

Tribhuvan University

Gothic Elements in Poe's Selected Short Stories

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by

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Declaration

I hereby declare that the thesis entitled

“Gothic Elements in Poe’s Selected Short Stories”

is my own original work carried out as a Master’s student at the Department of English at Ratna Rajya Laxmi Campus except to the extent that assistance from others in the thesis design and conception or in presentation style, and linguistic expression are duly acknowledged.

All sources used for the thesis have been fully and properly cited. It contains no material which to a substantial extent has been accepted for the award of any other degree at Tribhuvan University or any other educational institution, except where due acknowledgement is made in the thesis.

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April 09, 2018

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Letter of Approval

This thesis entitled “Gothic Elements in Poe's Short Stories”, submitted to the Department of English, Ratna Rajya Laxmi Campus, by Suman Phuyal has been approved by the undersigned members of the Research Committee:

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Abstract

Edgar Allan Poe is best known for his gothic creations, macabre and gloomy tales. He combines different elements of Gothic to his most of the stories. This thesis has portrayed Gothic elements of Poe's selected short stories. Gothic stories are dominated by fear, terror, mystery and suspense and explores the themes of loss and dark settings. For the preparation of this thesis, different scholarly sources relevant to the topic have been taken as the research methods. Both print and online sources have been reviewed for this purpose. As the theoretical tool, insights of gothic form and fiction have been collected from various sources. But this thesis will fundamentally rely on different theorists and their illustrations. This study is especially concerned with the three selected short stories with a theme of gothic haunts, madness of characters, atmosphere of terror and fear of death.

The Gothic arouse extreme emotions and the atmosphere of horror. There are gloomy settings, darkness and color symbols that terrify the readers. It also deals with supernatural, Gothic imageries and themes. This thesis attempts to explore and question how skillfully Poe's creativity is seen in Gothic genres with its violence and chilling situations. The research is focused on his literary works and gothic variations found in his fictional texts. Poe wisely uses Gothic literature to show fear inherent in the faces of people and investigates human emotions. His short stories have the Gothic qualities like: madness of character, atmosphere of terror and dread that show his ability to build suspense with blood-curdling scenes. The above all facts about the Gothic elements have been apparent in Poe's major gothic tales. There are significant gothic elements like terror, horror and mystery of suspense prevalent in three short stories of Poe.

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Gothic Elements of Poe's Selected Short Stories

Introduction: Gothic and its features

The term *Goth* is a Greek term for 'Gothoi' which means gloomy, grotesque and an atmosphere of decay and deterioration. There originates the next term 'Gothic' with the combination of Goths. Gothic is actually connected with Goths and architecture. This has been popular during 18th and 19th century to explore different gloomy atmosphere that creates suspense, terror and mystery. *Oxford English Dictionary* defines the term *Gothic* as: "Written in the style popular in the 18th and 19th centuries, which described romantic adventures in mysterious and frightening surroundings; very gloomy and horrifying" (393). Gothic writing means that writing which deals with the subject of horror, terror and mystery. There are different representative authors of gothic writings like: Horace Walpole, William Beckford, Emily Bronte, Edgar Allan Poe, Ann Radcliffe, Mary Shelley etc. On the other hand, Gothic fiction is largely known by its subgenre of gothic horror. It is a genre or mode of literature that combines fiction and horror, death and at times romance. Gothic stories highlight on the dark side of human psyche along with dark and picturesque scenery, atmosphere of mystery and anxiety. According to *Encyclopedia Britannica*:

Gothic fiction is that fiction prevailing atmosphere of mystery and terrors. The prominent features of gothic fiction include terror (psychological as well as physical), mystery, the supernatural, ghosts, haunted houses and gothic architecture, castles, darkness, death, decay, madness, secrets, curses and persecuted maidens. (4)

The above statement clarifies that gothic literature focuses on ruin, decay, death, terror and chaos, and privileged irrationality and passion over rationality and reason.

Mysterious imagination, medievalism, macabre and morbid and emotional aesthetic are other common features of gothic literature. *Merriam Webster's Encyclopedia of Literature* states: "Gothic novels were expected to be dark and tempestuous and full of

ghosts, madness, outrage, superstition and revenge" (613). It means that in a gothic short story, there is the dark and mysterious setting of an old building and the distinctive character's manner. Gothic stories are dominated by fear and terror. They explore the themes of death and decay. Gothic writers generally set their writings in wild landscapes, terror and horror the characters possess. They present wild scenes and terror. They are committed in showing the imaginary world in realistic ways as well. George Haggerty writes in detail about the gothic writer and explains that: "Gothic writer seemed caught between proving the reality of their fantasy and making that fantasy powerful and real" (381). It also deals with the dark, supernatural, symbolic characters such as the helpless women and other common images. Such elements are intended to create a feeling in the reader by hiding the ordinary life to reveal darker aspect of life.

Edgar Allan Poe's stories "The Masque of Red Death", "The Black Cat" and "The Premature Burial" are gothic, where there is the reflection of fear, terror, horror, mystery and disturbed mental condition, and the exploration of dark human psyche and moral isolation. In his gothic tales, the themes are not only the question of death but also physical signs, effect of decomposition, premature burial, and restoration of dead and mourning. The short stories written by Poe have the subject matter, setting, atmosphere, events, situation that arouses feeling of terror and horror.

The stories bear the themes of gothic haunts; morbidity and fear of death are on the ground. "The Masque of Red Death" deals with the theme of death where the main character Prince Prospero tries to escape from the inevitable being. The avoidance and running away of death resembles the horror and fear of death on the main character. Likewise, the mystery of the plague 'Red Death' resembles gothic horror. The red death is presented as a grotesque being which is unseen but in the form of masked figure. The narrator of "The Black Cat" has a horrifying behavior. The reincarnation of black cat resembles grotesque reality. The attack and hurting one of the eyes of cat by the narrator project terrifying scenes in the story. It has the prominent features of terror, mystery, the

supernatural, darkness, death, decay, madness, secrets, and curses. The continuous recall of graveyard and revival of corpse in "The Premature Burial" are mysterious incidents. Not only burying alive but also the experience of hypnotic state where the narrator flashbacks the scene of grave, corpse and burial ground present gothic subject matter. This research work attempts to study three different stories of Poe: "The Masque of the Red Death", "The Black Cat" and "The Premature Burial" and the gothic elements prevalent within the stories.

