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**The Semantic Connotation of Color Symbolism  
in Edgar Allan Poe's *The Black Cat* and *The  
Mask of the Red Death***

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## **DEDICATION**

To my dear mother and dear father for their unlimited love, faith and support.

May God reward them.

To my beloved aunt, Souad for her great support and positive encouraging thoughts and positive energy.

To my brothers and sister, friends and relatives.

To my friend and cousin Abla , may her soul rest in peace. Also, to my mate Abdesalam, an ambitious researcher , may his soul rest in peace too.

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And as the most important things are left for the end in the English language, I have deliberately left my precious supervisor Dr Halimi Mohamed Seghir for the end. With no intention to flatter, I would like to sincerely thank my supervisor for his remarkable efforts and most of all constant continuous support. Without forgetting to thank also the jury member Dr Saadoune Farifa And Dr Sayah Lambarak Samira for accepting to examine my dissertation.

## Abstracts

The study aims to analyze the use of color symbolism in the Gothic Literature. To illustrate this view, two literary works of the American poet and writer Edgar Allan Poe's *The Black Cat* (1843) and *The Mask Of The Red Death* (1848), have been studied for the sake of getting an overall view of the specific use of color symbolism, focusing especially on the black and red color. The later have been chosen to extract the hidden meaning behind their use. In addition to the study of the two colors, we have also taken into consideration the major symbols in the two short stories which are related to the chosen colors; Black Cat and Red Death.

This study contains two main chapters; each chapter is divided into two major sections. The first one explains the impact of literature and the literary genre as a whole, yet given a detailed part where the gothic literature; American as well as the British one are presented, focusing on the American literature with relation to the chosen author. The second chapter depicts the analysis of the notion of colors focusing on the gothic mostly using once parallel to the analysis of the black color in Poe's "*The Black Cat*" and red color in "*The Mask of the Red Death*". At last we sam up with the conclusion.

**Keywords:** Poe, Gothic literature , symbolism, colors, black, red

## Résumé

L'objectif du travail est d'étudier la symbolique des couleurs dans la littérature gothique. Dans ce sens, nous nous sommes concentrés sur deux œuvres du poète et écrivain américain Edgar Allan Poe, à savoir : *Le chat noir* (1843) ; et «*Le masque de la mort rouge* » (1848) Et ce, dans le but d'avoir un aperçu global sur l'usage de la symbolique des couleurs, tout en se basant sur les couleurs noire et rouge. Les lettres furent choisies afin d'extraire la signification cachée derrière chaque utilisation. Au delà des deux couleurs, notre étude prend en considération les symboles incluses dans les textes, relatifs aux deux couleurs choisies : le chat *noir* et la mort *rouge*.

Cette étude est structurée en deux chapitres, chacun composée de deux sections majeures. Le premier vise à expliquer l'impact de la littérature et du genre littéraire d'une manière générale, cependant expliquer en détails la littérature gothique ; les deux littératures américaine et britannique sont présentées en se concentrant sur la littérature américaine en relation avec l'auteur choisi.

Quant au second chapitre, il met l'accent sur l'analyse de la notion de couleurs en mettant l'accent sur les couleurs les plus utilisées dans le style gothique, relatives à l'analyse de la couleur noir dans les œuvres de Poe « *Le chat noir* » et « *Le masque de la mort rouge* ». Ainsi, nous terminons ce travail avec conclusion.

**Mot-clé :** Poe, Littérature Gothique, Symbolisme, Couleurs, Noir, Rouge

### الملخص:

تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى تحليل استخدام رمزية اللون في الأدب القوطي. تمت دراسة قصتي الكاتب و الشاعر الأمريكي إدغار ألان بو القطة السوداء (1843) وقناع الموت الأحمر (1848) ، من أجل الحصول على نظرة شاملة على النوع المحدد لرمزية اللون ، و قد تمت الدراسة خاصة على اللون الأسود والأحمر. تم اختيار ما يلي لاستخراج معنى الحقيقي لاستخدامها. بالإضافة إلى دراسة اللونين ، أخذنا في الاعتبار أيضًا الرموز الرئيسية في القصتين القصيرتين المرتبطتين بالألوان المختارة ؛ القطة السوداء والموت الأحمر.

تحتوي هذه الدراسة على فصلين رئيسيين؛ ينقسم كل فصل إلى قسمين رئيسيين. الأول يشرح تأثير الأدب وخصائصه ككل أي بشكل عام ، ولكن تمت تجزئة فصل الأدب القوطي ؛ ما اذا كان في الأدب الغوطي الأمريكي او البريطاني ، مع التركيز اكثر على الأدب الأمريكي فيما يتعلق بالمؤلف الذي تم اختياره. الفصل الثاني يتمثل في تحليل مفهوم الألوان كشكل عام و على الألوان الأكثر استعمالا في القوطية ، تزامنا مع تحليل اللون الأسود في بو "القط الأسود" واللون الأحمر في "قناع الموت الأحمر". و نختمها بالخاتمة.

الكلمات المفتاحية . بو. خرافات ادبيه . الرمزية . الالوان . اسود . احمر .

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# **General Introduction**

## General Introduction

### 1.1 Background of the study

Literature is the brighten light that reflects writer's mind. In fact, it can be described as being the mirror of writers, poets and authors mind. Literature shows the spoken words and makes the reader hungry to feel it. However, the later captures the souls of people for the future; it is a time capsule for the future and inadvertently as an endless present; eternal and immortalization or just a trend in time.

