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Faculty of Letters and Languages

Department of Letters and English Language



Dissertation

Academic Master

Domain: Letters and Foreign Languages

Field: Anglo-Saxon Literature

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Title:

**Characters' Disturbed Psyches in
Edgar Allan Poe's *The Fall of the
House of Usher***

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for Master Degree

in Anglo-Saxon Literature

Publically defended

On 02/05/2017

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Academic year: 2016/2017

Dedication

We would like to dedicate this modest work to our dear parents for their patience, encouragements, and continuous help during the years of the study.

*This work is also dedicated to our sisters and our brothers.
May Allah bless them.*

In addition, we dedicate this work to the best gift from Allah our favorite friends: Chaymaa, Asmaa, Imane, Fatima, Merzaka, Ahlem, Nari, Nissa, and Soumia for their support.

*And to all our friends who helped us and encouraged us,
especially Yahia and Mohammed El Ghazali.*

Also, it is an honour to us to dedicate this humble work to all our teachers from primary school till university.

Acknowledgements

Praise be to Allah with whose blessings and help, works would be achieved. Thanks to Almighty Allah, first of all, who guided and helped us to achieve this research work.

We owe our deepest gratitude to our supervisor, Mr. Madjid Doufene, for his considerable help, patience, and guidance.

Our gratitude also goes to Dr. Halima Benzoukh and Mrs. Hind Hanafi who accepted to examine and evaluate this work.

Our sincere appreciation goes to all of our teachers who have done efforts to teach us along our career.

Last but not least, we are so grateful to the agents of the library for their help. Also, we extend warm appreciation to all those who have helped us whenever needed.

Abstract

Edgar Allan Poe is known as the most complex personality in the entire group of American authors. His gothic style makes his tales out of the ordinary. This study aims to analyse the characters' psychological disorders and the influence on their behaviours in *The Fall of the House of Usher*, and to interpret the symbolic meaning of the characters' mental illnesses in the American society. The method, which is followed in this study, is analytical descriptive. Freudian psychoanalysis literary criticism is also followed to interpret the psychology of the characters and their behaviours. Within the analysis of Poe's short story, it seems that the tale is an allegory of the narrator's irrational anxiety. The three main characters of the story reflect certain aspects of American history. All in all, this study aims at showing Edgar Allan Poe's motives behind the use of characters' disturbed psyches in his work *The Fall of the House of Usher* (1839).

Keywords: gothic, disturbed psyches, psychoanalysis, dream interpretation

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General Introduction

1. Background of the Study
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6. Structure of the Study

1. Background of the Study

The American literature had witnessed several movements like realism, naturalism, rationalism, and romanticism. During the nineteenth century, the romantic period was considered as the first creativity movement in American literature. It placed within the history of westward expansion and the struggle between reform and separation found in the North and the South resulted in the civil war. Furthermore, Romanticism is defined as a literary and philosophical theory that aims to focus on the individual at the centre of life, creating a unique feeling and valuing its fidelity.

In the context of Romanticism, gothic literature begins in the late of the eighteenth century when writers start to return to the past and imitate medievalist. The gothic is featured by terrifying experiences, secret passageways, screams, bloody hands, ghosts and graveyards. Thus, one can see gothic literature spread through the Victorian literature in the novels of Dickens and the Brontës and the American fiction from Poe and Hawthorne through Faulkner.

Edgar Allan Poe is regarded as the most complex personality in the American authors. In addition to his position in literature, his gothic style is what makes his short stories out of the ordinary. He was the first to employ his own signature style in his works by using several gothic elements. During his life and after his death, Poe earned fame because of his psychologically thrilling tales, which examine the depth of the human psyche.

According to psychology, a normal human being should have a balance between his mind, body and spirit; these three elements shape the one total machine. Poe uses this concept in the opposite way to separate between mind, body and soul to create unique characters with mental disturbance.

As Edward Davidson states, “Poe does not conform to any general or basic American design or character[...] Poe represents the hypertrophy of an imagination which had only its imported culture to feed upon” (As cited in Broda, 2008, para. 3) Poe was not interested in the man in the new mass world of democratic American society. Instead, Poe focused on human inner conflicts, which took on various shapes in his fiction and his own version of understanding phenomena such as death or split personality before they were defined and created suspense and even before the psycho-thriller was thought of, thus the content of his works indicates an author who was ahead of his time. Symons believed that “as an artist [Poe] always worked in the first person, looking again and again at his personality in a glass that often gave back frightening reflection” (As cited in Broda, 2008, para. 4) this express the view that Poe tries to represent his own personality onto his characters.

The Fall of the House of Usher utilises many of the gothic aspects and is considered by critics not to be just Poe’s best short story, but also an excellent example of gothic fiction in all the American literature. This story has many qualities such as the sense of remoteness that means this tale could take place anywhere. It aims to create an eerie and creepy atmosphere by focusing on the physical and mental aspects. The characters seem to have a sort of psychic communication among them, and the possibility of returning to life after death. Poe uses this effect in *The Fall of the House of Usher* to reach the story climax in a brilliant and breathtaking way that is why he returns the entombed and living corpse of Madeline Usher.

In *The Fall of the House of Usher*, Poe examines such themes as incest, mental breakdown, and death. He uses conventions of gothic literature such as haunted location, death and the supernatural power to drive the protagonists into madness and bring fear upon them.

The readers of this story cannot understand if it is just about the (un-)dead, about three insane people in a haunted mansion, or it is more than this. In order to grasp the real message behind this story, one should analyse the main characters’ behaviours using psychological methods.

2. Objectives of the Study

Through the present research, we aim to detect the characters' psychological disorders and the influence on their behaviours in *The Fall of the House of Usher* and to interpret the symbolic meaning of the characters' mental illnesses in the American society.

3. Statement of the Problem

Edgar Allan Poe's short stories are full of madness and horror because he was influenced by gothic literature. In *The Fall of the House of Usher*, he appears to have motives behind the use of characters' disturbed psyches. Hence, this dissertation aims to answer the following question:

- What are the author's reasons behind using the pathological behaviours in *The Fall of the House of Usher*?

To answer this question, we hypothesise that:

- Edgar Allan Poe tries to represent his own mental troubles in the story.
- Poe uses disturbed characters to criticise the American society at that period.

4. Motivation

Poe's short story *The Fall of the House of Usher* was chosen to be studied because of various reasons. This tale is considered as the highest achievement in the American literary genre in general and the gothic fiction in particular during the 19th century, which helps to know more about Poe's hidden motives behind the use of disturbed psyches. Poe intelligently was able to combine many literary tricks in one work to give his readers an eerie sensation and push them to live in a ghostly and supernatural world.