This thesis attempts to answer that reading a gothic story can create the atmosphere of fear, mystery and thrill. The mood in gothic writing is fear, anxiety and morbid settings that invoke terror and suspense. In the context as mentioned above, it becomes imperative to explore why the characters of Poe's stories possess gothic abilities? Why the characters take help of sinful act in order to get rid of terror and death? How and why there are horror elements in the selected stories? What attempts do the characters do to escape from inevitable death? What relation there is between superstition and grotesque reality? Poe cleverly uses gothic tales to analyze the darkest corners of the human mind. He investigates man's emotions, particularly fear, and his short stories that suggest the atmosphere of horror and dread.

This research work is limited only to study on the supernatural horror, gothic elements, the fear of death, mystery of the characters and terror in the three different stories of Edgar Allan Poe. It does not offer a comprehensive analysis of psychological part. Since, the major purpose of the study is to explore the gothic elements in the stories, a comprehensive study of psychological dilemma of characters lie outside the area of this project. The research work does not offer an analysis of alienation of characters in the stories either.

There have been different researchers who have studied in selected stories of Edgar Allan Poe. Different sources like: books, journal articles etc. are read that helps in this research work. Such books and journal articles play an important role to achieve this work.

Different critics have provided their different views about the stories of Poe. In "The Black Cat", there is an unknowing involvement of crime by protagonist. The main narrator unknowingly involves in evil crime that he cannot stop himself from happening. James W. Gargano further writes: "The Black Cat" is on one level an intense study of the protagonist's discovery of and infatuated immersion in evil and on another level a subtle examination of the protagonist's refusal to recognize the moral meaning of his career"(173). Gargano clarifies the character's moral sense after he commits evil deeds. He means that most of the gothic tales' characters are involved unknowingly in evil deeds which create sense of terror and scary feeling in readers. The style used by Poe to display his protagonist's evil act and scene of remorse is appreciable. Furthermore, he talks about the psychological aspects, use of symbols like fire, cat etc. in Poe's story.

John E. Reilly on the other hand wants to justify that Poe's tales focus on the principle of perversity where the main character becomes evil due to his/her inner motive and whatever the sin committed by the character is punishable and neither be hidden.

Reilly in his journal "A Source for Immuration in "The Black Cat"" argues:

Although Poe's villainous narrator see this impulse as antagonistic to their own well-being, the principle of perversity consistently and ironically operates in Poe's tales as an instrument for the discovery and punishment of the evil perpetrated by the narrator in effect and agent of god's providential justice. (94)

Another critic John Harmon McElroy states the black cat as "a species of humor" (103). He further alleges that the killing of the cat, hiding his wife behind wall and remorse later creates a humor that he terms as a "Sine qua non" (103) that refers to an essential condition. He states:

There can be no evident joke in "The Black Cat" until we find out that the talking voice is only pretending remorse for what he has done, despite his protests of sincere recognition of his heinous crimes. Humor is dependent

on a visual recognition of discrepancy between assertions and deeds. (104)

McElroy explains that the humor of the narrator pretends remorse but cannot stop him from making brutal crime. The humor in gothic tales is visual that acknowledges differences between statements and crimes. Though the story has terrific atmosphere and brutal sin from the main character, there is repentance of main character as well. The combination between evil deeds and regret create humor in Poe's stories.

"The Black Cat" briefly explores the household events that revolve around the periphery of family and the house where there occurs the domestic tragedy. William Crisman declares "The Black Cat" as a "mere household story" (87). He clarifies that the narrator of the story begins horrific story of exploiting, blinding, hangings and axe murders inside his house which can be a series of mere household events. He further adds that "exasperation" (89) is also reflected in "The Black Cat". The narrator's violent acts, directed first towards his cat and then toward his wife, indicate his madness that leads to the guilt. Such events are happened in the backgrounds of family where the main character's madness in exploiting and killing his/her nearest creates heart piercing incidents.

Moreover, Poe's works have different style, narrative techniques, language use etc. Jacob Rama Berman talks about the style used to beautify the context and place in "The Masque of the Red Death" that portrays death, decay and deterioration. He comments that attempts as Poe's own adoption of the beautification with deterioration and decay is gothic in "The Masque of the Red Death". He further remarks: "'The Masque of the Red Death' embodies the abbey's arabesque interior decor and forces reconciliation between the pleasure of viewing difference, in the form of decadent art and the horror of contact with real difference" (140). Berman tries to show the reality between beauty and decay that also explore the use of symbols in gothic literature. Berman means that though the gothic tales create scary scene, the motive of creating terror is with the beautiful characters that live in lonely building. The scenery inside interior of the building is also successful to create

horrific sight in a symbolic way. In most of the gothic tales, the setting is dark that the character is unknown about fear and mystery they are going to face. Hubert Zapf says that "The Masque of the Red Death" is an example of entropic imagination. He concludes: "Poe's view is far more pessimistic here in that he sees all of creation doomed from the beginning by its predestinated destruction, which always already overshadow all life-affirming impulses even before they can fully realize themselves" (216). What he means to say is that this story has entropic imagination where there is predestinated destruction where Prince Prospero tries to escape from such destruction i.e. plague of red death. He wants to challenge the death and hide inside his mansion. It proves that most of Poe's gothic short stories begin with destruction and some sorts of violence act which later ended with resolution.

"The Masque of the Red Death" concerns with the study of mind and emotions characterized by a love of beauty. The use of decorations inside the palace, sophisticated stylization, decadent atmosphere, kingdom of plague and superstitious attempts of escaping inevitable death present strong effects on the readers. Elvira Osipova further asserts: "The Masque of the Red Death is set for another feast during the plague, but in a different aesthetic environments" (28). She states that to create a strong feelings among the readers, different atmospheres have been created. Instead of dirty slum areas, the setting is a castellated abbey isolated from the outside world presents aesthetic effects upon the readers.