American literature is a treasure land of many authors to discover, a lot of subjects to deal with, and rich periods to shed light on. yet, it has been passing through different literary movements such as Realism, Naturalism, Rationalism, and Romanticism; the latter is considered as the richest period of authors, such as Edgar Allan Poe, who contributed in the evolution of American literature as a whole with their brilliant and attractive writings (Santee 2010).

Romantic writers stand for revolting against the age of reason (1700-1770); imagination and intuition versus reason and spontaneity versus control, were the feathers they mostly celebrate (Kaiser 2004). The romantic authors like Edgar Allan Poe try to adopt in his writings the most important elements of romanticism, the super-use of imagination, for example, symbolism and the focus on nature; he attempt to make readers interact with his works and to feel it for the sake of feeling integrated with the fictitious characters.

*The Black cat (1843)* is considered the greatest symbolic short story in American literature; it is dealing with its high level of guilt, loyalty and deterioration of the human body and death. The black cat is a short story that was written by Edgar Allen Poe (1809-1849) in which the reader is subjected to the confession of a convicted murderer. It was an American symbolist and one of the prominent and significant literary genre in the romantic period. Po's short story holds an important element that symbolize and describes the hidden given message that he wanted the readers to be in touch with; the black color. The later has been always seen as a color of depression, hatred, death and guilt, the reason why Poe based the aim of his written work on the black color.

In addition to *Black Cat*, Poe has written another short story which bases on the use of color to transmit his message to the audience. *The Mask Of The Red Death* which tells a strange story which has a deep relation to the author's real life. The symbol "*red mask*" is a

virtual description of the ultimate death; it symbolizes the decease that killed almost all Poe's family member including his father. Red is usually used in literature to symbolize blood, death, anger and desire of killing and murdering. Gothic writers uses those two dark colors to create an atmosphere of fear in order to add more meanings to their writings and to transmit also a specific message that has mostly relation to their life experiences.

In fact, the analysis of any literary work requires the examination of the writer's vocabulary and the style of writing and the language. Poe's two shorts stories are full of figures of speech, especially symbolism. The aim of this study is to make learners aware of the meaning of the symbolism, and how they can interpretations symbols in any literary work. Thus, our study attempts to deal with the investigation of black and red color in *black cat* and *red mask* as an important symbol in Edgar Allan Poe's work.

## 1.2 Objectives of the study

Through the present research, we aim at investigating to what extent color symbolism; black of black cat and red of the mask of the red death in Poe's literary works can be misunderstood by reader. Thus, our first aim is to contribute to our understanding of how interpretation the symbols as well as colors and to what extent could help learners in general and learners who study literature in particular enhance comprehension of the story.

## 1.3 Problem

A reader of "*The Black Cat*" and "*The Mask Of The Red Death*" will observe the notice use of color as major symbols in those two story. Yet, the author appears to have motives behind the use of this device. Hence, one may ask the following questions:

- How can the symbol of black cat be interpreted in Edgar Allan Poe's work?
- How can the symbol of red mask be interpreted in Poe's work also?
- How can a simple color have much impact on the atmosphere of a whole story?

To answer those questions, we hypothesise that:

- Effective Interpretation of the two symbols "Black Cat" and "Red Mask" may enhance a good comprehension of the stories.
- A good study of the major colors used in the Gothic literature is the key word of getting in touch with Poe's psychology.

## **Justification**

The choice of Edgar Allan Poe's two short stories did not come at random but because of various reasons. First of all, it is related to our interest in this story, which is a real picture of the gothic fiction in the 19th century where Poe describes and analyses the dark side of human existence. He is thus considered as the representative figure of the literary tradition works of nineteenth century in American literature. Secondly, the stories are regarded to be the most popular of Poe's gothic works which go with our great focus; the Gothic Literature.

## **1.4 Methodology**

The method which is followed in this work is analytic, investigating and interpreting the color symbolism in both *Black Cat* and *the mask of the red death* in Poe's short stories. We have also used the method of psychoanalysis literary criticism to explain the link between the narrator and his main characters.

The data of this study are collected in the following steps; first, reading and Understanding the whole content of the two stories by Edgar Allan Poe. Second, taking notes from the story that are related to the objective of the work. Thirdly, selecting and picking up data referring to the problem investigating the symbols in Poe's works.

## **1.5 Dissertation structure**

This work contains two chapters. The first chapter explains the impact of literature and the literary genre as a whole and given a detailed part where the gothic literature is explained. The second chapter depicts the analysis of the notion of colors focusing on the gothic mostly used once in parallel to the analysis of the black color in Poe's "*The Black Cat*" and the red color in "*The Mask of the Red Death*".

# **Chapter One: an overall view of Literature and the Gothic Literature**

## 1.1 Definition

When the sun light goes across a mirror, a beautiful and strong image of the reflected light will appear. Literature is the reflected light that comes from the mirror which describes the inner beauty of a poet mind. From this description, one can see the beauty of literature and the impact that it may have on the reader's minds and emotions.

However, we go with one of the very interesting genre of literature: the Gothic Literature. Edgar Allan Poe is the master of the gothic literature due to his important role that he had on ameliorating the gothic themes. Poe gave the human psychology the major aim of his writings. Followed by other writers, Poe's major subject had wildly spread in the gothic culture. Symbolism is one of important literary tool that is mostly implied in Edgar's works; one can notice its use starting from the reading of the title. Like in the short story *The Black Cat* or in *The Fall Of The House Of Usher* or even in his most famous poem *raven*. All the titles stated above are considered as symbols.