5. Methodology

The method, which is followed in this work, is an analytical descriptive method in order to interpret the protagonists' disturbed psyches and odd behaviours. The analysis of the selected material is based on a psychological approach using Sigmund Freud understanding of Id, ego, and superego, his dream analysis, and his view of the conscious and unconscious.

6. Structure of the Study

This dissertation is divided into two chapters. The first chapter includes the historical and biographical context of the story. In addition, it includes a general overview of Freudian psychoanalysis theory and its major principles. The second chapter deals with the analysis of the corpus and discussion of the results.

Chapter One: Historical and Biographical Context

Introduction

1.1 America in the 19th Century

1.2 Transcendentalism

1.3 Gothic Literature

1.4 Poe's Biography

1.5 Poe's Gothic Elements

1.5.1 Death and Decay

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Introduction

Literature works as a mirror of life. This function explains the notion of representing society through literary works. Over the 19th century, American writers depicted an image of the American society in their writings; including Transcendentalism and Anti-transcendentalism movement, those marked the field of literature, philosophy, art, religion, and politics.

One of the most prominent authors of this period is Edgar Allan Poe, who is considered the inventor of terror stories. His writing always deal with the genre of gothic fiction. The most important gothic elements used by Poe are death and decay, madness, and haunted location. Poe is often related to psychology, which is the study of human behaviours and thoughts.

1.1 USA in the 19th Century

In the early nineteenth century, America was at the time of luxury that made a new image of the nation because of the economic growth, building new big cities, railroads, and the discovery of gold and silver. The United State enjoyed a long period of success and restfulness, which is completely different from the early republic days. The huge transformation witnessed a new capitalism, a system that brought rigours for people especially slaves (Social Change and National Development, n.d).

Furthermore, the late nineteenth century was called the Gilded Age. This name gives a clear picture of how was the hidden reality at that period; the gilded age was shining outside but very dark inside brimful of greed and corruption. Society suffered from labour violence, discrimination, and militancy among the farmers, although the 19th century was a modern constructive era in America (Overview of the Gilded Age, n.d).

During the 19th century, American literature was shaped by the history of the country. After the revolution, the American writers like William Cullen Bryant, Washington Irving, James Fenimore Cooper, and Edgar Allan Poe were encouraged to produce native literature and establish a great half century of literary evolution where traditions and beliefs are introduced as the concept of self-reliance and independence (American Literature, 2017).

In the early to mid-1800s, an artistic, literary, and intellectual movement appeared as a reaction to the industrial revolution called Romanticism. It was against aristocratic society and the scientific rationalisation of nature. This movement corroborated strong feeling as an authentic source of aesthetic experience. It emphasises on new emotions such as horror, terror, and the sublimity of untamed nature. Romanticism raised folk art and ancient custom to get beyond the rational and classicist ideal models, creating a reanimated medievalism (American Literature: The Dream, n.d).

In the later period, between 1820 and 1860, a new philosophy developed from the romantic ideals called Transcendentalism.

1.2 Transcendentalism

In the first half of the nineteenth century, an artistic, religious, political, and philosophical movement called Transcendentalism emerged in America. Transcendentalism is an optimistic offshoot of Romanticism. Its preeminent representative was Ralph Waldo Emerson.

Transcendentalism was an arrangement of thoughts advancing another comprehension of the individual, his or her relationship to nature and society, and the significance of self-development. It is a theory of subjectivity, where rational and intellectual world are rejected in favour of intuitive and individual (Wayne, 2006).

Transcendentalists believed in self-reliance and self-expression, and they refused modern social mores that supported social conformity. The Transcendentalists confirmed that everything in the world was a reflection of God or the divine soul in which people could encounter divinity through nature. In addition, they believed that individuals reached the universe truths that governed the universal through their experiences, not from the past. (Wayne, 2006)

Transcendentalism assented to “over-soul”; a phrase coined by Emerson; which means “The absolute reality and basis of all existences conceived as a spiritual being in which the ideal nature imperfectly manifested in human beings is perfectly realised” (Merriam Webster dictionary online, 1828). The over-soul has a connection to the man, a connection to nature, and a connection to higher spiritual power.

A contrasting philosophy Anti-transcendentalism or Gothic witnessed in mid to the late 1800s, in both Europe and America. It is a pessimistic offshoot of Romanticism known as the dark side of individualism.

1.3 Gothic literature

Gothic is a type of novel began in the late eighteenth century. It is a European sentimental, depicted fanciful story, which is characterised by dark and gloomy settings that deal with the supernatural and dim, and emotional plots that search nearly to the unconscious human mind (Julita, 2008).

Gothic Literature began with the publication of Horace Walpole’s *The Castle of Otranto* (1764). It is a novel in which the setting was haunted castle with dungeons, secret passages, and sliding panels. The story concentrated on the sufferings of the heroine from a villain named Manfred and made plentiful utilisation of sensational and supernatural occurrences.

Prominent components of Gothic fiction include mystery, horror, the supernatural; the setting was often wild and desolate landscapes, gloomy forests, and medieval castles

furnished with dungeons, subterranean passages, and sliding panels; an atmosphere of doom, gloom, and dread; heroes and heroines suffer from cruel villains, malicious witches (Cuddon, 2013).

Gothic fiction pursues to teach the reader's sentiments through his relationship with the character's feelings, to emerge his sympathy, and to investigate the man's mind and the causes of evil in it (Julita, 2008).

The objective of the gothic is the sublime where the reader's passionate reaction is animated by making the audience simultaneously in a safety and risk setting. In order to achieve this sublime state, the gothic uses "Abjection", which originated in Freudian psychoanalysis theory, and the utilisation of this theory to the gothic has been profoundly effective (Sigurðsson, 2009).

The above features of gothic literature can be perfectly seen in many of American gothic writings such as Nathaniel Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter*, Washington Irving's *The Legend of Sleepy Hollow*, and Edgar Allan Poe's *The Fall of the House of Usher*. Above all American gothic writers, however, Edgar Allan Poe stands alone as the father of the gothic movement.

1.4 Poe's Biography

Edgar Allan Poe is the most known for his extraordinary morbid tales and haunting poetry. He was an editor and harsh literary critic. He was born on January 19, 1809, in poverty at Boston, his parents were actors and his mother Elizabeth Poe was a talented actor actually more than his father David Poe. After his mother death in 1811, he was adopted by the family of John Allan at the age of two years. The misery continued when Poe was separated from his sister Rosalie and his older brother Henry. The Allans gave their middle name to Poe, but he was not legally adopted. The new family moved to England in 1815 to expand their tobacco business and Poe studied in many boarding schools among the five years he lived overseas (Edgar Allan Poe National Historic Site, n.d).