"The Premature Burial" talks about the scene of burying alive. There has been use of different references of entombment and cataleptic state of the narrator. There is also variation in style, substance and fictional mode of humor. J.G Kennedy especially explores that "The Premature Burial" has the "ingredients of 'humor'" (170). The incidents of Burial create a short problem for the corpse whose liveliness produces laughable encounters. He adds:

The humor depends partially upon the baseness of the victim, in some sense all deserve their misfortunes and evoke little sympathy. And in the preposterous world of burial satire, entombment is never permanent anyway, for comic necessity mandates the victim survival. Escape from the tomb permits the improbable confrontation between the deceased and his survivors which forms the crux of burial humor. (170)

Kennedy discovers that being alive from funeral in reality is laughable that projects humor. Though the events are related to interment, the possibility of getting alive from coffin creates burial humor. The environment inside the burial ground, suffocation and condition of being alive is presented in the story. Another critic Erin E. Forbes states "The Premature Burial" as a "consummate sepulchral study" (34). Most of the allusions used in the story about burial alive is perfect gloomy study. She also talks about the "imaginative space of social death" (35). She contends:

"The Premature Burial" satirizes the reliance of liberal, enlightenment ideals of humanity, progress and perfectibility on a gothic imaginary. By linking incarceration to slavery through the trope of premature burial, the tale finally suggests that the threat of social death may have produced not silent slaves and malleable prisoners but a multitude of voluble, raucous ghosts. (35)

Not only the allusions related to entombment is gloomy but also, narrate and explore about the social death of different people after they are buried and revive from the burial ground.

Gothic literature imposes a sense of dread. It creates a complex mixture of three distinct elements terror, horror and mystery. Terror means a state of intense fear, horror refers to an extremely strong feeling of fear, shock or disgust and mystery means something that is difficult to understand. Edmund Burke in his book: *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* tells clearly about one of the gothic features that: "Terror is in all cases whatsoever, either more openly or latently

the ruling principle of the sublime" (73). His explanation of the sublime is clearly related to the almost Gothic study of terror. He means that we fear whatever threatens to injure or to kill us that greatly generalize the complex nature of pain and fear. Also, he describes that the literature attempts to produce the reader's imaginative sympathies that act as a factor of emotional involvement. Gothic authors usually mention terrific scene of their contemporary time followed with chaos and disorder. They sometimes focus on supernatural theme that is clearly monstrous and horrific. Many gothic tales have terrifying setting such as isolated buildings, castles and palaces. Most of the features of Gothic fiction consist ruin, decay, and glimpse of fiery destruction.

Regarding use of Gothic mood and atmosphere in the Gothic fiction, James Keech in his journal article "The Survival of the Gothic Response" states that: "A Gothic atmosphere was thus seen very early as a means of symbolically expressing the cold objectivity of science and the sense of fearful power resident in the control of natural forces" (143). He further tells about the subjects of the Gothic literature and the relation of Gothic with science. He clarifies that gothic atmosphere arouse symbolically with the sense of fearful power that is resided in the control of supernatural powers. There is always the central character, usually isolated either willingly or unwillingly and with some hidden wickedness. Gothic writers present fears and suspense incorporated with gloomy atmosphere in their works. There is an equal association between the use of setting and the storylines of gothic novels with the architecture often serving as a mirror for the characters and the plot lines of the story. Such setting in the gothic literature resembles darkness, terror and horrific scene. In this way, different critics and scholars have interpreted Poe's stories with different views. Critics like James Gargano declares about character's moral sin, John E. Reilly states about perversity, John McElroy asserts about the use of humor and William Crisman explores about homely narratives in "The Black Cat". Likewise, Jacob Rama Berman talks about the use of style and symbols, Hubert Zapf claims about entropic imagination and Elvira Osipova states aesthetic environment used in "The

Masque of the Red Death". Similarly, in "The Premature Burial" J.G. Kennedy alleges about humor and Erin E. Forbes states it as a funereal study. There are other critics like: James Keech who talks about Gothic atmosphere prevalent in mainly three stories of Poe and Edmund Burke about terrors. But my point of view is that the selected stories are in the form of gothic convention with the elements of death, decay, mystery, madness of characters, supernaturalism and reincarnation. As Gothic is a type of fiction with supernatural, terrifying events that is dark and has emotional plots, it is usually set in the ruined Gothic castles or abbeys, terrifying experiences in ancient castle, screams, groans, bloody hands, ghosts, and graveyards. The Gothic literature represents the joys of extreme emotion, the thrills of fearfulness and awe inherent in the sublime, a quest for atmosphere.

As many writers use different techniques to narrate the story, Gothic writers also have endless ways of telling story. Due to this, a writer like Edgar Allan Poe is successful to capture the attention of the readers from the beginning of the story. Sometimes, in order to keep reader near to the text, the writers focus on exaggeration. Therefore, using different elements of Gothic genre, I want to explore on the theme in the following chapter. Moreover, it brings the facts of gothic literature and it also aims at establishing the importance of characters to create gothic setting in a more encompassing way. As the first chapter deals with gothic writing and its features and Poe's works from critics' perspective, the second chapter is about gothic elements in Poe's selected short stories.

Gothic Elements in Poe's Selected Short Stories

The thoughtful exploration of horror and terror is based on actual human nature and events like madness of characters. The chief reason to handle the gloomy and frightening matters is to deal with death, madness, diseases, and deterioration of personality in gothic stories. There is reflection of fear, terror, horror and mystery which lies under the study of dark human mind and moral isolation. The theme does not only concern with the question of death but also the supernatural elements, premature burial, and rehabilitation of dead and mourning that are prominent in the gothic tales. The images

of graveyard, reincarnation of images, gothic attitude of characters, masked figure, buried corpses etc. portray the gothic elements in the stories. However, the characters in the stories are always longing to escape the gothic reality. The loss of control of the characters that later creates horrifying incidents, fear of unknown and graveyard settings are importantly presence in the gothic tales. What happens to most characters in the story is that though they claim themselves as normal, their deeds later prove their insanity. Their violent acts in the story result their own destruction. This is how the situation of horror, mystery and fear are clearly presented in Edgar A. Poe's most of the gothic tales.