## 1.2 Definition of literature

It is widely known that it is quite difficult to provide literature with only one simple definition. The first and basic one is that literature is any productive work given from a writer or an author. Mario Klarer in his book entitled *An Introduction to Literary Studies (1998)* states:

Look up the term literature in any current encyclopedia and you will be struck by the vagueness of its usage as well as an inevitable lack of substance in the attempts to define it. In most cases, literature is referred to as the entirety of written expression, with the restriction that not every written document can be categorized as literature in the more exact sense of the word. The definitions, therefore, usually include additional adjectives such as "aesthetic" or "artistic" to distinguish literary works from texts of everyday use such as telephone books, newspapers, legal documents and scholarly writings (01).



According to Klarer (n.d), literature is specified by its aesthetic excellence of execution and also by its artistic sense, and that not any written work is attributed the status of literature unless it shows a certain kind of beauty.

Although literature means the writing formed with letters, some definite it as spoken or sung texts. To be more precise, it is a written work that acquires literary values regardless if it is a fictional or non fictional work, or if it is prose or poetry. One can explain poetry by the famous poem of Edgar Allen Poe in his 1845 poem: The Raven: "Be that word our sign in parting, bird or fiend,

I shrieked, up starting-  
Get thee back into the tempest and the Night's plutonian  
shore!  
Leave no black plume as a token of that lie thy soul hath  
spoken!  
Leave my loneliness unbroken!—quit the bust above my  
door!  
Take thy beak from out my heart, and take thy form from  
off my door!" Quoth the Raven, "Nevermore" (p.05).

In a step forward, literature can be more acclaimed confer to its major forms such as drama, short stories and novels. The English poet and play writer William Shakespeare (April 26, 1564 –d. April 23, 1616) gave a great illustration of drama by his famous book and play "The Tragedy of Hamlet, Prince of Denmark" (1603), as well as Jane Austen in her noted novel "Emma" (1815) by given all the norms of a good representation of literature.

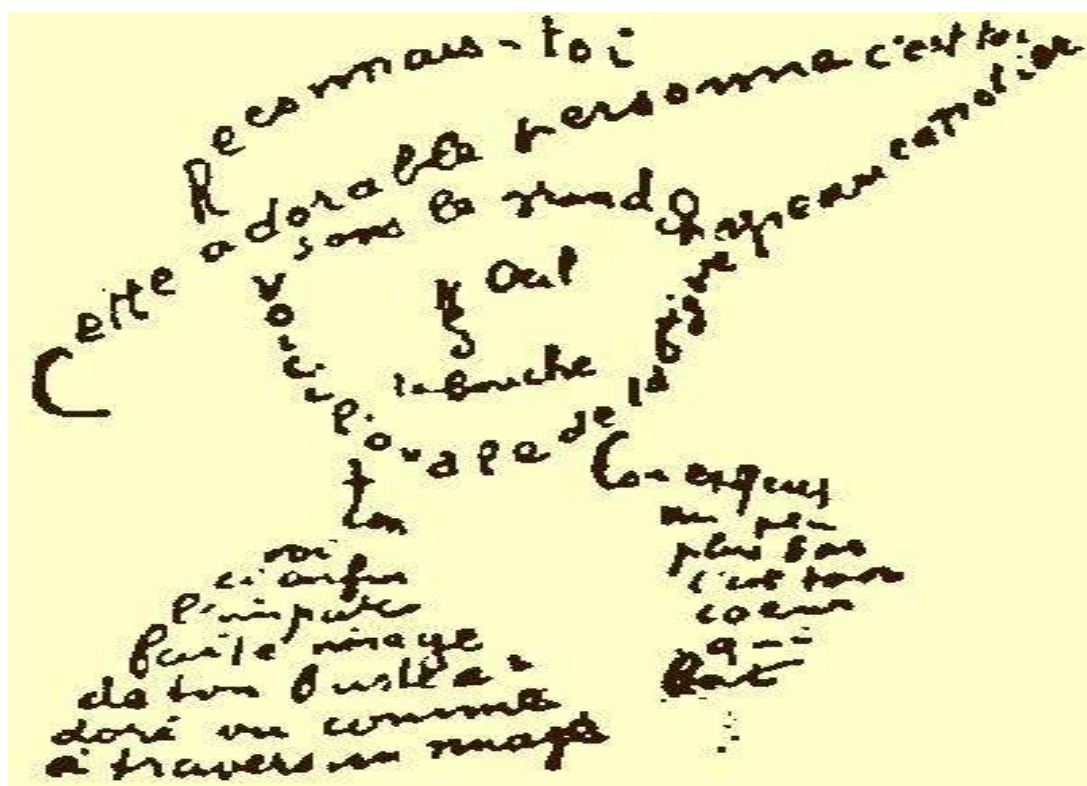
### **1.3 Literature and the literary genres**

In the ancient Greece, literature was prorated into two main categories which are tragedy and comedy. However, by time and with the evolution of man, so many other types and genres appeared. Literary genre is related to the style of writing. It is characterized by: polysemy, radical ambiguity, the use of metaphor, potential messages. Genre, in English, is divided into types such as: fiction, non-fiction (folklore, drama, prose and poetry. (Bright hub education n.d)