In 1820, Allan family return back to Richmond because of their failure in business, and Poe was sent to the school of Professor Joseph H. Clarke, after few years professor Clarke wrote:

While the other boys wrote mere mechanical verses, Poe wrote genuine poetry; the boy was a born poet. As a scholar he was ambitious to excel. He was remarkable for self-respect, without haughtiness. He had a sensitive and tender heart and would do anything for a friend. His nature was entirely free from selfishness. (As cited in *The Works of Edgar Allan Poe*, n.d, p.7)

At the age of seventeen, Poe continued his study at the University of Virginia, but unfortunately, after one year he was not able to complete his studies because his foster father refused to pay debts, this led Poe to quarrel with Mr. John Allan, which finally asked him to be responsible for his own life (Edgar Allan Poe National Historic Site, n.d).

Poe moved to Boston to establish his literary career, he published his first book of poetry 'Tamerlane and other poems'. Then Poe travelled to Baltimore to live with his aunt Maria Poe Clemm and her young daughter Virginia. In 1833, Poe won fifty dollars prize for his short story "Ms. Found in Bottle." Again, Poe moved to Richmond in 1835 to work as an editor for *The Southern Literary Messenger* and also to married his thirteen-year-old cousin Virginia the love of his life. To find a better job in the field of literature, the Poes travelled to New York but it seems far away for Poe to find his dream job. In Philadelphia, between 1838 and 1844 Poe lived his happiest years of his entire tumultuous life and wrote his most famous works like *The Fall of the House of Usher*, *Murders in Rue Morgue*, and *The Tell-Tale heart* (ibid).

In 1842 Poe's wife Virginia became ill with Tuberculosis and died in 1846, the death of his beloved caused Poe a deep depression he was completely shattered unable to recover from the loss of Virginia and after only two years on October 7, 1849, Poe died of "acute congestion of the brain" that probably caused by overdose of alcohol. In the same year, Poe wrote to his friend Frederick W. Thomas "...Literature is the most noble of profession...I shall be a 'litterateur' at least, all my life; nor would I abandon the hopes which still lead me on for all the gold in California..."February 14, 1849. Poe gets great satisfaction from literature that it became central to his life (ibid).

1.5 Poe's Gothic Elements

Poe was able to create his own version of gothic fiction with his unique and astonishing style of writing. He is famous for several common themes, symbols and structures. The most important themes used by Poe are death and decay, madness, and hunted location; these themes are used nearly in his entire tales. An excellent example in which all these elements are combined together to build the whole gothic touch in the tale is *The Fall of the House of Usher*.

1.5.1 Death and Decay

Poe uses death and decay- the natural process that slowly destroys a building, plant or body-as elements of his gothic fiction with a twist at the end of the plot to make his readers think differently about the concept of death and wait for unexceptional final resolutions. Both of these themes are presented through Roderick and Madeline Usher and the house of the family. The death of the last two members of the Usher's family happens at the same time of the fall of the old mansion (Smith, 2011).

1.5.2 Madness

The unstable state of mind of characters emerge a lot of questions through the process of reading about the sanity of the narrator who tells us about the incidents of the story and also about the unknown element or "what is coming next?" Therefore, madness is a dominant element in the story because our main character Roderick undoubtedly suffers from a mental disorder as his friend describe him "a cadaverousness of complexion, an eye large, liquid and luminous beyond comparison; lips somewhat thin and very pallid" (*FHU*, P.8) (Smith, 2011).

1.5.3 The Haunted Location

This element helps to create the atmosphere of the tale and add a creepy and eerie tone thus the supernatural setting shares common area with other themes such as madness and death and help to develop the advancement of the plot. The setting in *The Fall of the House of Usher* plays a big role in the story. It symbolises the decay of the Usher family and gives a horror and terror mood to the tale as our unnamed narrator said “physique of gray walls and turrets, and all of the dim tarn into which they all looked down” (FHU, p.10) these detailed descriptions help Poe creating a gloomy and gothic atmosphere (Smith, 2011).

1.6 Freudian Psychoanalysis Theory

Psychoanalysis theory is a conceptual system about personality development and behaviour developed by Sigmund Freud. Psychoanalysis is a method that explains and treats mental and emotional problems.

When Freud formed his theory of development, he relied upon observations and case studies of his patients’ talk about dreams, feelings, memories... etc. His study included the idea of the conscious and unconscious. In parallel with this, he formulated his ideas about sexual development from childhood to puberty and beyond. After that, he laid out the tripartite division of the structure of the mind into Id, ego, and superego. Later on, he concentrated on what psychoanalysis could say about other issues of culture and society.

1.6.1 The Conscious and Unconscious Mind

From the late 1880s to the early 1900s, Sigmund Freud explored one of the most categories that he tackled, which is the ideas of the conscious and unconscious mind that arise from his exercise with his patients (Rennison, 2001).

Freud claimed that the mind divided into two parts. The part of the conscious mind, which is aware of its own thoughts, wills, designs, or perceptions. In addition, there is the much larger part revealed by free association “the unconscious mind”, which is opposite of the first part. It is a storeroom of transgressing and dark thoughts and desires. The conscious was the result of repressed thoughts, feelings, and desires, which are unacceptable for the conscious self (Ibid).

Freud proposed two opposing principles that lay behind the behaviour, they are “the pleasure principle” and “the reality principle”. The first governs the human at birth and pushes him towards the instant gratification of his wishes. While the second is to live with and adapt the natural world and society. He saw that libido, which is the sexual drive, is the main motive for most behaviour. In order to get mental health, people must re-direct libido into socially acceptable behaviour. If people fail to find successful means of re-directing libido, their pleasure principles and reality principles will be in a conflict and the result will be their illness. By working through the repressed thoughts and desires in the unconscious mind, it could solve the conflict and defeat their mental illness (Rennison, 2001).

Other signposts to the division between conscious and unconscious, which were dreams that happen when people are sleeping and the conscious system of censorship and repression are least careful, fascinated Freud. That is why dreams support Freud’s theories of the unconscious (Ibid).

Freud found that the unconscious evidence appears in Jokes and human mistakes. He saw that the inordinate thoughts and desires of the unconscious mind are seeking means of expression, burbling under the conscious mind, and searching for an outlet. He claimed that meaningless mistakes carry hidden messages from the unconscious mind. He also argued that jokes freighted with unconscious emotions of love, fear, and hate. Many of these jokes deal with subjects such as sexuality and family relationship. The tension, which these subjects created, reject expression in socially unacceptable behaviour and thence many jokes are examples of the unconscious working its way into the conscious (Ibid).