Mostly, the gothic stories are based upon the exploration of horror and terror that the major focus is on human nature which is clearly visible to the readers. While reading such stories, different images of ghostly creatures are observed by the madness of characters and their behaviors. Sharon Furrow in her journal article "Psyche and Setting", states such creative works as a "Pictorial Imagination" (16). It elucidates how interior world of the main character is presented in the most gothic tales. The suspense in many gothic stories becomes main motif that later has been enrolled within characters and their nature. The short stories written by Poe are more a fictional tale in which the subject matters, settings, and atmosphere are designed to arouse feeling of terror and horror.

"The Masque of the Red Death" is a tragic and bloodcurdling story. It contains gloomy, mysterious and death related situations. In the story, Prince Prospero attempts to avoid a dangerous plague known as the Red Death. In this story, a bloody disease called the Red Death ravages kingdom. The story presents human ignorance to the nature of death and fear of the unknown. In the case of revealing the terror and horror, different gothic symbols, settings, gothic conventions are presented in the story. A castellated abbey as a setting, Red Death, ebony clock, seventh room, masked figure etc. as powerful imageries help to portray horrific incidents among the readers. Irving Malin in her journal article asserts the castle as a "disintegration of social order" (146). The palace becomes a place where terrific events i.e. the death game of Red Death can be seen taking place.

Though the whole country is ravaged by the fear of Red Death, Prince Prospero has no any terror as he has surrounded the castle with strong iron gates and walls thinking that the Red Death may enter his kingdom. Describing the incidents, Poe writes:

Prince Prospero was happy and dauntless and sagacious. When his dominions were half depopulated, he summoned to his presence a thousand hale and light hearted friends from among the knights and dames of his court, and with these retired to the deep seclusion of one of his castellated abbeys. This was an extensive and magnificent structure, the creation of the prince's own eccentric yet august taste. ("The Masque of the Red Death" 1)

The way Prince Prospero hides himself inside the castle without fear resembles his fear to death. The gothic setting i.e. palace where the prince hides with his other knights later becomes grave when the plague hits the whole surroundings. In "The Masque of the Red Death", Prince Prospero's castle is the main setting where gothic atmosphere prevails as Robert D. Hume asserts: "The atmosphere is one of the evil and brooding terror; the imaginary world in which the action takes place is the author's objectification of his imaginative sense of the atmosphere. In other words, the setting exists to convey the atmosphere" (286). In order to create gothic themes, the atmosphere helps and the actions happening in the imaginative world originate threatening fear. What Hume wants to clarify is that the setting of the tales portrays the overall gothic atmosphere prevalent in the tales. In such situation, Poe states:

But in the western or black chamber the effect of the fire- light that streamed upon the dark hangings through the blood-tinted panes, was ghastly in the extreme, and produced so wild a look upon the countenances of those who entered, that there were few of the company bold enough to set foot within its precincts at all. ("The Masque of the Red Death" 3)

The gloomy situation inside the castle and rooms is the actual reason that supports in arousing fear and terror among the readers. The strange fire light projected red painted

windows dreadful which supports in creating the horrific environment.

The deadly incidents have happened inside the castle by killing all people. There is the mixture of fear, death and atmosphere that seems to be more dreamlike than real.

Death is roaming everywhere in the story. Prince Prospero is trying to ignore death and escape it by enjoying a ball and inviting people. However, death cannot be ignored.

Readers are confronted with death as:

The 'Red Death' had long devastated the country. No pestilence had ever been so fatal, or so hideous. Blood was its Avatar and its seal-the redness and the horror of blood. There were sharp pains, sudden dizziness, and then profuse bleeding at the pore, with dissolution. ("The Masque of the Red Death" 1)

Poe describes vividly how the plague of Red Death devastates the whole kingdom and frighten all. The imagery of Red Death and blood creates certain kinds of terror upon the readers. The situation of pain and bleeding scenes explores about horrific environments.

Gothic symbols are another source to arouse terrific atmosphere in the readers while reading stories. Poe uses the seventh room as an imagery of death, as this room is black and red which represents the death colors. The odd color combination of rooms with windows prevails the gloomy atmosphere. The walls of the room are black and the window has red color. Both red and black colors represent violence and death. Vincent Buranelli writes about Poe's use of symbols in his book *Edgar Allan Poe*:

Poe's use of symbolism in his Gothic stories is a guiding thread to his literary art. That he is not persistently a symbolist is one of his strength, for it means that he only turns to symbolist is one of his strength, for it means that he only terms to symbolism when it has distinct role to play and then he handles it with great care to keep it from becoming diffuse or ambiguous. (76)

The atmosphere and descriptions of mental states are two peculiarly attractive features in "The Masque of the Red Death". The tricks creating atmosphere is derived from the tradition of the Gothic Fiction to give extreme and heightened meaning. To give brief description of color symbols, Poe further describes:

The seventh apartment was closely shrouded in black velvet tapestries that hung all over the ceiling and down the walls, falling in heavy folds upon a carpet of the same material and hue. But in this chamber only, the colour of the windows failed to correspond with the decorations. The panes here were scarlet- a deep blood colour. ("The Masque of the Red Death" 2-3)

Poe uses the term "blood-tinted panes" (3) to describe the room's windows that symbolize dread. Poe describes other rooms in different colors like blue, purple, green, orange, white and violet. Each room represents a stage in the life of man. Blue represents birth, purple represents a change to royalty, green represents the growth of youth, orange represents strength and maturity, white is purity, violet represents the knowledge and wisdom that comes with age before the red and black room representing death in the story.