### 1.3.1 Poetry

Poetry is the ancient way forms of literature. According to Hayley Drucker in Five main genres of literature: to keep the short stories remember, people used to recite them in a sort of poem. Although nowadays poetry is rarely performed because it is mostly written down, yet it does still exist. Poetry uses aesthetic and rhythmic qualities of language that why we consider it as a literary art. Poetry, as it is defined in the *OXFORD ENGLISH DICTIONARY*: "has traditionally been distinguished from prose by its being set in verse". That is to say, it is set of lines that that mainly focus on the balance of the meaning and the rhythm. (Bright hub education n.d)

Poetry exists in three main parts. The shorter and the more modern poems, inspire anything from a few lines to a few pages that are usually collected in one series book of one author or variety of writers. One of the most frequent taught poems of this type is "The raven" of Edgar Allan Poe. We do have, then, the conventional poems of Shakespeare's time, such as the blank verse and the sonnet. Homer's The Iliad and The Odyssey are the typical illustration of the ancient epic poems transcribed from oral stories. These long, complex poems resemble novels. (Brigh hub education n.d).



**Figure (01):**Calligram by Guillaume Apollinaire. A type of poem in which the written words are arranged in such a way to produce a visual image.

### 1.3.2 Prose

Prose is the opposite of poetry. Once you understand what poetry is, it would be easy for you to get the meaning of it. Prose is any piece of writing that includes complete sentences that form a paragraph in a natural way. According to Richard Graff, On the historical development of prose claimed that :

**1-Novel:** a long fictional prose narrative such "The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym of Nantucket" by Edgar Allan Poe (1838) and "David Copperfield" by Charles Dickens (1850).

**2-Novella:** The novella exists between the novel and short story. As explained the publisher, Melville House it as “too short to be a novel, too long to be a short story.” (Bright hub education n.d)

**3-Short story:** a dilemma in defining the “short story” as a literary form is how to, or whether one should, distinguish it from any short narrative. Apart from its distinct size, various theorists have suggested that the short story has a characteristic subject matter or structure;[11] these discussions often position the form in some relation to the novel. We have the example of “The Yellow Wallpaper” by Charlotte Perkins Gilman (1892) (Bright hub education n.d)

### 1.3.3 Drama

Drama can be considered as any text meant to be performed rather than read.

As stated in Merriam Webster (1828) " a composition in verse or prose intended to portray life or character or to tell a story usually involving conflicts and emotions through action and dialogue and typically designed for theatrical performance: play".

That means that drama is a sort of vivid and concrete illustration of an imaginary work that expresses a given situation quoted from a given work. Drama is widely expressed in the Shakespearean plays that were represented several times by students in schools or by actors. (Bright hub education n.d)

### 1.3.4 Fiction

Etymologically, the word fiction has been derived from Latin word “fictus” that means to form. It is one of the two branches of literature in association with non-fiction. Fiction consists of stories, novels, and dramas based on made up and fabricated stories and characters. According to Merriam Webster: “literature in the form of prose, especially novels, that describes imaginary events and people.” (Definition of fiction n.d)

It also contains certain symbolic and thematic features known as literary merits. In other words, fiction recites a story, which aims at something bigger than a story which signifies imagination. On actual historical events, stories may base on fiction. Although imaginary characters are in a fictitious setting in stories, yet they may have some similar points with real life events and characters. When taken their characters from actual life, writers alter their characters very skillfully with fiction writers are able to entertain, educate and inspire their readers they can sweep their emotions with the use of fiction. . (Definition of fiction n.d).

### **1.3.5 Nonfiction**

Non fiction is all types of writing that are based on true facts and events. It refers to literature based in fact. However, it is the broadest category of literature. As it is mentioned in *the Cambridge Dictionary*: "writing that is about real events and facts, rather than stories that have been invented". That is to say, the nonfiction literature helps us understand our world.

In fact, nonfiction works contains several important features based on reality. That is to say, nonfiction writing must contain real people, places, and events.

## **1.4 Symbolism in literature**

### **1.4.1 Introduction**

Literature stands for the reflection of the society. In many ways Literature has the power to decode people's thinking, Ideas, languages, Perceptions, and so on so far.

Nothing is haphazard everything is significant. This is a virtual contract between the writer and reader. This lead us to read the perception of the writer and the story's representations via characters, the setting, Plot.

Historically, Symbolism has been found as an art in back in the 19th century .It's roots saw the beam in 1886 precisely by Gustave Kahn, Jean Moreas. The latter, has launched a Manifesto of thee symbolist poetry, which included the figurative arts in *LE Figaro*. To add more, Symbolism was an art movement in response to Realism and Impressionism. Poets, musicians, artists, and writers all used Symbolism to express meaning in an indirect manner. Symbolist painters wanted their pictures to depict a meaning beyond just the figures they drew.

### **1.4.2 Definition of symbolism**

Symbolism can be defined as a technique that “stands for something/someone else. It is a conventional sign of some object, idea or process. In Greek, symbol on means token or

watchword” (Cosmos and History: The Journal of Natural and Social Philosophy, vol. 12, no. 1, 2016)

### **1.4.3 Symbolism and Figurative Language**

Symbolism and figurative language provide a depth to writing that reliance on straightforward expression. These types of literary devices allow the writer to move beyond using prose merely for the transmission of facts. Using symbolism and figurative language brings prose closer to poetic expression and provides the opportunity to deliver information on multiple levels that can be understood by multiple levels of educational awareness. Sexton, Timothy. (Types of Symbolism & Figurative Language.n.d)

### **1.4.4 Types of Figurative Speech**

It's a literary device that uses language for different literal meaning. All power to achieve a rhetorical effect.

