



UNIVERSIDADE FEDERAL DO CEARÁ
CENTRO DE HUMANIDADES
DEPARTAMENTO DE ESTUDOS DA LÍNGUA INGLESA, SUAS LITERATURAS E
TRADUÇÃO
GRADUAÇÃO EM LETRAS INGLÊS

REYNOLD STEPHANES MESQUITA MARQUES

GOTHISICM IN EDGAR ALLAN POE'S: AN ANALYSIS OF THE CASK OF
AMONTILLADO

FORTALEZA - CE

2024

REYNOLD STEPHANES MESQUITA MARQUES

GOTHICISM IN EDGAR ALLAN POE'S: AN ANALYSIS OF THE CASK OF
AMONTILLADO

Trabalho de Conclusão de Curso apresentado ao
Curso de Graduação em Letras Inglês da
Universidade Federal do Ceará, como requisito
parcial à obtenção do título de licenciatura em
Letras Inglês.

Orientador: Prof. Dr. Paulo Roberto de
Nogueira Andrade.

FORTALEZA – CE

2024

Dados Internacionais de Catalogação na Publicação
Universidade Federal do Ceará
Sistema de Bibliotecas

Gerada automaticamente pelo módulo Catalog, mediante os dados fornecidos pelo(a) autor(a)

M32g Marques, Reynold Stephanes Mesquita Marques.
GOTHISICM IN EDGAR ALLAN POE'S: AN ANALYSIS OF THE CASK OF AMONTILLADO /
Reynold Stephanes Mesquita Marques Marques. – 2024.
12 f.

Trabalho de Conclusão de Curso (graduação) – Universidade Federal do Ceará, Centro de Humanidades,
Curso de Letras (Inglês), Fortaleza, 2024.
Orientação: Prof. Dr. Prof. Dr. Paulo Roberto de Nogueira Andrade.

1. Edgar Allan Poe. 2. Literatura Gótica. 3. The Cask of Amontillado. I. Título.

CDD 420

REYNOLD STEPHANES MESQUITA MARQUES

GOTHISICM IN EDGAR ALLAN POE'S: AN ANALYSIS OF THE CASK OF
AMONTILLADO

Trabalho de Conclusão de Curso apresentado ao
Curso de Graduação em Letras Inglês da
Universidade Federal do Ceará, como requisito
parcial à obtenção do título de licenciatura em
Letras Inglês.

Orientador: Prof. Dr. Paulo Roberto de Nogueira Andrade.

Aprovado em: 25/09/2024

BANCA EXAMINADORA

Prof. Dr. Paulo Roberto de Nogueira Andrade (Orientador)
Universidade Federal do Ceará (UFC)

Prof. Dr. Diego Napoleão Viana Azevedo
Universidade Federal do Ceará (UFC)

Prof. Dr. Michel Emmanuel Felix Francois
Universidade Federal do Ceará (UFC)

GOTHICISM IN EDGAR ALLAN POE'S: AN ANALYSIS OF THE CASK OF AMONTILLADO

Reynold Stephanes Mesquita Marques*

RESUMO

Esse artigo visa listar através de uma revisão de literatura diferentes aspectos da literatura gótica e por meio de análise literária, identificar quais aspectos estão presentes na obra “The Cask of Amontillado” (1846) do escritor norte americano Edgar Allan Poe. Era esperado pelo autor deste trabalho encontrar todos os aspectos da literatura gótica listados na pesquisa, contudo, um deles não foi possível afirmar completamente. Mesmo assim, é possível afirmar que o conto possui a maioria das características da literatura gótica, constituindo-se assim, um conto gótico. Os aspectos listados foram: Um Local Sombrio, Terror, Horror, Segredos do Passado, Presença do Sobrenatural e Dualidade. O processo de listagem dos aspectos citados neste artigo também visa a facilitação de futuros pesquisadores na mesma área, contribuindo assim para o desenvolvimento acadêmico literário.

Palavras-chave: Edgar Allan Poe; Literatura Gótica; The Cask of Amontillado.

ABSTRACT

This article aims to list through a review of literature different aspects of gothic literature and through a literary analysis, to identify which aspects are in the work “The Cask of Amontillado” from the North American writer Edgar Allan Poe. It was expected by the author of this work to find all the features of gothic literature listed in the research, although, one of them was not possible to affirm completely. Even though, it is possible to affirm that the short story has the most features of gothic literature, being this way, a gothic short story. The features are A Gloomy Place, Terror, Horror, Secrets From The Past, Supernatural Presence, and Duality. The process of listing the features shown in this article also aims to facilitate future researchers of the same field, promoting literary academic development.