The clock in the black room is a symbol of death indicating how time passes till death come. It basically makes the prince and the people in the ball experience that their lives are travelling away with time, and that the death is approaching. The alarming sound of the black clock provides chilling atmosphere. It ticks loudly and sounds horribly. The clock being presented as 'giant' and 'ebony' in some way carries the hideous meaning in depth that can foretell the upcoming misfortune. Paul Haspel asserts clock as a symbol of "inescapable nature of time" (57). The sound of the clock is described as: "a dull, heavy and monotonous clang" ("The Masque of the Red Death" 3) which alerts the guest about their approaching death. Every hour the black clock rings loudly that the orchestra stops playing due to which other guests experience fearful situation and it seems that they are waiting for something bad to happen. The revellers could neither stop its pendulum from swinging nor could they prevent its threatening tones from reducing their feelings. Howard

P. Lovecraft puts into words: "The oldest and strongest emotion of mankind is fear, and the oldest and strongest kind of fear is fear of the unknown" (1). Prince Prospero in "The Masque of Red Death" faces the same condition where he has a fear of unknown Red Death and he tries to skip from it. There is a kind of fear roaming around the guests presented in the room that might be the fear of unknown. As midnight clock chimes, the visitors become aware of a figure that they do not previously notice it at all.

The origin of masked figure creates odd environment inside the palace. No one in the palace has seen it but they experience its arrival after the last echoes of clock. The presence of masked figure represents anxiety that further tells it as:

And thus, too it happened, perhaps that before the last echoes of the last chime had utterly sunk into silence, there were many individuals in the crowd who had found leisure to become aware of the presence of a masked figure which had arrested the attention of no single individual before ("The Masque of the Red Death" 5).

Within the story, the masked figure becomes an agent to create frightening mood. The masked figure, who made its presence at midnight, had not been seen by anyone before. Irving Malin further declares masquerade as a symbol of "uncertainty and terror" (146). The masked figure is described as "tall and gaunt, and shrouded from head to foot in the habiliments of the grave" ("The Masque of the Red Death" 6). Furthermore, when the mask of the Red Death appears, it is shocking to all the guests. The readers discover that the Red Death as a guest is even stranger than all the other guests.

The figure in "The Masque of the Red Death" looks like a corpse of a victim of the Red Death, indicating the presence of the plague, which is dangerous and deadly that all the guests want to escape. Later, the ghostlike figure is further described as: "But the mummer had gone so far as to assume the type of the Red Death. His vesture was dabbled in blood- and his broad brow, with all the features of his face, was besprinkled with the scarlet horror" ("The Masque of the Red Death" 6). This sort of physical appearance of the disguised

character haunts in a terrific way to the readers. The terrible costume of the unexpected guest also depicts the symbol of horror. The mysterious guest has a mask that looks like the face of a corpse. The death and life is represented in the story. It deals with the theme of death where the main character Prince Prospero tries to escape the inevitable being. It resembles his madness of avoiding death. Prospero states:

'Who dares,' he demanded hoarsely of the courtiers who stood near him-
who dares insult us with this blasphemous mockery? Seize him and unmask
him-which we may know whom we have to hang at sunrise, from the
battlements!' ("The Masque of the Red Death" 6)

The main character clarifies the madness of Prospero who fears death. The avoidance and running away resembles the horror and fear of death faced by the main character.

"The Black Cat" is about the relation between man and animal. In this story, the narrator has love with animals but he murders his cat and his wife in his extreme drunkenness. He has not got any power to face the cold horror of murder and confesses the crime. He has a horrifying behavior. The story has the atmosphere of terror that creates fear and horror among humanity. The narrator's violence upon the black cat exposes his intention to scare the readers. The madness of the narrator in "The Black Cat" arouses the feeling of terror. Not only madness of the narrator but also the use of symbols and settings help the story to have horror. He combines massive fear into the tales of suspense, horror and the supernatural. The narrator displays several attributes of madness as he injures an innocent cat, hangs it, kills his wife in a fit of temper and finally hides her rotten corpse behind a brick wall.

In the beginning, the narrator shows kindness and goodwill toward animals that is praised by his family members. Later, his fiendish intemperance or alcohol leads to his madness. The narrator's mad behavior when he is drunk projects terror among the readers. His drinking habit is extreme as he explains: "I grew, day by day, more moody, more irritable, more regardless of the feeling of others. I suffered myself to use intemperate

language to my wife, at length, I even offered her personal violence" ("The Black Cat" 27). Alcoholism has acted as a substance for the narrator's good manner turning into insanity. It has been caused by the drinking habit; the narrator experiences an essential behavioral change that results in a much different emotion from his earlier acceptance.

Poe's most weighty study of horror and terror is based on a very humane and realistic phenomenon like madness of characters. This characteristic is the principal reason to handle the frightening subjects with which his reputation is so closely connected to death, madness, diseases, and the dissolution of personality. Once Poe said in his book *Tales of Grotesque and Arabesque*: "If in many of my productions terror has been the thesis, I maintain that terror is not of Germany, but of the soul- that I have deduced this terror only from its legitimate sources and urged it only to its legitimate results" (5). Poe means his writing is weighty to scare the soul of people by arousing atmosphere of horror. On the surface, the stories appear to be driven by a gothic mystery, horror, identity crisis and fear of death. The terror is related to the feeling of dreadful and prediction on ongoing horrifying experience. As Gothic conventions mean representing terrifying experiences, the gothic atmosphere is also presented in "The Black Cat". Irina Anisimova in her journal highlights Ivan Bunin's novel *Dry Valley* that: "The Gothic atmosphere results from cruelty and an unnatural closeness in the relationships between former serfs and their owners" (379). She further clarifies that the horrifying situation is resultant of the cruel nature of the characters. Similar gothic atmosphere is seen in Edgar Allan Poe's "The Black Cat" where there are features like cruelty of the main characters and unnatural closeness with the cat. In such environment, the narrator asserts: "I took from my waist coat-pocket a pen knife, opened it, grasped the poor beast by the throat and deliberately cut one of its eyes from the socket! I blush, I burn, and I shudder, while I pen the damnable atrocity" ("The Black Cat" 28). The narrator's sinful deed and cruelty succeed in arousing gothic atmosphere among readers. The resultant of his drinking habit alters the behavior and makes him extremely mad in hurting and killing the innocent cat. The way

narrator attacks the cat with a knife and hurts his eye really creates the scene of terror among the readers. But next day, he blames his "Spirit of Perverseness" ("The Black Cat" 28-29) for his attack and killing of the same animal. He calls the condition is "in cool blood" ("The Black Cat" 29) to accomplish the left task of killing. The main characters' insane act of killing the innocent creature is apparent due to his alcoholic habits. The attack on Pluto and eventual murder presents brutal scene that can show the atmosphere of terror.