#### **1. Simile**

A simile is a figurative language device that allows one object to be compared with another by using the term "like" or "as." It is linking figure of speech to help the others in any comparison, in other words, direct comparison. Simile is listed on the oldest figures in the rhetorical theory. (Itlibrary n.d)

#### **Examples**

- Writing is like hunting. There are brutally cold afternoons with nothing in sight, only the wind and your breaking heart. Then the moment when you bag something big. The entire process is beyond intoxicating. (Kate Braverman, quoted by Sol Stein in Stein on Writing, 1995)

-Then, we had revise, make the words walk slowly on the slippery trail. (Judith Small, July 8, 1991)

#### **2. Metaphor**

Metaphor renders the language to be used directly to identify one object with another without using "like" or "as." The same rules can be applied for both; simile; metaphor, and the primary difference between these two kinds of figurative language are the directness of metaphor. (John Spacey. 2016)

## Examples

-My beloved is the red balloon that lifts my heart.

-I'm drowning in a sea of grief

## 3. Allegory

As a literary device, an allegory is a metaphor in which a character, place or event is used to deliver a broader message about real-world issues and occurrences.( Stephen A. Barney ,1989). It is different from symbolism. An allegory is a complete narrative that involves characters and events that stand for an abstract idea or event. A symbol, on the other hand, is an object that stands for another object, giving it a particular meaning. Unlike allegory, symbolism does not tell a story. For example, Plato, in his *Allegory of Cave*, tells a story of how some people are ignorant, while at the same time other people “see the light.” Plato’s allegory stands for an idea and does not tell an actual story. (simplicable n.d)

## Examples

-All animals are equal but a few are more equal than others.

-In John Steinbeck’s novella *The Pearl*, the main character Kino finds a gigantic pearl that he hopes to sell to pay for his child’s medical fees. Through the course of the story, Kino encounters greed in every direction, which forces him to flee the town with his wife and son. Trackers follow the family and tragically kill Kino’s son. Kino and his wife end up throwing the pearl back in the ocean as it has only brought them misery. This story is an example of allegory in that it shows the corrupting effect of money and power of greed.

-She was fishing for compliments

## 1.5 The gothic literature

### 1.5.1 Definition of the word Gothic

No one can provide the word gothic with only one definition. It may seem easy for some yet it is not the case in reality, indeed. Snorri Sigurðsson stated in his 2009 long essay: “*The Gothic Function and Definition*”:

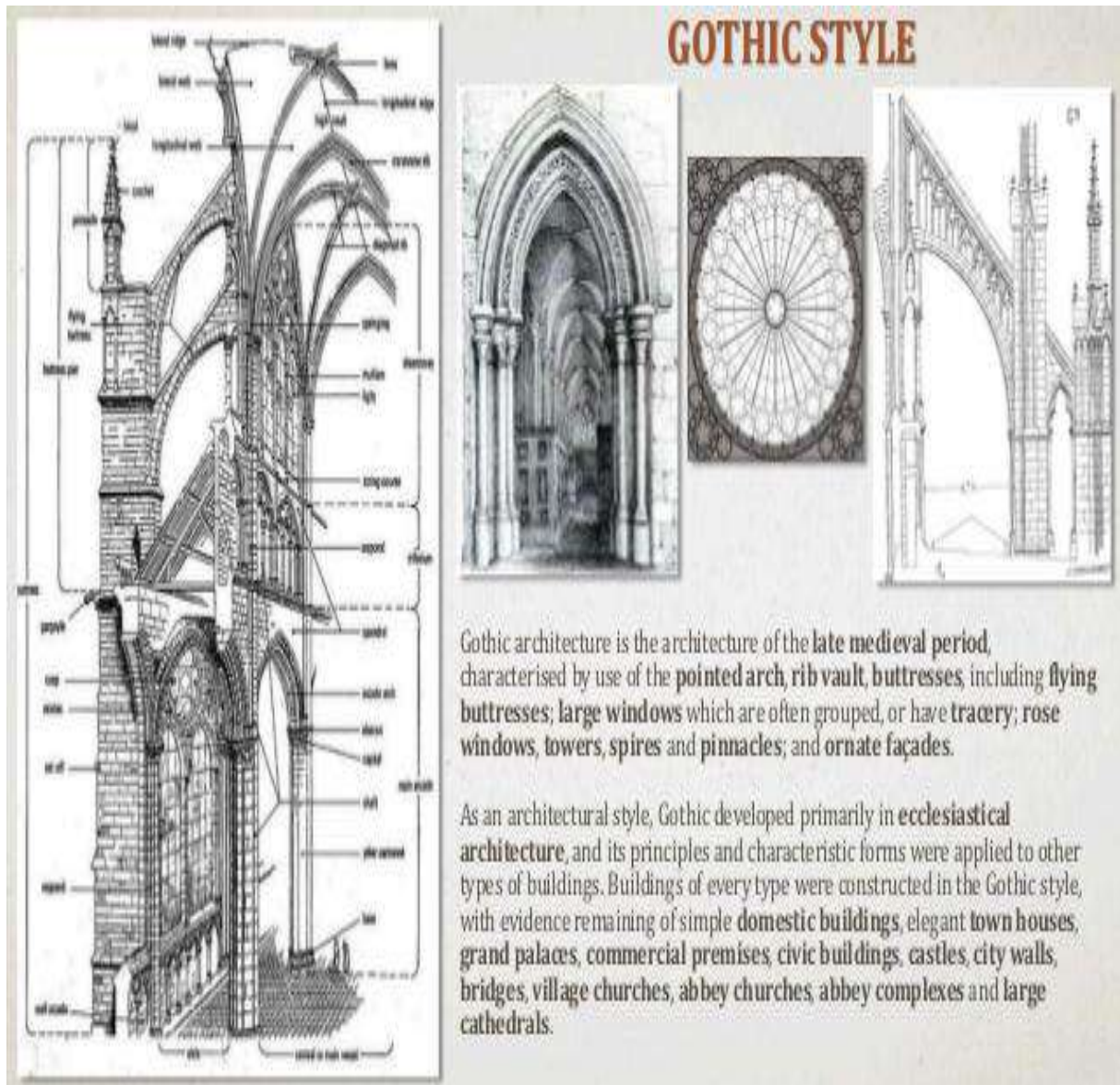
One would presume that posing a question as simple as “What is Gothic?” would supply an equally simple answer. Unfortunately, such is not the case with the Gothic, whether it is in literature, motion pictures, or in music. Something often presumed to be indicative of the Gothic, perhaps even defining, is the inclusion of