Keywords: Edgar Allan Poe; Gothic Literature; The Cask of Amontillado.

1 INTRODUCTION

Among all the literary genres presented at school, Horror and Gothic Fiction were the ones that got my attention to the reading habit. Edgar Allan Poe was one of the writers who took my attention with his tragic and violent short stories. Easy to read and catchy, each tale is accessible to different age groups. With the modern rise of gothic fiction being republished, and movies being shot, it is essential for the writer of this article, to make possible for new readers a brief introduction to gothic fiction.

Although Edgar Allan Poe's “The Cask of Amontillado” (1846) is widely recognized as a great work of Horror and Gothic literature, it might be difficult to distinguish this piece as Gothic. Could it be possible to list features of Gothic fiction, analyze the short

* Reynold Stephanes Mesquita Marques, graduando em Letras Inglêss. E-mail: reynoldmesquita@gmail.com.

story, and find aspects that make the tale Gothic?

2 GOTHIC FICTION FEATURES

2.1 Setting (Gloomy Places, Medievalism)

The setting has been an essential feature of Gothic Literature since its first work. Walpole's work "The Castle of Otranto" published in 1764 is a crucial tale that led to the beginning of this genre. The author establishes what would be followed in many works ahead. According to Nick Groom (2012), in his book "The Gothic, a Very Short Introduction" (2012), a gothic novel from the XVIII and XIX had some types of obscurity such as Meteorological, Topographical, Architectural, Material, Textual, Spiritual, and Psychological (Nick Groom - Chapter 8 - The gothic A Very Short Introduction (2012). Taking into consideration, the setting takes a great role in a gothic story.

The places were gloomy. That means that the features of the places are there to haunt the characters and build the atmosphere intended by the author. Shadows, mists, old furniture, ancient ruins, or castles among other features were present in many of them.

Another aspect stated by Groom (2012) is Medievalism. Many aspects of medieval Europe were present in these works such as castles, manors, and monasteries. Since Poe did not live in Europe, his stories took place in settings related to his reality, such as manors, old houses, and the underground.

Jerrold E. Hogle in chapter I of the book "The Cambridge Companion to Gothic Fiction" (2002) states that a gothic tale usually takes place in an "Antiquated Place". This place, says Hogle, could be a "castle, a crypt, a graveyard, a primeval frontier or island, a large old house or theater, [...]"

Considering these elements, it is possible to affirm that Gothic settings were full of gloomy places that built together the genre's characteristics. Works such as *The Monk* (1796) take place in an old and haunted monastery; *The Castle of Otranto* is an old castle with a great helm within the walls and is full of secret passages.

2.2 Terror and Horror (Violence, Sublime)

First, it is necessary to define Terror and Horror. According to Hogle (2002), Terror "holds characters and readers mostly in anxious suspense about threats to life, safety, and sanity kept largely out of sight or in shadows or suggestions from a hidden past". While Horror: "confronts the principal characters with the gross violence of physical or psychological dissolution, explicitly shattering the assumed norms (including the repressions) of everyday life with wildly shocking, and even revolting, consequences" (Hogle, 2002).

The sensation of Terror comes mainly from the interaction with the Sublime. The Sublime is defined by Groom (2012) as "The sublime signals the limits of rationality -The 'sleep' of reason- and was best communicated by obscurity". When characters face big churches, dark monasteries, old castles, whispering voices, and the supernatural, their reason is tested. Hogle (2002) states about the Sublime feeling, citing Burke's (2000) work:

Burke's definition confines the sublime (traditionally the "grand style" literally a "rising from beneath a threshold") to "whatever is fitted in any sort to excite the ideas of pain, and danger," including the threat of "death" and the dissolution of the self, by "operat[ing] in a manner analogous to terror" so as to produce "the strongest emotion of which the mind is capable" (Burke, *Enquiry*, in Clery and Miles, *Gothic Documents*, p. 112). Sublimity is thus aroused for Burke and then Walpole by linguistic or artistic expansions into "Vastness" or "Infinity" or even "notions of

ghosts or goblins” (clearly expatiations into the boundless) because they terrifyingly threaten the annihilation of the self (ibid., pp. 112, 114), but such stretchings of immediate credulity are nevertheless valuable for Burke (“according to the rules of probability”) because the “mortal agents” who observe those potentials are reacting as they should, as he sees them in a treatise focused primarily on the empirical psychology of emotional affect.

While the Terror affects the characters mentally and pushes them to their bounds, the horror affects them physically. Explicit violence, visceral assaults, and shattered bones are common in Gothic fiction. In *Frankenstein, or, The Modern Prometheus* (1818) by Mary Shelley, the creature suffers great terror from all the assumptions the society makes upon it. These assumptions and prejudice terrify the creature so much that sometimes it does terrible acts of violence. Thus, Horror is spread throughout the story.