Even though horror story deals with the sublime and the supernatural, the underlying theme of the fallen hero applies to the real world as well. Furthermore, the prevalent fears of murder, sin and the unknown are fears that we face in life. In the Gothic world, they are merely multiplied. *Merriam Webster's Encyclopedia of Literature* further explores the idea of Gothic: "Horror story focuses on creating a feeling of fear. They can have supernatural elements and features such as ghosts, witches and they can address more realistic fear" (559). The characters are affected by the mental tortures due to the experiences of death and gothic realities. The gothic tales address the horrific, hidden ideas and emotions with individuals in a realistic manner. The title of the story resembles symbol of supernatural by presenting a cat as black, the symbol of darkness. The black cat is symbolized as witch mythically as well. The narrator's wife in "The Black Cat" illustrates the cat as: "...a little tinctured with superstition, made frequent allusion to the ancient popular notion, which regarded all black cats as witches in disguise" ("The Black Cat" 27). His wife's suspicion to black cat as a symbol of darkness, death, decay, madness, secrets, and curses clarify in detail that supernatural elements are also responsible factors to create sense of fear.

Terror is characterized by despair and indeterminacy in its action of possibly dreadful events in gothic tales. There is also an occurrence of awful and deeply unpleasant feelings. Poe's line clearly shows dreadful and shocking happenings as: "I experienced a sentiment half of horror, half of remorse, for the crime of which I had been guilty; but it

was, at best, a feeble and equivocal feeling and the soul remained untouched" ("The Black Cat" 28). The character's moral sense after he commits evil deeds also become a catalyst to present terrible atmosphere among the readers. Alcohol cannot be used as a rational excuse but it leads repeatedly towards brutality. The immoral deed in his extreme drunkenness is repeatedly seen with another cat and wife as well. The madness of character in "The Black Cat" is motivated into a rage by the cat and his wife's interruption in his attempted murder of it has the true reason behind his actions. In the article, 'The Aesthetics of Fear', Joyce Carol Oates states: "The powerful appeal of the gothic world is that its inhabitants who resemble civilized and often attractive men and women, are in reality creatures of primitive instinct" (181). Though the narrator belongs to good and well off family, he cannot stop himself from committing such sin that terrifies everyone. The horrifying murder is such a brutal act that becomes effective subject to originate terror where Poe writes:

Uplifting an axe, and forgetting, in my wrath, the childish dread which had hitherto stayed my hand, I aimed a blow at the animal which, of course, would have proved instantly fatal had it descended as I wished. But this blow was arrested by the hand of my wife. Goaded by the interference into a rage more than demoniacal, I withdrew my arm from her grasp and buried the axe in her brain. She fell dead upon the spot, without a groan. ("The Black Cat" 33)

The lines clarify about primitive sentiment or impulse that governs human behavior. Besides, the extreme rage that cannot stop the narrator from spreading fearful situation. Here, though he is in fine condition and not drunk, he has done such a cruel deed of killing. His madness dominates his intention, and in a state of shock, he is able to hide his wife's body.

The setting is another important gothic theme used in "The Black Cat". The story takes place in a house and a cellar. Such setting helps to arouse dreadful atmosphere that

can scare the readers or audience. The cellar where the narrator hides the body of his wife in the wall is the perfect gothic setting. To create a gothic scene, the cellar that is underground of the house is a place where it would be easy to insert the corpse of his wife. The gothic setting has been used to convey gruesome and horrifying environment that easily terrifies the readers. The narrator states: "I determined to wall it up in the cellar- as the monks of the Middle Ages are recorded to have walled up their victims" ("The Black Cat" 34). The narrator considers different ways to do with the corpse of his wife. He thinks of cutting the body into pieces, burying under the house but later he walls the body in the cellar. The extreme scene of having no feelings of love towards his beloved creates fear in the readers.

The narrator's beginning of madness is seen in his experiences with Pluto which later continues till his horrifying murder of his wife and insane act of hiding the body behind the cellar. The story takes place in a house, a dark tavern and a cellar. This atmosphere makes the reader feel scared and creates a certain element of dread. The entirety of "The Black Cat" is about the narrator falling in madness, and while in control, causing chaos to his loved ones. Even with these topics, however, the true terror is the narrator's madness, lack of reason, supernatural events, gothic imageries, gothic settings and alcoholism.

Another story, "The Premature Burial" is also about horror of burial alive. To make the story readable, different allusions are used in the story. This story is a classic horror story on the theme of being buried alive, which is a common fear. In the story, the main character describes his struggle with the premature burial in that time. He emphasizes his fear and pain by mentioning several people who have been buried alive. The narrator analyses the examples in order to provide context for his terror of being buried alive. There are also different Gothic impulses like Gothic settings, symbols, haunt and dread prevalent in "The Premature Burial" which supports to arouse fear and horror among readers. Bret Zimmerman comments Poe for his contribution and termed his writing as

"Stylistic versatility" (637). It is indeed true that "The Premature Burial" contains versatile style. Poe uses many allusions of experiencing horror of premature burial in a different style. The narrator becomes tortured from his fear of burial. In this manner, "The Premature Burial" has different gothic settings that create terror, fear and horror among readers. Mostly, gloomy and decaying setting creates mystery in the story. Likewise, the scenes of graveyards, cemetery, family vaults and ship are gothic settings found in different references used in the story that build up intense emotions among readers. There is use of family vault as gothic setting where a lady has been buried. But after some years when her parents dig the same ground to replace it with another body, they are shocked with terror to see to coffin box opened. Such incident of being alive creates horrific thoughts. Exploring the Gothic setting, Poe writes:

The lady was deposited in her family vault, which for three subsequent years, was undisturbed. At the expiration of this term it was opened for the reception of a sarcophagus; but, alas! How fearful a shock awaited the husband, who, personally, threw open the doors! As its portals swung outwardly back, some white–appareled object fell rattling within his arms.