some supernatural content. As a rough and general starting point it is sufficient to begin an explanation. An incorrect beginning, it may be but it gives something to build a better explanation and definition. Assuming a story with supernatural content, would it then be possible to state that it is Gothic, based on that element alone? The short answer would be no, if the supernatural content were but a fixture of the story. The example of Superman suffices here; he is an alien being and is capable of feats greater than humans are, yet narratives about Superman are not Gothic. (01).

According to Snorri, Gothic cannot be considered as a simple word that one can provide only one definition to the later. It can describe the language of the Goths as well as their architecture, for instance. The word Gothic usually shows a certain kind of mystery, terror and ambiguity. For that reason, not all kind of literature plays, motion pictures or music can be seen as a gothic work unless it contains all the norms of a gothic work.

As it is mentioned in *the Oxfordpower*, Gothic is connected with a style that was common in Europe from the 12th to the sixteenth centuries. Typical features of gothic architecture are pointed arches.( Oxford power dictionary)





**Figure 02: Gothic architecture.**

### 1.5.2 The Gothic origin

Gothic aroused as a post medieval and post renaissance phenomenon within the British cultural fiction. However, the term "Gothic" used to refer notably, in the past, to the east Germanic tribes "The Goths" which means the barbarians. In the eighteenth century, the later turned to describe anything related to medieval period principally architecture such as churches and cathedrals almost from twelve to sixteen century (Punter and Byron 9).

Spenser and McEvoy claimed that Gothic in literature was linked to the anarchy as it is a reaction to the age of order "the Renaissance". They state that "if Gothic had a positive connotation when signifying architecture, it came to have a negative one when referring to



literature"(16). A group of people from a high social class, in Europe, started writing "Gothic" as a reaction to the ultimate reason used by the European writers in their works.

David Punter stated that, "Gothic signifies the lack of reason"(13). According to what was stated by Punter, opposing realism Gothic combined the powerful emotions taken from tragedy with the supernatural imagery and violence found in legends.



**Figure 03 : The supernaturalism in gothic literature**

British gothic fiction is seen as escapism or a cultural anesthetic. for the sake of escaping their everyday anxieties and problems, people tend to read this fiction. As it is definitely mentioned in the book, *Gothic Literature: A Gale Critical Companion*, " because these tales of oppression and terror are set in other places and other times, English readers did not applied directly these fears to their own time"( Hogle and Bomarito p.58 n.d).

For instance, in Edgar Allan Poe's, *The black cat*, there were a man who had a favored of cat which its color was black yet he finished by killing it simply because he was drunk and disturbed one night. From that moment the entire life of the narrator changed from bad to worse. From that small example, one can conclude that from indulging in Gothic culture, a lot of personal enjoyment and cathartic escapism can be gained.

Gothic is genre where horror meets.

In *The Handbook to Gothic Literature*, Marie Mulvey-Roberts notes that "the Gothic novel often employs the subtitle 'A Romance' (226. 1998). She claimed that a novel is a variation of the Romantic. For that, Gothic and the romantic writings have many similar points such as the elements of nature, powerful love and the focus on imagination and feelings through the use of imagination.



**Figure 04: Romance implication in gothic literature**

According to Fred Botting in his 1996 book, "*gothic*", a significant diffusion of gothic traces were adapted in the mid nineteenth century through literary and popular fiction within the forms of realism, sensation novels and especially ghost stories. (74). He also added that:

"Eighteenth-century Gothic machinery and the wild landscapes of Romantic individualism give way to terrors and horrors that are much closer to home, uncanny disruptions of the boundaries between inside and outside, reality and delusion, propriety and corruption, materialism and spirituality. These are signified by the play of ghosts, doubles and mirrors". (74)

The first representative of the gothic literature was *Horace Walpole*, when he published for the first time his long novel “*the castle of Otranto*” in (1794) in which he integrated the subtitle “*A Gothic Story*”. Walpole linked it to the medieval ages in which supernatural elements were employed for causing fear in his readers and to make them deeply live the story. In his novel, the author used the word gothic to denote the crude barbarous and medieval. One can consider the success of the novel and its popularity as being an open door for other writers in which they followed the same traditional and elements used by Walpole in writing their novels which were classified under gothic genre or the origin of gothic. (Hogle and Bomarito 1 z 57)

Here is a list of some writers that inspired from Horace novel:

- Charles Brockden Brown’s *Wieland* (1797).
- Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein* (1818).
- Charles Robert Maturin’s *Melmoth the Wanderer* (1820).
- Ann Radcliffe’s *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794) and *The Italian* (1797)

### 1.5.3 Definition of the gothic literature

Since the ancient ages, the unknown became the source of terror of mankind. inspired from all over the old world stories, The Medieval Ages’ tales set a frame for the existence of this fear within abandoned castles, graveyards and shape which later became the basic for the Gothic literature (Snodgrass, 2005).