Different authors presented these features in different ways. Ann Radcliffe (1826) states about horror and terror: “Terror and horror are so far opposite, that the first expands the soul, and awakens the faculties to a high degree of life; the other contracts, freezes, and nearly annihilates them”.

Be it for a balance between terror and horror or one rather than the other. Both were a critical aspect of Gothic literature. The first builds an uncanny atmosphere and the latest brings to the reader extremely violent scenes.

2.3 Secrets from the Past

According to Hogle (2002), another aspect that is perceived in gothic works is “The Past”. It might be long ago as shown in *The Castle of Otranto* or recent. This Past haunts the characters “psychologically, physically, or otherwise at the main time of story” (Hogle, 2002). The past can be present in different ways. It might be shown in a settlement as said before, it can be revenge for a situation that had happened or even beliefs from a different time amongst other possible representations.

This aspect can be connected to the Medievalism mentioned before since many gothic works were written at the end of the XVIII century and the XIX. Many of these works used these settings as a representation of the past that is still present in the characters' lives. Not only the places and architecture are elements that haunt the characters, but also the social dilemmas that were present during that time such as the Industrial Revolution, Colonialism, and Feminism. These dilemmas bring the idea of duality. Hogle (2002) says that Gothic is about confrontations between the low and the high, life and death, natural and supernatural, ancient and modern, realistic and artificial, and unconscious and continuous. It is expected to find secrets from the past, ancient intrigues, and revenge for a stolen heritage. Or even finding characters dealing with the duality of tradition and modernity. For instance, Doctor Frankenstein in *Frankenstein* (1818), creates a new creature by mixing skills from both times. He studies alchemy and the spark gives the creature life.

The interaction between ancient and modern creates conflict and is vital to building a plot in Gothic Fiction. How do the old powers from the old aristocracy, and clergy interact with an ongoing changing world? These things might haunt and follow the character creating a Terror felling.

2.4 Supernatural (Uncanny)

A notable aspect of gothic novels of the 18th and 19th Centuries and amid several novels that valued the realistic elements of stories (Crely, 2002), the supernatural was a resource to build terror, horror, and sublime.

The characters are haunted not only by the environment like great buildings and dark places. Sometimes supernatural beings are ghosts, demons, zombies are there to terrify the character. An important aspect of these beings is that sometimes they are between worlds. The ghost for instance is a creature that is dead but it is still among the characters, it is the past haunting the present but in a supernatural way. The creature from Frankenstein, for instance, is a mix of many dead people and made alive, but does not feel like a living being.

In the Castle of Otranto, it is possible to see manifestations of the supernatural in the environment as well. A great helmet falls in the middle of the castle during a wedding party. It is also heard through the story, the tinkle of chains, ghostly voices, visions, and prophecies.

While novels there could not appeal to the imagination (Clery, 2002), Gothic romances would be pleased to use folklore, supernatural, and superstitions. The Terror feeling was built with uncanny situations such as demonic possession such as in *The Monk* (1796) by Matthew Gregory or supernatural creatures as in *Dracula* (1897) by Irish writer Bram Stoker.

The supernatural in the stories helped to build the uncanny feeling. Royle (2003) states about the Uncanny:

The uncanny entails another thinking of beginning: the beginning is already haunted. The uncanny is ghostly. It is concerned with the strange, weird and mysterious, with a flickering sense (but not conviction) of something super-natural. The uncanny involves feelings of uncertainty, in particular regarding the reality of who one is and what is being experienced (Royle, 2003).

The strangeness toward the supernatural and strange events links this feature to all the others mentioned previously. The settlement, the past, horror, and terror work together to haunt the characters and create a gloomy story.

2.5 Duality

Gothic can be considered as a genre of dualities. In many stories, it is possible to find conflict between different sides or two sides of the same person. Take the example from *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (1886) by Scottish writer Robert Louis Stevenson. It is possible among different narratives the living against the dead, the poor against the rich, the natural against the supernatural, men and women, and so on.

From these dualisms, it is possible to find many conflicts. The Frankentein's creature is a mix of dead and alive. The doctor's process of making the creature has an electrical spark and the use of alchemy. Over the narratives, it is possible to see the past haunting the present as it would still be there. Medievalism from castles and religion went against modernity. Hogle (2002b) states that Gothic is a genre serious and popular at the same time. Different sides were put in conflict:

Still classified for many as betwixt and between "serious" and "popular" literature and drama, the Gothic is thus continuously about confrontations between the low and the high, even as the ideologies and ingredients of these change. It is about its blurring of different levels of discourse while it is also concerned with the interpenetration of other opposed conditions – including life/death, natural/supernatural, ancient/modern, realistic/artificial, and unconscious/conscious – along with the abjection of these crossings into haunting and supposedly deviant "others" that therefore attract and terrify middle-class characters and readers.