In all of the human behaviour, dreams, and jokes, Freud discovered that much of mental life was unconscious and that only some individual acts and thoughts were conscious (Ibid).

1.6.2 Sexuality

In the late nineteenth century, Freud claimed that neuroses and hysteria come from sexual desires. He also argues that sexual instinct was present in all children (Rennison, 2001).

In his *Three Essays on Sexuality* of 1905, Freud pointed out different human behaviour. There were “inverts” who were attracted to the same sex. “Perverts” whose libidos were directed towards other parts of the body. There were “fetishists” whose libido were directed towards inanimate objects. There were also “sadists” and “masochists” whose wish was either to inflict or receive pain during sexual activity. Finally, there was the childhood sexuality, which was present in the child from a very early age and there were several stages of infantile sexual development. Moreover, the period between the ages of six and eight is the ‘latency period’, and sexual desires re-emerge in puberty (Ibid).

Freud pointed out that the child would pass through three stages to gain sexual pleasure. The first stage is the “oral stage” in which the emphasis is the mouth. Sucking the mother’s breast or the thumb. The breast is the source of food and the source of pleasure. Upon the breast, the child will feel of love and hate. The second stage is the “anal stage” (between the ages of one and three). It concentrates on the control of the bladder and the bowels. The source of pleasure in this stage is producing and withholding stools. The third stage is the “phallic stage” (from the ages of three to five). The emphasis in this stage is on the genitals, which stimulated first by everyday activities like washing or urinating and then deliberately by the child itself. In the phallic stage, the sexual differences are discovered. The child can be fixated at any given stage, with consequences ongoing into adulthood. After these three stages, the child will face what Freud called the “Oedipus complex”, which means that the child falls in love with his mother and he becomes jealous of his father and fantasises about killing him. For Freud, The Oedipus complex reflects genuine human emotions and fantasies (Ibid).

According to Freud, after the oedipal stage, there is the latency period, in which sexual activity is dormant and the memories of earlier sexual feelings are repressed by infantile amnesia. After a long period of development, Sexuality emerges again in adolescence when the time is right for the ‘genital’ stage, the direction of sexual feelings towards intercourse with an adult of the opposite sex (Ibid).

1.6.3 The Structure of the Personality

During the First World War and the early 1920s, Freud laid out the tripartite division of the mind, “the conscious mind” and “the unconscious mind”, into three major components: the id, ego and superego.

The first component of Freud’s most developed model of the mind’s structure is what he called The Id, which is the oldest and most primitive part of the mind. This part of personality is unconscious and serves as the source of psychic energy derived from the pleasure principle (Rennison, 2001).

The ego is the rational component of personality that allows the individual to sense and adapt to the real world and acknowledge the "reality principle". It develops from the id and comes to control it. The ego provides the instinctual demands of the id in ways that are realistic, safe and socially acceptable. The ego plays the role of the conscious mind. Although the monitoring and censoring of the id that the ego carries out are done unconsciously (Ibid).

The third part of personality is the superego, which lay in Freud’s thinking on narcissism. Freud defined the concept of “primary narcissism” as a period of child development when all libido was directed towards the self. As the ego develops, the superego is created and supervises the ego. The superego represents internalisation of parental conscience and the rules of society, which guide the individual when he moves beyond primary narcissism. The superego is often unconscious, it relates to attitude about what is right and wrong and to feelings of guilt, and demands to behave in acceptable ways to society (Ibid).

1.6.4 The Theory of Neuroses

The first meaning of neurotic symptoms was discovered by J.Breuer in the study of a case of hysteria (1880-1882). Freud early collaboration with Breuer in the study of hysteria was the beginning of what called the theory of neurotic symptoms, which Freud believed were derivatives of memories that had been existed in the unconscious (Castle, 2013).

Neuroses are psychological disorders in which cause a conflict between the self and the world, these disorders include hysteria, obsessive, depression, phobias and so on. Psychoses, like schizophrenia and manic depression, are difficult diseases related with an organic basis that leads to a breakdown in the balance between conscious and unconsciousness (Castle, 2013).

Freud (1916) draws his instances not only from hysteria but also from compulsion neuroses, which was not so popular at that time; it is more a private concern of the person, renounces bodily manifestations and creates its symptoms psychologically. Freud believed that compulsion neurosis and hysteria are the main forms of neurotic diseases in which psychoanalysis has been built up. The main manifestations of compulsion neurosis are the person occupied by thoughts that do not interest him in reality, is moved by a strong desire that is too different from his nature, and is driven by actions, which afford no pleasure, but he cannot resist.

The thoughts may be absurd in themselves or thoroughly indifferent to the individual, often they are absolutely childish and in all cases they are the result of strained thinking, which exhausts the patient, who surrenders himself to them most unwillingly. Against his will he is forced to brood and speculate as though it were a matter of life or death to him. The impulses, which the patient feels within himself, may also give a childish or ridiculous impression, but for the most part they bear the terrifying aspect of temptations to fearful crimes, so that the patient not only denies them, but flees from them in horror and protects himself from actual execution of his desires through inhibitory renunciations and restrictions upon his personal liberty (Freud, 1916, p.227).

When it comes to fear and anxiety, Freud (1916) states that there are two types of fear, real fear in contrast to neurotic fear. The real fear is more rational and accessible to us; it is a reaction to the discernment of external danger. That is to say, a danger that we expected and forefeel. Thus, the situations or objects, which arouse our fear, are depended on our knowledge of power over the external world. On the other hand, anxiety is used in relationship to certain condition regardless of objectives, while fear is directly linked to object. The use of the word “anxiety” is surrounded by ambiguity, but generally, it means a subjective condition such as an emotion, caused by our way of understanding that an “evolution of fear” has been accomplished (ibid).

1.6.5 The analysis of Dreams

Dreams are considered as indirect and coded messages. In order to hold the key to the meaning of the symptom, it needs a deep interpretation. Thus, the process of analysing dreams is a complex process involving considerable skill on the part of the analyst; Freud was confident that good training would guarantee reliable and scientific results (Castle, 2013).

Dreams are divided into two kinds, manifest dream content and latent dream thought. The manifest level is the dream itself and the object of interpretation; the latent dream is the actual thought that is unknown and cannot be expressed consciously because it is “censored” by the superego that in normal case screens insights for consciousness and prevents whatever could result in a trauma to the ego (ibid).

In his work *The Interpretation of Dreams*, Freud (1900) states that there is a relation between dreams and mental diseases and when we speak about this relationship, we may mean three different things:

- Aetiological and clinical relations, as when dream represents a psychotic condition.
- Changes, which the dream-life undergoes in cases of mental disorders.
- Inner relations between dreams and psychoses, analogies that point to an intimate relationship.