The romantic writer’s interest in nature and the metaphysical world revived the sense of investigating the unknown in their literature. The English historian and writer Horace Walpole’s story *The Castle of Otranto* (1764) is considered to be the first Gothic novel; its characters are baited in the mysterious, eerie passages (Balk, 2011) whereas, this new sub-movement reached English-speaking areas by the work of William Thomas Beckford’s *Vathek* (1786), and the works of Samuel Coleridge, Lord Byron, and Marry Shelley whom work with the fiction in this kind of literature (Snodgrass, 2005). As William Blake states “Gothic is Living Form” (Brown, 2008:67). The Horror stories of the gothic period are regarded *as a way to bring the past back*:

Even if they rarely describe themselves as such, many of the late eighteenth-and early nineteenth-century literary works now classified as Gothic can be also be

seen to offer ways of understanding the past, and the relations between past and present. (Watt, 2006: 119)

In this kind of literary, the majority of the used settings and events are the architecture of the past periods, where empty streets and inhabited castles are taken as a place for its events. The use of such settings is described as ‘a reminder’ and a symbolic presentation of the ancestors and their life, in addition to how they were able to keep their style of life alive to be a base for authors centuries later (Watt, 2006).

From a historical perspective, the eighteenth century adhered the events that build the new Gothic literature. In order to be separated from the French, the Northern Europe, or more specifically the Protestant nations as England, German and Scandinavian areas formed its own kind of literature (Brown, 2008). The French writings were noticed to have a strong liking for reason, wit and politeness, before the French Revolution in 1789, where the other nations’ literature was too much related to the Gothic culture (ibid.). By the end of the Waterloo battle in 1815, The division of literature in Europe came into an end for the ‘freedom’ was transmitted all over Europe, especially France (ibid.). With this battle, French literature joined the European one after that the Napoleon reign was failed and it was “the victory of the Gothic civilization” in literature field, (Brown, 2008: 67).

#### **1.5.4 British gothic literature**

The Romantic writers became able to see the beauty of the world around them with the interesting turn they took toward nature. As Burke referred to the word ‘sublime’ as a “Productive of the strongest emotion which the mind is capable of feeling” (Carter & McRae, 1997: 208). Borrowing the classical Greek word from the French writings of Nicolas Boileau (1636- 1711), and giving it an explanation in his *Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and the Beautiful* (1757-59) , Burke gave, also, a stable norm for the horrors that are frequently used in literature. Due to this ‘strongest emotion’ that the sublime aids the human being to produce can change the comfort of happiness into melancholy, a beautiful scene to terror, and this was the aim of the Gothic writings (ibid.).

The overused imagination in Gothic novels illustrates the relation between the sublime and the creation of terror (ibid.). The appearance of this sub- movement was first in Horace Walpole’s story *The Castle of Otranto* (1764), and then this kind of novels became popular due to the writings of other British novelists such as Ann Radcliff (1764-1823) and William Godwin (1756-1836) (ibid.). Abandoned castles and the dark vaults features changed to care

more about the psychology of the person. That is to say, the gothic writing in the 19th century did not keep the same discussed issues in the 18th century's works, as in Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1818) (Hogle, 2002).

To create terror, the events of the Gothic stories took place inside the cities which are full with ghosts as a consequence of the new changes in the British life and the Industrial Revolution results.(Botting, 1996). However, the Tudors' castles and abbeys are The mainly used settings as a representation of the British nation roots (Chandler, 2009). This nostalgia to the origin was a result of the economic and political changes and the crowded cities (ibid.).

### **1.5.5 American Gothic Literature**

The American Gothic writings created its own method in this literary genre, specially with the use of 'personification', which enables "the dead to rise, the ghostly voice to materialize out of nowhere, and objects to assume a menacing pseudo-life" (Hogle, 2002: 196). That means that they were not really influenced by the English and other European writers; they did not limit the American's creation. American gothic literary works were based on the new innovation and creativity in order to create a relationship between the past events and the present life from different sides; individual or social. While trying to create this relation, Americans were looking for their origins, and they were trying to find the truth about the American being (ibid.). David Moge, Scott P. Sanders, and Joanne B. Karpinski claim that: "Gothicism must abide on a frontier-whether physical or psychical" (Quoted in Martin & Savoy, 1998: 7) and these two aspects are used in the American gothic writings. That is to say, Gothicism in the literary works should be limited to a specific frame.

Inspired by English writers, Charles Brockden Brown is the first American writer to start writing about Gothic subjects. His most known literary work is *Wieland or The Transformation* (1798), which treats religious beliefs, madness and murder (Boswell & Rollyson, 2008). Furthermore, Brown's stories draw a darker sinful picture for the individual that has been rooted from the past life of the ancestors (Hogle, 2002). Through Nathaniel Hawthorne' novels, *The Scarlet Letter* (1850), and *The House of Seven Gables* (1851) one can see the real use of America as a nation rather than a colony. He used the Puritan plot implicitly as the source of the present faults (ibid.).

