary representatives of horror literature is certainly the most famous and successful Stephen King, who inherited the title of master of fantasy and gothic from Edgar Allan Poe horror. Poe's use of arabesque was a significant contribution to the development of literature, and his works continue to be celebrated for their intricate and evocative style and his ability to blend beauty and terror in his stories.

Edgar Allan Poe's influence on American literature cannot be overstated. As a writer, poet, and literary critic, Poe contributed significantly to the development of the short story genre and was a key figure in the Romantic movement in the United States. His use of psychological horror, symbolism, and themes of death and the supernatural set him apart from his contemporaries and established him as one of the most influential writers of his time. Poe's works continue to inspire and influence generations of writers, and his legacy can be seen in the works of many American writers today. His contribution to American literature and the broader literary world will undoubtedly continue to be studied and appreciated for many years to come.

## 5 Resumé

Edgar Allan Poe byl velmi komplexní a fascinující literát, který se výrazně zapsal do historie americké literatury. Tato bakalářská práce se zaměřuje na různé aspekty Poeova života a díla, jeho biografie, literární kariéry, a to nejdůležitější – analýzu subžánru arabesky.

Poe se narodil v rodině herců a v mladém věku ztratil oba rodiče, načež byl následně vychován pěstouny, po celý život se potýkal s chudobou, nemocemi a osobními problémy, přesto se mu podařilo vytvořit jedna z nevlivnějších děl literatury v americké historii. Prostřednictvím různých kariérních příležitostí prokázal Poe talent pro vyprávění. Jeho literární díla, která často rozvíjela témata arabesky, hororu, tajuplnosti a nadpřirozena, nepřestávají uchvacovat čtenáře dodnes. Navzdory jeho krátkému životu byl Poeův přínos literatuře kolosální a jeho vliv lze vidět v mnoha literárních žánrech, včetně hororu, sci-fi a detektivky. Při zkoumání Poeovy biografie nabýváme většího uznání pro jeho genialitu a životní výzvy, které musel překonat, aby dosáhl literárního úspěchu a prostřednictvím své práce literárního kritika prokázal svůj bystrý intelekt a porozumění spisovatelskému řemeslu.

Poeova literární díla, včetně povídek, poezie a esejí, odhalila jeho užívání složitých literárních prostředků, jako je arabeska, symbolika, ironie a alegorie, které pomohly pozvednout jeho díla na úroveň literárních klasik. Mimoto jsem v této práci analyzovala několik Poeových nejslavnějších děl, jako je „Zánik domu Usherů“, „Jáma a kyvadlo“, „Maska Rudé smrti“, „Zrádné srdce“, „Černý kocour“, a „Sud vína amontilladského.“

Poe použil techniku arabesky v mnoha svých povídkách k vytvoření atmosféry tajemna a napětí. Tato technika zahrnuje složité a zdobné popisy prostředí, postav a událostí, které vyvolávají pocit krásy a elegance, ale také podivnosti a nadpozemskosti. Díky použití arabesky dokázal Poe vytvořit jedinečný styl vyprávění, který čtenáře uchvátil a nechal je ve stavu zaujetí, dychtivě zjistit vyvrcholení jeho příběhů. Dokázal zprostředkovat složité emoce a myšlenky prostřednictvím svých popisů zdánlivě všedních vzorců, námětů a jednání protagonistů, což dodalo jeho příběhům hloubku a komplexnost.

Poeovy arabesky jsou považovány za klasiku hororového žánru, o jejichž četbu a hlubší zkoumání je dodnes hojný zájem. Jeho vliv lze vidět v dílech mnoha dalších spisovatelů, kteří přejali podobné techniky k vytvoření svých vlastních jedinečných literárních stylů. Mezi autory, které Poe ovlivnil, patřil například irský spisovatel Oscar Wilde, jehož „Obraz Doriana Graye“ (1890) byl pravděpodobně inspirován Poeovou povídkou „Medailon“. V obou je ústředním motivem těchto děl vliv umění na lidský život. Za dalšího autora, který byl ovlivněn Poeovým dílem, je považován skotský spisovatel Robert Louis Stevenson se svým románem „Podivuhodný případ doktora Jekylla a pana Hyda“ (1886). Mezi nejznámější a nejúspěšnější současné představitele hororové literatury nepochybně patří Stephen King, který po Edgaru Allanu Poeovi zdědil titul mistra fantasy a hororu. Poeovo použití arabesky významně přispělo k rozvoji této literatury a jeho díla jsou nadále glorifikována pro svůj složitý a evokující styl a jeho schopnost mísit motivy krásy a hrůzy v jeho příbězích.

Vliv Edgara Allana Poea na americkou literaturu je nevyvratitelný. Jako spisovatel, básník a literární kritik Poe významně přispěl k rozvoji žánru povídky a byl klíčovou postavou literárního směru Romantismu ve Spojených státech. Jeho užití hororu s psychologickými prvky, symboliky a témat smrti a nadpřirozena ho odlišilo od jeho současníků a učinilo z něj jednoho z nejvlivnějších spisovatelů své doby. Poeova díla nadále inspirují a ovlivňují generace literátů a jeho odkaz lze i dnes vidět v dílech mnoha amerických spisovatelů. Jeho přínos americké literatuře i širšímu literárnímu světu bude nepochybně nadále studován a oceňován po mnoho dalších let.

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