These relations between the two phenomena are the favourite theme of medical and literary writers.

1.7 Psychoanalysis and Literature

Nowadays, psychoanalysis seems to be very familiar to the public it spreads everywhere and this is due to its application to other domains. Psychoanalysis affected various disciplines including sociology, anthropology, ethnology, psychology, religion, mythology, literature and art.

Sigmund Freud linked his therapy of psychoanalysis to literature. He developed the relation between literature and psychoanalysis in his *Creative Writers and Day-Dreaming*. In order to understand creativity, he compared fantasy, play, dreams, and the work of art (Tien, 1990).

Freud introduced psychoanalytic theory on the structure of the literary work and made a psychoanalytic investigation into the style of writing. According to him, psychoanalysis is able to detect the motives and meanings, which are disguised by and work through other meanings in the literary work. Freud believes that the writer finds in his work substitutive gratification for his thwarted desires. That is why the literary works reveal something about the author. Therefore, in order to analyse the author one must focus on his literary work as a product of his personality (Ibid).

Many writers were attracted by psychoanalysis including Edgar Allan Poe who is the most appealing to psychoanalysts and literary critics of their persuasion. Poe's melodramatic life story made psychoanalysts and literary critics use Poe's life in analysing his works. Psychoanalysis and literature serve and replace each other. That is to say, psychoanalysis could be intra-literary as much as literature is intra-psychoanalytic (Ibid).

Conclusion

After the American Revolution, the gothic movement dominated literature and became a popular writing style. This style can be easily described by mysterious, consisting of heinous death and fear, and detecting the dark side of human nature. It is characterised by terrifying settings and emotional plots. It portrays fantastic tales dealing with horror, madness, death, sanity, grotesque and fear.

One of the greatest writers of this style is Edgar Allan Poe, who is known for his chilling tales of horror. His writing is always characterised by elements of gothic fiction such as madness of characters, death and decay, and haunted location that helps to create creepy and grotesque atmosphere. Poe characterised his tales by the focus on the psychological side, in which the analysis is focused on the human's behaviours, thoughts, feelings, dreams, and memories. The majority of his characters suffered from mental disorders and odd behaviours. His childhood was full of tragic events beginning with the death of his mother while he was just two years old. His own bereavements helped him to create such art as *The Fall of the House of Usher*.

Chapter Two: Psychological Analysis of *The Fall of the House of Usher*

Introduction

2.1 The Analysis of the Narrative situation

2.2 Determining Madeline Usher's Mental Condition

2.3 Examining Roderick Usher's Extreme Alteration

2.4 Analysing the Narrator's State of Mind

2.5 The Symbolic Meanings of the Characters' Disturbed Psyches

2.5.1 Madeline's Depression as a Metaphor for U.S. Policy Problems

2.5.2 Roderick's Schizophrenia as Critique of the American Dream

2.5.3 The Narrator's Split Personality Representing Loss of Cultural Identity

Conclusion

Introduction

The Fall of the House of Usher is the most outstanding gothic tale written by Poe, which provides a deep insight into thoughts. Therefore, analysing this story using psychoanalysis methods will provide a basis for understanding Poe's hidden motives behind using characters' pathological behaviours through Gothicism, unique narration techniques and certain literary theories. With every sentence written carefully in the story, Poe tries to confront the readers with the terrifying and ambiguous parts of our mind.

2.1 The Analysis of the Narrative situation

The first character appears in reading *The Fall of the House of Usher* is the unnamed narrator. In many works about this Gothic tale, he has been neglected. At first, it might be unnoticed by the readers but in fact, he is the most important one who plays a dynamic role in the story.

Poe introduces the readers to the narrator's manifest anxiety and unstable mind by letting the first-person ask, "What was it- I paused to think- what was it that so unnerved me in the contemplation of the House of Usher?" (*FHU*, p.3) connected and supported by the medieval setting and the terrifying atmosphere (Reuber, 2004).

The narrator starts giving us very important details about him and the surrounding location

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. I know not how it was—but, with the first glimpse of the building, a sense of insufferable gloom pervaded my spirit. I say insufferable; for the feeling was unrelieved by any of that half-pleasurable, because poetic, sentiment with which the mind usually receives even the sternest natural images of the desolate or terrible. I looked upon the scene before me—upon the mere house, and the simple landscape features of the domain—upon the bleak walls—upon the vacant eye-like windows—upon a few rank sedges—and upon a few white trunks of decayed trees—with an utter depression of soul which I can compare to no earthly sensation more properly than to the after-dream of the reveller upon opium—the bitter lapse into every-day life—the hideous dropping off of the veil (*FHU*, p.1).

This passage describes the tale's building and the narrator who is alone in the scene and just arrived on his horse invited by his old friend Roderick Usher who asks for his help. At this point, the narrator still cannot define the reason for his strict anxiety, since he cannot understand that the old mansion is his double, representing his decaying mind and body, his conscious and unconscious; as if he is unable to read his dream-content. Heller states that the narrator uncomfortable state which caused by entering the house explains "an opposition between the narrator and the house" (As cited in Reuber, 2004).

The dramatic introductory passage, which seems to be a description of the setting, is actually more than this; it gives a great insight into the narrator's disturbed psyche. In addition, the first-person narrators are usually limited in their physical and mental abilities they known as "unreliable narrators" and with the confession of our narrator that he is familiar with the bad effect of "Opium", makes his narration even more unreliable (Rock, 2016).

2.2 Determining Madeline Usher's Mental Condition

Lady Madeline the beloved sister but very ill twin, Roderick describes her as "a tenderly beloved sister, his sole companion for long years, his last and only relative on earth." (*FHU*, p.10). She presents for only short time when the narrator sees her "I regarded her with an utter astonishment not unmingled with dread; and yet I found it impossible to account for such feelings. A sensation of stupor oppressed me as my eyes followed her retreating steps. When a door, at length, closed upon her" (*FHU*, p.10).

All what we know about Madeline is that she suffers from a physical disease "The disease of the lady Madeline had long baffled the skill of her physicians. A settled apathy, a gradual wasting away of the person, and frequent although transient affections of a partially cataleptical character" (*FHU*, p.11) just like her brother Madeline also might have lost interest in social activities, this kind of lethargy according to Cave is a sign of major depressive disorder (as cited in Rock,2016).

Madeline's health condition seems to be more physical illness rather than psychological trouble, but her body and mind are for sure connected with each other and her illness could be caused by psychological disorder which leads to her bodily malady.