Duality is the rope that gathers all the features of gothic fiction and entangles them in harmony. The mystery from Terror and the explicit violent Horror; The past that is still present; The environment that should protect is the one that haunts; and The creature that should be dead is alive.

3 SHORT STORY ANALYSIS

Edgar Allan Poe was born in 1809 in Boston and was a son of Elizabeth Arnold Poe and David Poe, Jr. In December of that same year, his mother passed away and his father abandoned his family. Edgar and his siblings are adopted by different families. In London, Poe starts to write poetry after going to school. In February of 1826, Poe went to University to study ancient and modern languages and published his first collection of poems in 1827. After many poems were published and different jobs, Edgar Allan Poe publishes different short stories for collections and newspapers. Many of them are known such as “The Fall of House of Usher” (1839), “The Pit and the Pendulum (1842), “Tell-Tale Heart” (1843), and “The Cask of Amontillado” (1846).

After analyzing/describing and discussing what was exposed about several features of gothic fiction, this article now leads into a further analysis of the short story The Cask of Amontillado (Poe, 1846) to find which features can be found within the text. It is expected that all or at least most of them might be found in the tale.

In the first paragraph, it is clear that there is a situation that happened in the past that still bothers the narrator, Montresor. “I vowed revenge”, he says. Poe starts the story with an unsolved matter between the two main characters. It is not clear what made the revenger vow death upon Fortunato, but it is shown that it was something related to “Insults” although they are not specified. Considering the way the characters are named, by their family name (Montresor and Fortunato), it is visible that heritage and legacy matter in this setting. Insulting a person cannot be only directed to that person but to their family.

To demonstrate this aspect, when Montresor and Fortunato are walking through the vaults Fortunato says:

“These vaults,” he said, “are extensive.”

“The Montresors,” I replied, “were a great and numerous family.”

“I forget your arms.”

“A huge human foot d’or, in a field azure; the foot crushes a serpent rampant whose fangs are imbedded in the heel.”

“And the motto?”

“Nemo me impune lacessit.”

“Good!” he said (Poe, 1846).

By analyzing this dialogue, it is plausible to affirm that there is an inherent presence of a belief related to Montresor’s family. This motto is present not only in words but also in the narrator’s behavior. Montresor did not bear Fortunato's insults and could not accept that he would flee impune. Considering these factors, it is reasonable to affirm that the past feature is present within the narrative.

The interplay between the past and the Setting might be noticed when both characters dive into Motresor’s vaults. The place is described with words like Vaults, Catacombs, and Crypt, describing a gloomy medieval-like place. Outside Motresor’s house, there is a carnival party, a happy scenario full of people drinking and having fun, while under the earth, both characters walk through halls full of darkness and foulness.

When examining these places in Montresor's vaults, it is clear Poe's description creates this terrifying place. Web work, Skeletons, and Human remains are some features that fill the chambers they walk through. Given these descriptions, it can be easily seen that the construction of the short story has many aspects that make the setting a gloomy place, confirming that the narrative one more time fits in one of the features of gothic fiction.

It can be seen from the above paragraph, that the setting in the story is one of the aspects that carry the tone of Terror and Horror. A claustrophobic feeling might come to the reader while reading the characters' conversations through the catacombs. When both characters get to the final part of the story, the friendly behavior of Montresor shifts into violence and revenge. The feeling of getting his revenge without being caught could be finally achieved. While Fortunato is drunk, the narrator walls him up. If the chambers were not claustrophobic enough with all the skeletons, and casks of wine, being inside a wall could be.

As I said these words I busied myself among the pile of bones of which I have before spoken. Throwing them aside, I soon uncovered a quantity of building stone and mortar. With these materials and with the aid of my trowel, I began vigorously to wall up the entrance of the niche (Poe, 1846).

The terror grows while Montresor keeps laying further brick tiers. The narrator says that he listens to the clanking of the chains behind the bricks that are being settled and he likes it. It is notable the cruelty of Montresor's revenge. Now, he is not showing his friendly side shown a few chambers ago. His revenge is being done with no paybacks and nobody is seeing it. This cruelty is broken by a scream that comes from the wall. The silent gloomy place is taken by that horrific scream that somehow frights Montresor. Terror bursts into Horror. A trowel is changed for a sword that gropes over the bricks recklessly. The calm Montresor screams while Fortunato screams in despair and agony.