It was the skeleton of his wife in her yet unmolded shroud. ("The Premature Burial" 39)

In reality, to arouse panic situation, there is the use of gothic setting like vault. The frequent use of allusions in the story supports to originate gothic settings like graveyard, vault and cemetery. Not only the funeral of body but also the condition of being alive after getting buried creates a chilling sensation. Christine Doyle in her article "Contemporary Hauntings" talks about gothic tales where she mentions the views of Dale Townshend about gothic as an "excruciating scenes of horror and terror in religious writings presumably to scare children into virtuous behavior" (244). It is clearly portrayed in "The Premature Burial" where different allusions of burial ground present pain, terror and frightening situation among readers. The visual images of buried corpse, graveyard and

breathhtaking rebirth of the corpse into the vault help in experiencing horrific environment. Poe in one of the examples about premature burial provides the reference of Mademoiselle Victorine Lafourcade and Julien Bossuet say that the gothic setting of burying Victorine Lafourcade creates an atmosphere of terror that supports the view of Townshend. The gothic setting as an ordinary graveyard is presented as:

She was buried not in a vault, but in an ordinary grave in the village of her nativity. Filled with despair and still inflamed by the memory of a profound attachments, the lover journeys from the capital to the remote province in which the village lies, with the romantic purpose of disinterring the corpse. He reaches the grave and unearths the coffin, open it and he saw unclosing of the beloved eyes. ("The Premature Burial" 40)

The terrific scenes as the buried corpses come into the life after burial that follow with grave as gloomy setting. The act of digging the grave of the beloved and the scene of opening eyes by his beloved girlfriend provide heartrending sight. The characters are affected by the mental tortures due to the experiences of death, gothic realities. Gothic settings give mental stress to the character keeping the readers in central periphery.

The use of symbols in "The Premature Burial" is unique to the Gothic genre. The title itself is symbolic in itself as premature burial symbolizes the death. It is a story of extreme horror depicting effects of fear in the human mind. The narrator's terror is the result of his dwelling obsessively on morbid thoughts. Being alone from the world of the living is the cause of the narrator's abnormal fear of being buried alive. The thought of being alone and abandoned, without hope of ever seeing another human being, frightens the narrator that provides the perfect reason for the creation of gothic settings. The narrator says an empty human mind contains unknown and mysterious terrors. Another symbol that is well crafted in the story is the narrator's cataleptic state. The narrator tries to say the condition and experience during his cataleptic state as: "I grew sick, and numb, and chilly, and dizzy, and so fell prostrate at once" ("The Premature Burial" 46). It clarifies how the

catalepsy is trying to affect him in abnormal way by taking him into the world of imagination where he only thinks about death, premature burials and grave. Furthermore, Poe states his own hypnotic state as a medium that creates distressing thrills. The narrator experiences no physical harm but he begins to dream of death and premature burial. That is why he becomes increasingly nervous having a fear of death that he asserts:

I endured there was no physical suffering but of moral distress an infinitude. My fancy grew chanel, I talked of worms, of tombs, and epitaphs. I was lost in reveries of death, and the idea of premature burial held continual possession of my brain. The ghastly danger to which I was subjected haunted me day and night [...And]. When nature could endure wakefulness no longer, it was with a struggle that I consented to sleep- for I shuddered to reflect that, upon awaking, I might find myself the tenant of grave. ("The Premature Burial" 46)

It explains the fear that the narrator faces in his cataleptic state creates horrifying situation in readers. He sees dead figure, grave, etc. in his captivating state. In this story, the narrator is haunted by his own inner fear as he confesses:

I no longer dared trust myself out of the immediate presence of those who were aware of my proneness to catalepsy, lest, falling into one of my usual fits, I should be buried before my real condition could be ascertained. I doubted the care, the fidelity of my dearest friends. I dreaded that, in some trance of more than customary duration, they might be prevailed upon to regard me as irrecoverable. ("The Premature Burial" 48)

The narrator has uncertainty about his unconscious state wherein he doubts on his own friends. The lines clarify the fear of being buried alive in his unconscious state. The continuous recall of graveyard and revival of corpse are mysterious. Not only burying alive but also the experience of hypnotic state where the narrator flashbacks the scene of grave, corpse and burial ground presents gothic subject matter. His gothic vision during

his dream originates different gothic symbols that enrich terrifying happenings. Joseph M. Garrison states that, such "redemptive possibilities of terror and horror" (148) appear in "The Premature Burial". Garrison further asserts: "The narrator suffered from a cataleptic disorder and consequently takes elaborate precautions to protect himself from being entombed in the suspended condition" (148). He means to say that the situation releases the terror in readers. The narrator in his unconscious condition dreams about his own burial procession and death imagination. Similarly, as the story moves ahead it has been clear that the problem of hypnotism occurs near Richmond in Virginia down the bank of the James River in a small berth beneath the deck. The cabin of small ship becomes a gothic symbol where the narrator is entrapped into his fantasy that provides him with the images of premature burial, burying alive and graveyard. Later, he comes out of that world and he expresses about the situation as:

The tortures endured, however, were indubitably quite equal for the time, to those of actual sepulchre. They were fearfully—they were inconceivably hideous; but out of Evil proceeded Good; for their very excess wrought in my spirit an inevitable repulsion. ("The Premature Burial" 52)

Whatever the fear or terror, the narrator faces, he comes out of it after he leaves reading horror based books. He concludes that the imagination is sometimes unhealthy that everyone must ignore it. The experience is terrible but becomes more active and less fretful. He believes worrying about the death and imaginary world that produces the most crippling anxiety among the readers. The Gothic settings, Gothic symbols, Gothic impulses and haunting are successfully presented in "The Premature Burial". The more terrifying scene is created, the more the readers have chilling anxiety.