Poe succeeded to give the story another turn and reaches its climax by introducing Madeline to the readers in very imaginative artistic way, in order to exemplify Roderick's and the narrator's covert sexual desires, which are linked to their fear of death. Although the text does not reveal these sexual wishes and that is what gives the tale its touch of mystery. However to make things clear one should understand Madeline as Roderick's and the narrator's "soul companion" and "the unconscious female double"(Reuber, 2004).

According to Freud's "The immediate vicissitude of libido", Poe was able to define Madeline as something familiar and unfamiliar that should be repressed, this explains to us her disappearing and reappearing. Through "settled apathy" and her "transient affection of partially cataleptical character" Madeline becomes the illustration of "self-dissolution" and "the fear of death" that develops Freudian analogy between death and castration "analogy to the fear of castration" connected with the narrator's inner disturbance and consequence mental disorder represented in Roderick (ibid).

Saliba states (as cited in Reuber, 2004) that Madeline is a figure comes from the unconscious part to represents a hazard to the narrator actuality, thus we can consider Madeline as the narrator's strong Id who can easily get over his ego.

2.3 Examining Roderick Usher's Extreme Alteration

Carton (as cited in Kašparová, 2014) believes that Roderick Usher is an unforgettable character who is considered to be Poe's "most perfect portrayal of the mingled attractiveness and repulsiveness". Reuber (2004) states that the reader of *The Fall of the House of Usher* can compare the old house to Roderick's body and mind as it suffers from the effects of age and from his fear of a nervous affection "He entered, at some length, into what he conceived to be the nature of his malady. It was, he said, a constitutional and a family evil, and one for which he despaired to find a remedy—a mere nervous affection, he immediately added, which would undoubtedly soon pass off." (*FHU*, p.9).

Roderick seems to lose interest in every kind of social activities or contact and for the past years the only company was his sister Madeline Usher, his behaviour seems odd and the loss of interest in activities and lethargy are symptoms of depression, but Roderick suffers also from sadness and mental agony (Rock, 2016).

"I shall perish," said he, "I must perish in this deplorable folly. Thus, thus, and not otherwise, shall I be lost. I dread the events of the future, not in themselves, but in their results. I shudder at the thought of any, even the most trivial, incident, which may operate upon this intolerable agitation of soul. I have, indeed, no abhorrence of danger, except in its absolute effect—in terror. In this unnerved, in this pitiable, condition I feel that the period will sooner when I must abandon life and reason together, in some struggle with the grim phantasm, Fear" (*FHU*, p.9-10).

These words absolutely denote a mentally unhealthy person and thoughts haunted by fear and death. In addition to many symptoms of depression, there are other mental disorders in Roderick's behaviours "His action was alternately vivacious and sullen. His voice varied rapidly from a tremulous indecision (when the animal spirits seemed utterly in abeyance) to that species of energetic concision" (*FHU*, p.9).

Cave (as cited in Rock, 2016) indicates that this kind of inconsistency of speech is a case of “Schizophrenia”; this would explain somehow why Roderick entombs his sister believing that she still alive “the mockery of a faint blush upon the bosom and the face, and that suspiciously lingering smile upon the lip which is so terrible in death” (*FHU*, p.18).

Shifting the angle to see the tale as the narrator’s nightmare when he entered the house and seen his early boyhood’s extreme alteration, his anxiety start affects his language skill and rises to “extreme fear”. This is transmitted to Roderick’s “nervous affection” within the narrator’s dream, which can be understood as one of the dream-thoughts whose dream-content unveils the dreamer’s neurosis. From this, not only the house reflects the narrator’s self but also Roderick is a part of the reflection, as “double figure” within this dream. Therefore, we can understand Roderick Usher as perfect representative of the narrator’s ego (Reuber, 2004).

2.4 Analysing the Narrator’s State of Mind

The unnamed narrator as mentioned before undoubtedly suffers from inner troubles; his sentences are long and quite unorganised and his statements at a certain level become unclear and difficult to understand what he tries to say:

I was aware, however, that his very ancient family had been noted, time out of mind, for a peculiar sensibility of temperament, displaying itself, through long ages, in many works of exalted art, and manifested, of late, in repeated deeds of munificent yet unobtrusive charity, as well as in a passionate devotion to the intricacies, perhaps even more than to the orthodox and easily recognizable beauties, of musical science (*FHU*, p.4-5).

To grasp the real meaning of this passage, the reader needs to read it many times because of the disorganised speech which indicates mental illness such as hallucination; therefore, there are theories that suggest Madeline Usher as a product of the narrator’s unconscious mind or in other words as the narrator’s nightmare (Rock, 2016).

In his dream, the narrator combines between his fear of death and castration in incestuous relationship, which could lead to the dissolution of self. Incest is a possible source for the emerging fear of death, and according to Freud is “analogous to the fear of castration” that Poe has cleverly represented through the narrator’s thoughts about Roderick and Madeline relationship (Reuber, 2004).

Madeline’s death not only foreshadows Roderick’s end, but also foreshadows the narrator increasing anxiety of self-dissolution, which caused by madness or death, thus, disclosed the real dream-content. The narrator’s psychological unrest reaches its peak during the night, and his unconscious becomes powerful and takes over the conscious because of his nervousness and the gloomy atmosphere of the house (Ibid).