Furthermore, throughout the whole story, there are several examples of duality. The story is set while a carnival party is happening in the city and the characters go to a place that has the opposite mood of the upper city, instead of a happy party, they go to a decaying location. The narrator himself, during the whole story, expresses his double personality. Montresor compliments Fortunato while his thoughts lead his enemy to his death. The time of the day might express a sense of duality. The Avenger leads the drunk man to his house at Dusk time, the time of the day when the sky is changing. The live burying might be considered a kind of duality since the person is alive while shut in the wall.

As Elli Comeau (2012) states in his article "A Horrific Tale Bathed in Irony: Edgar Allan Poe's "The Cask of Amontillado", the short story is soaked in Irony. The duality presented above might be seen in this figure of speech. While Fortunato injures Montresor through the vaults, the revenger gives many tips on what he is going to do which is not understood by Fortunato. The family's coat of arms is also a kind of ironical duality: While Montresor "steps" on Fortunato, Fortunato's death is known by other people, a consequence that Montresor did not want but he confesses the crime after some time.

For the matter of the supernatural, it was not possible to find any utterances that could be considered a supernatural event. From the party to the last chamber, all the happenings are done by both characters. The vaults are dark and have bones on the walls, but nothing out of the natural. The lack of influence of the supernatural might indicate Montresor's evilness as stated by the article "Terror and Horror in Poe's "The Cask of Amontillado".

Poe's elimination of supernatural elements and reliance on the vices of man to connote a tone of evil that is palpable due to existing in the realm of plausibility creates a level of terror too close to reality. When the possibility of evil events occurring in reality is introduced, the level of terror evoked is frightening, due to the reader's realization of being surrounded by potential villains in the form of mankind (Danielle, 2017).

4 CONCLUSION

Despite the lack of the supernatural, *The Cask of Amontillado* is soaked with Gothic features. All the features that could be found in the text were easily perceived. The settlement covers many aspects that Groom (2012) and Hogle (2002) in their works. The past is present in the building and in Montreso's family beliefs and Terror and Horror are worked finely by Poe. The Duality of the narrator is present from the beginning to the end of the tale. Although the supernatural feature could not be found, *The Cask of Amontillado* might be considered a Gothic Story since most of the aspects presented by the authors mentioned are in the text. It was expected by the author of this article, to find the supernatural feature in the text, but it was not possible to affirm it. For further researchers, different stories can be analyzed using the same steps taken in this article.

REFERENCES

- CLERRY, E. J. The genesis of "Gothic" fiction. *In*: HOGLE, J. E. (editor). *The Cambridge Companion to Gothic fiction*. 1. ed. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002. p. 21-39.
- COMEAU, A. A Horrific Tale Bathed in Irony: Edgar Allan Poe's "The Cask of Amontillado". *The Write Stuff*, [S.l.], v. 22, p. 44 - 46, 2012.
- DANIELLE. Terror and Horror in Poe's "The Cask of Amontillado". *The Artifice*, 26 de jan. 2017. Disponível em: <https://the-artifice.com/edgar-allan-poe-the-cask-of-amontillado/>. Acesso em 23 de set. de 2024.
- EWIS, M. G. *The Monk*. 1. ed. Londres: J. Bell, 1796.
- GROOM, N. The Descent Into Hell. *In*: GROOM, N. *The Gothic: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012. p. 71 – 80.
- HAYES, K. J. (editor). *The Cambridge Companion to Edgar Allan Poe*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010.
- HOGLE, J. E. Introduction: the Gothic in Western culture. *In*: HOGLE, J. E. (editor). *The Cambridge Companion to Gothic fiction*. 1. ed. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002. p. 1-20.
- POE, E. A. The Cask of Amontillado. *Godey's Lady's Book*, Filadélfia, v. 33, p. 216-218, nov. 1846.
- RADCLIFFE, A. On the supernatural in poetry. *New Monthly Magazine*, [S.l.], v. 16, n. 1, p. 145-152, 1826.
- ROYLE, N. *The Uncanny*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003.
- SHELLEY, M. *Frankenstein or The Modern Prometheus*. 1. ed. Londres: Lackington, Hughes, Harding, Mavor & Jones, 1818.

STEVENSON, R. L. **The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde.** 1. ed. Londres: Longmans, Green & Co., 1886.

STOKER, B. **Dracula.** 1. ed. Londres: Archibald Constable and Company, 1897.

WALPOLE, H. **The Castle of Otranto.** 1. ed. Londres: Thomas Lownds, 1764.