In a nutshell, "The Masque of the Red Death", "The Black Cat" and "The Premature Burial" are the single handed creation of Edgar Allan Poe that have common thread of gothic elements that clearly proves him as one of the pioneer in gothic genre. Gothic elements such as supernatural, superstition, gloomy and morbid settings are major

ingredients found in Poe's above mentioned stories. The atmospheric scenario is arousing our senses with terror, chill our imagination to the super gothic sublimity. The prince's palace, and its architectural design in "The Masque of the Red Death", dark buildings, the underground cellar in "The Black Cat" and the images of graveyards, family vaults in "The Premature Burial" give the gothic picturesque. The atmosphere evokes terror, suspense and gloom in all three stories. Besides, the settings, symbols and superstitions that are presented in the stories increase the effect of moral shock and horror which arouse gloomy environments among the readers. Likewise, the use of first person narrative in two stories: "The Black Cat" and "The Premature Burial" succeed to keep the readers close to the horrifying experiences and the madness of characters and narrators in the stories bind everyone in chilling incidents.

Conclusion: Poe as a Gothic Writer

Gothic fiction is the subgenre of gothic horror. It is a mode of literature that depicts horror, terror and superstitions in chilling manners. Gothic tales generally focus on fear and horrid environments through mystery and suspense. Edgar Allan Poe has made full use of many of the basic attributes of gothic fiction in his stories. The common theme of gothic in his stories is represented by gothic structure. One of the most prominent themes that haunt the Gothic fiction of Edgar Allan Poe is death and decay. The other elements of the gothic that are prevalent throughout his works include the presence of madness, internal chaos, supernatural and creepy locations. These gothic qualities are created by death, murder, ghost, haunted castles, supernatural occurrences and gloomy atmosphere. Upon these elements, the protagonists of his short stories are affected badly. They suffer from mental tortures. They are compelled to commit evil acts. Such qualities are visible in mainly three short stories: "The Masque of the Red Death", "The Black Cat" and "The Premature Burial" written by Edgar Allan Poe.

"The Masque of the Red Death" contains many gothic elements. Prince Prospero

organizes masquerade ball to escape the plague Red Death. Poe successfully connects the avoidance and running away with the horror and fear of death by the main character.

Likewise, the mystery of the plague is presented as gothic horror. There is also escaping from death, foolish act of characters to avoid death, fear of unknown, different color symbols and castellated abbey as a suitable setting in the story. Edgar Allan Poe artistically uses different literary genres to analyse the dark human mind and investigates human's sentiments in the story. Poe uses gothic colors of red and black to support an atmosphere of horror and emotional conflict. He also displays suspense with horrible scenes in the story to arouse gloomy environment and horror. Poe's way of presenting the atmosphere of terror and analyzing different complexities of his character clarifies his creativity. The gothic symbols, settings, superstitions and fear of unknown are outstandingly exposed by Poe in order to arouse terrifying circumstances in this story.

Another story, "The Black Cat" is about the horror of a murder and crime. Poe has chosen excellently different Gothic conventions as themes. The narrator in his extreme fiendish situation commits the crime of hurting and killing his lovable animal. Poe's skill in creating chilling and fearful situation among the readers through his characters is seen in this story. The matter of reincarnation of black cat resembles grotesque reality. Though the narrator tries to hide his sin, the corpse of the cat hidden behind the underground cellar help to find the guilt of him. The attack and hurting the eyes of cat by the narrator show terrifying scenes in the story. The horror rooted in human mind gets activated to commit the wrong act and exhibit the wrong behavior, which ultimately leads the person towards loneliness as it is noticed in this story.

In Poe's "The Black Cat", the madness of character, alcoholism, cruel nature of character towards animals, superstitious beliefs, perverseness and insane deeds are successfully conveyed as different gothic features. In this story, Poe attempts to expose and explore the unconscious world of desires, horror and fears. He has invested the most mechanical plot with an atmosphere of horror in this homely narrative tale. The arousing

of terror to tragic heights and making the protagonist get into the criminal turns is proficiently presented in the story. The reflection of terror and horror that lies beneath the orderly surface of civilized person is shown in this short story. Due to exploitation and unnecessary irritation, the protagonist in this tale becomes alone and the horror originates from bad habits and wrong doings of the same character that Poe exuberantly depict through the lines of the story. The horror of wrong act makes the character get tortured and regret doing wrong things but they have not eventually been shown in the physical appearances. Poe's technique of presenting his character using first person narrative has the motive of encountering scary environment that not only disturbs the mind but also terrifies the heart of everyone.

Similarly, "The Premature Burial" is about burial alive where different settings of burial ground and vaults terrorize the readers. Poe is a master at creating gloomy, mysterious, ghostly and terrifying environment along with the feeling of threats that has been vividly reflected in this story. The narrator is haunted by his own inner fear in the story. The continuous recall of graveyard and revival of corpse are mysterious incidents that Poe conveys in creative way. Not only burying alive but also the experience of hypnotic state where the narrator flashbacks the scene of grave, corpse and burial ground present gothic subject matters. Poe's literary experiences are seen in the story "The Premature Burial" where his use of various allusions, display of the images about premature burial in narrator's cataleptic state and the morbid settings reflect his abilities in using gothic conventions. His morbid setting and macabre environment further support to create foundation of gothic genre in this tale. Poe is successful to present gothic raw material which captures the weird nature and makes this story more frequent tales of terror, included by strange dark setting.

To sum up, Poe's Gothic tales are dominated by fear, horror, supernatural and mystery where the themes of death and decay play vital role in terrifying ways. Poe's tales are categorized under gothic fictions that portray the terrifying situation rooted in human

mind. Poe has used different gothic symbols, atmosphere, supernatural aspects etc. to evoke terror in all the three stories. There are various styles used in telling a story and the writers like Poe are able to bind their readers into the world of their tales from the beginning that is repeatedly found in the three major stories. Poe's way of selecting the plots includes some exaggerations due to which there emerge different meanings that can make the tales readable. It cannot be ignored that in order to create chilling situations, he combines different features of gothic in the three tales. It undoubtedly proves Poe as an American gothic story writer whose gothic tales have gothic conventions.

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