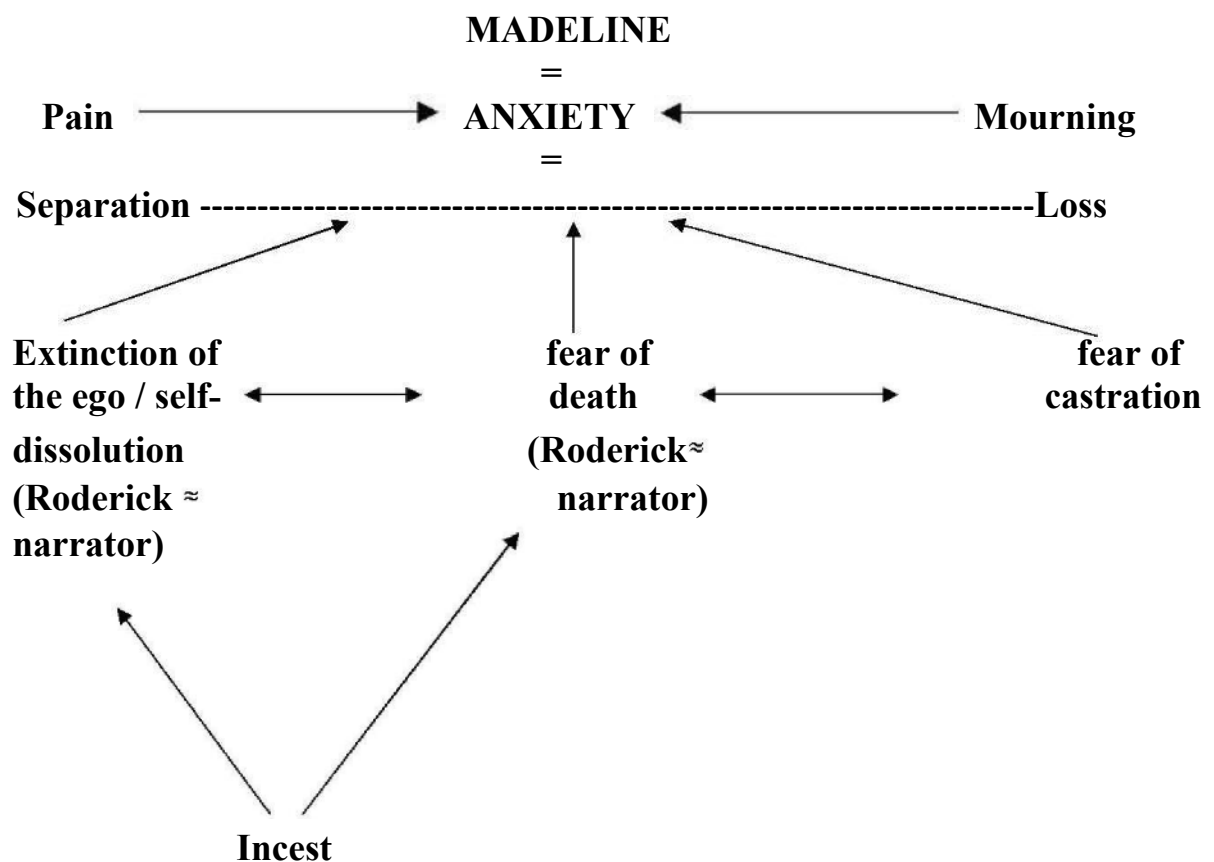
“I struggled to reason off the nervousness which had dominion over me. I endeavored to believe that much, if not all of what I felt, was due to the bewildering influence of the gloomy furniture of the room—of the dark and tattered draperies” (*FHU*, p.19).

As the tale is about to be ended and approaches its dénouement, the narrator’s and Roderick’s ego has succumbed to the Id and their stream of consciousness becomes an expression of madness. Though Poe throughout the story has showed Roderick as the house’s madman but now the narrator is the one who described as madman. “Do I not distinguish that heavy and horrible beating of her heart? Madman!”—here he sprang furiously to his feet, and shrieked out his syllables, as if in the effort he were giving up his soul—“Madman! I tell you that she now stands without the door!” through these words Poe makes it clear that the narrator’s double is Roderick and the whole story is “an indirect elaboration” of the narrator’s disturbed psyche (Reuber, 2004).

When the twins die, the narrator tries to escape from the creepy mansion and from his extreme fear of death letting behind him. The crumbling house falling into pieces

The entire orb of the satellite burst at once upon my sight—my brain reeled as I saw the mighty walls rushing asunder—there was a long tumultuous shouting sound like the voice of a thousand waters— and the deep and dank tarn at my feet closed sullenly and silently over the fragments of the “House of Usher (*FHU*, p.25).

Figure 1: The Abstract Relation between the Narrator's Unconscious Desires and Fears



This diagram includes terms that belong to Freud’s terminology (as cited in Reuber, 2004, p.215). It explains the relationship between the narrator’s unconscious desires and fears (incest, death, and castration); it also represents how his longings and fears hint the separation and loss of life, in which the narrator’s extreme anxieties takes personified form of Madeline.

2.5 The Symbolic Meanings of the Characters' Disturbed Psyches

Poe did not write *The Fall of the House of Usher* just in order to show the dark side of human existence. The story is more than three insane people in a haunted mansion it is more than this.

2.5.1 Madeline's Depression as a Metaphor for U.S. Policy Problems

As mentioned before, Poe wrote *The Fall of the House of Usher* in a Gothic and dark romantic style. This style seems to be a reflection of the dark aspects of the American history. One of the darkest aspects that afflicted America is the Revolutionary War in the second half of the 19th Century. The consequences of the revolutionary war affected the American citizens and causes anxiety and depression upon them (Röck, 2016).

In that time, the events and situation of Europe affected the United States and made it unstable. Due to those effects in the United States, the president James Monroe issued his Doctrine, in which the concerns of the U.S government were revealed (Ibid). "The late events in Spain and Portugal shew that Europe is still unsettled [...] It is impossible that the allied powers should extend their political system [...] without endangering our peace and happiness." (Monroe, 2008).

Monroe Doctrine stated that the United States would remain neutral in European affairs and not get involved with European conflicts. In addition, the U.S would not interfere in European colonies in the Western Hemisphere. Also, if the European nation tried to interfere in the Western Hemisphere, the U.S would see it as a hostile act (Troolin, n.d).

In 1837, there was a panic, which was triggered by a combination of factors including the failure of a number of brokerages firms in New York, one New York City bank president committed suicide, a number of state-chartered banks failed, and the collapse of real estate prices and food (McNamara, 2017).

As history shown, financial instability often causes further problems. A major part of the U.S population, who lived through the Great Depression have been pessimistic and afraid especially about what may happen to their future (Röck, 2016).

As we all know, literature is a mirror of society. Therefore, it is usual that these problems and troubles, which afflicted the American policy and economy, were covered in the literature. When relating these factors to Poe's story *The Fall of the House of Usher*, one will discover that Madeline's Usher mental depression stands for the great depression, which afflicted the United States population in the 19th century (Ibid).

2.5.2 Roderick's Schizophrenia as Critique of the American Dream

As previously stated, Roderick Usher suffers from schizophrenia, which is which is a very serious mental illness characterised by delusions. Delusions are not related to unsound or mentally ill people, but also to sane people.

In the late 16th and early the 17th century, a particular issue misguided the U.S citizens, which is the American Dream. The American Dream was born in the declaration of the independence and the arrival of the first European Settlers. The basic idea of it is that every man and every woman shall achieve what they are able to do and everybody shall be treated and seen equally. Yet wars and crises followed, too many Americans built mistrust towards the American Dream because they did not what they had been dreaming of; that is to say, the American Dream turned into an American Nightmare.

The American Dream is a highly discussed topic within the American society. In *The Fall of the House of Usher*, Edgar Allan Poe describes the American Dream in dark and gloomy way. The main character of Poe's story Roderick Usher represents the ordinary American citizen. Roderick suffers from depression just like his sister Madeline since they are twins. At that time, the United States were suffering from the great depression, which is due to the crises and economic troubles. When Madeline died, Roderick believed that she is not dead. This is what we called delusion, which Roderick suffered from.

This delusion is considered the same as the American Dream. The belief that Madeline is still alive is equaled the hope the American citizens feel when they think about the American Dream. However, the hope can make the individual not good or push him into a heinous end, just like what did the delusion to Roderick Usher. It cannot save him from death (Röck, 2016).

2.5.3 The Narrator's Split Personality Representing Loss of Cultural Identity

In addition to the socio-political-economic problems, which happened in the United States during the 19th century, the United States population had to face another defies. Because of the unstable situation in Europe at that time, the United States witnessed a stream of immigration, which had its peak in the middle nineteenth century. Therefore, the United States of America was not a home of true Americans, but also a home of another people from different countries (Röck, 2016).

The situation in the U.S was no exception because it is well known that when people from different cultures and ethnicities meet, the problems will occur because they are different in a variety of ways, including different ways of looking at things, different ways of dressing, and different ways of expressing personality and goodness (Ibid).

Before the revolution of 1848, Poe wrote *The Fall of the House of Usher*. In this time, the people emigrating from Europe displayed and increased a sense of nationalism, which is a sense of national consciousness exalting one nation above all other and lead to the non-mixing of peoples and nationalities.

Due to mass immigration, the most American population in the 19th century felt that the immigration is affecting their identity and they lost part of it. Even though there is no such thing as a pure American. The USA inhabitants opposed such mixing; they have been almost hurtful to see “the land of the free and the home of the brave” became full of individuals with different ethnic identities (Röck, 2016).

Because of the issue of immigrants, America seems to have become a split country. On one hand, there are those immigrants. While on the other hand, there are patriotic “true American”. This state is the same as the state of the narrator of *The Fall of the House of Usher*. By his real self, he presents the true American population. While his other self symbolises the immigrants. Both states the real self and the other self are two individual parts of the whole that co-exist into the mind. Just like immigrants and Americans co-exist, but are independent of each other (Röck, 2016).

Conclusion

A gothic horror story, Poe's *The Fall of the House of Usher*, is a tale of sickness, madness, incest, and the danger of unrestrained creativity. Poe represents his main characters in an abnormal way through using Gothicism and certain literary theories.

The main characters of *The Fall of the House of Usher* are more than mere maniacs in a supernatural horror story. Poe's story is a psychoanalysis tale of inner struggles and madness. While analysing the characters' thoughts and behaviours, their mental disorders seem to have deeper and symbolic meanings.

The tale shows that literature and the real life are often more closely connected to each other. That is to say, literature is a mirror of society. The disturbed psyches of the three main characters portray certain aspects and people's beliefs, views, and fears of the American society in the 19th century.

General Conclusion

General Conclusion

The present research paper attempted to examine and explain the gothic fiction in the short story *The Fall of the House of Usher* by Edgar Allan Poe, who was specialised in this genre. As we have seen, the life conditions of the society played a principle role in shaping Poe's writings. Therefore, the life conditions of the society influence the writings of many artists as evidenced through Allan Poe. That is to say, the literature mirrors the society.

In this work, our main concern was to determine and analyse the character's psychological disorders and the influence on their behaviour. In addition, we aimed to find out Edgar Allan Poe's motives behind using characters' mental illnesses.

Poe's writing style is simple but effective. Therefore, it is easy to be understood but difficult to be interpreted. *The Fall of the House of Usher* is one of Poe's masterpieces, in which there are much madness and troubles.

The theory, which was selected to be the sample to analyse the characters' disturbed psyches and to find out their parallels in the U.S. American history, was psychoanalysis theory.

The interpretation of the characters mental disorder in the short story made a new sense of the story and enhanced comprehension. During the 19th century, the American society suffered from different socio-political- economic problems, the Revolutionary War and its consequences, the unstable situation in Europe, the panic of 1837, the Great Depression, the American Dream, and loss of cultural identity. These dark aspects of the American society were parallel to the three main characters of *The Fall of the House of Usher*. Therefore, among Poe's motives behind using such characters was to attack the life conditions of the U.S American society during the 19th century.

Finally, we can say that these analogies may or may not have been intended by Poe, but in every case, they gave deep insight into the general mood in the United States during the 19th century.

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Résumé

Edgar Allan Poe a été connu comme la personnalité la plus compliquée dans le groupe entier d'auteurs américains. Son style gothique rend ses contes vraiment extraordinaires. Cette étude a pour but d'analyser les troubles psychologiques des personnages et ses influences sur leurs comportements dans *The Fall of the House of Usher (La Chute de la Maison Usher)* pour interpréter le sens symbolique des maladies mentales des personnages dans la société américaine. La méthode suivie dans cette étude est en fois descriptive analytique. Et la méthode de psychanalyse freudienne de la critique littéraire pour interpréter la psychologie des personnages et leurs comportements. Nous avons constaté en analysant la nouvelle de Poe que le conte est une allégorie de l'anxiété irrationnelle du narrateur. Les trois personnages principaux de l'histoire reflètent certains aspects d'histoire américaine. Bref, cette étude vise à montrer le motif d'Edgar Allan Poe derrière l'utilisation des personnages avec des psychismes dérangés dans son travail *The Fall of the House of Usher* (1839).

Mots-clés : psychismes gothiques, dérangés, psychanalyse, interprétation de rêve.

ملخص

اشتهر ادغار ألان بو بكونه أكثر شخصية معقدة في مصاف الكتاب الأمريكيين. فقد جعل أسلوبه المنمق بالأسلوب القوطي قصصه خارقة للعادة. تحاول هذه الدراسة من خلال قصة سقوط منزل آش، تحليل الاضطرابات النفسية وتفسير المعنى الرمزي لهذه الاضطرابات النفسية في المجتمع الأمريكي. يتم تحليل هذه الدراسة عن طريق منهجية الوصف والتحليل، ونظرية سيجموند فرويد التي تقوم بتفسير الحالة النفسية لدى الشخصيات وتصرفاتهم. من خلال تحليل هذه القصة، تبين أنها قصة خيالية لواقع حقيقي مجسدة في قلق الراوي الغير منطقي. حاول الكاتب نقد بعض الأحداث التاريخية للمجتمع الأمريكي من خلال الشخصيات الرئيسية في القصة. وفي الأخير، تهدف هذه الدراسة لإظهار دافع الكاتب لاستعماله شخصيات مضطربة نفسياً.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الأسلوب القوطي، الاضطرابات النفسية، التحليل النفسي، تفسير الأحلام.