American gothic writers started to write stories with 'pure' American settings, characters, and events, because the European scenes like castles and abbeys were not suitable for their New World. Also, because this new land contained undiscovered mysterious and

secrets of the past, that helped in providing a strong ground for the Gothic story (Botting, 1996).

The Gothic American writers introduced the struggle within the individual in addition to the struggle between the past and the present. The main figure who analyzed this phenomenon was Edgar Allan Poe (1809-1849), "His subjects are varied, exploring particularly individual cases of delusion and more general anxieties about death" (ibid: 78). Poe presented the struggle between consciousness and unconsciousness, or what is called 'doubling', as in the story of William Wilson (1839). The main character or the protagonist in this narration is having a conflict with another person, 'otherness', with the same name and behaviors, which appears at the end and after a duel, that he is in front of a big mirror. The inner of the real character is introduced through the 'double' character in Poe's story introduces and the goodness that the real William lacks. This type of struggle which leads to madness is used also in other novels or short stories as *The Tell-Tale Heart* (1843), *The Fall of the House of Usher* (1834) and many other literary works by Poe, which shows the inner of the human being and the dark seeds that can be resulted from the uncertain conditions that the person can face (ibid.).

### 1.5.6 Edgar Allan Poe and gothic

Edgar Allan Poe is an American writer who is known as one of the greatest writers of gothic novels, he received much debates. Poe is famous with the writing of poems and gothic short stories as well as essays and novels. The majority of his writings are gothic yet he also has other genres like humorous and science fiction works (American gothic – smith 61)

Although he did not invent the gothic fiction, Poe is considered as the master of Gothic horror. One can say that gothic genre was approximately half a century old before the appearance of Edgar. Once he started publishing macabre tales in the Southern Messenger in 1835, many readers were fascinated by his writings due to its novelty. He renovated the terror tale to have bases in human psychology rather than in the supernatural horrors, regardless the fact that almost all Gothic stories contains supernaturalism element; it is absent in those written by Poe (Nineteenth-Century"Smith 169).

Fisher declares that "Poe realized that Gothicism was eminently compatible with psychological plausibility in literature and he worked out such designs in combination repeatedly through his literary career"(78). That means that Poe opted for manipulating the Gothic traditions in order to be resulted in a psychological fiction. Indicated through dreams

mostly, Gothic elements are a form of psychological states, in the majority of Poe's stories. However, the components of his buildings are symbols to what is inside his characters' psyche. Poe's *The Fall of the House of Usher*, *The Black Cat*, *The Pit and Pendulum* and *the death of the red mask* mostly belong to the gothic fiction (Fisher 87-88)

Magistral and Pogger stated that when Poe has taken Gothic genre to American literature, he kept the identical features without integrating any kind of change, yet he added the psychological perspective to the genre. However, Poe's Gothic tales, the reader can discover that the protagonist's madness make him/her innocent from the crimes that he committed through creating the schizophrenic mind because he made the degree of horror more increased.

Perverse as called Poe is an important characterization of Poe's characters in his fiction novels or short stories. It is when they appear to show obsession, delusion and self loathing under the tendency to destruct themselves.

They also stated that, "Poe was the first writer to press the relationship between monster or criminal and the reader to the point where it came simultaneously unbearable and pleasurable"(qtd. in Wrangō 13-14); they argue that the male antagonist was an important characteristic of Gothic; moreover, Poe created kind of intimacy between the reader and the character when he changed the narrative perspective to the first person.

The critic Marie Mulvey Roberts confirmed that Poe's "explorations of the psychology of fear opened out the Gothic to the subjective examination of mental break down" (155). That is to say, Poe is one of the first Gothic writers who dealt with the madness of humans, it is clearly appeared in his short stories *the black cat* and *the masque of the red death*.

## 1.6 Conclusion

At the end of this chapter we conclude that literature is a wild universe which mixes between the internal and the external beauty. It shows the hidden thoughts of the author's literary mind. With literature readers can see life from another side that makes them feel the beauty of the entire world as well as its obscured side that they may like it too.

One of the important literary genres that show a specific side of literature is Gothic. It is specified by its use of darkness and sadness, horror and terror, murder and death which shows the dark side of their principle characters toward the others. Edgar Allan Poe is one of the famous writers that present the gothic literature. Through his poems, novels and short stories, Poe gave a new image to the gothic literature by replacing the supernatural with giving the great focusing on the human psychology.



**Chapter two: The notion of colors in  
Edgar Allan Po's The Black Cat and  
The Mask Of The Red Death**

## 2.1 Introduction

Edgar Allan Poe, an American poet and writer, exerted a major influence on American literature with his own works but also with his literary criticism. Poe is considered as the greatest American author whose works made the American Literature gradually develop; his short stories are still considered as the best that America has produced. All of Edgar Allan Poe's tales show an incredible richness of symbolism.

This chapter deals with the notion of colors in Edgar Allan Poe's short stories, *The Black Cat* and *The Death of the Red Mask*. However, the two main colors that we have opted for to conduct this analysis are black and red. The American writer is known by his extreme use of symbolism. Yet, most of his works themes are based on obscurity, ambiguity, death, guilt and sadness. The two selected short stories are good illustration of what is described above.

## 2.2 Color symbolism in Gothic Literature

### 2.2.1 Definition of colors

Color is one of the fundamentals of the design buildings. It can be a powerful tool in the expert's hands affecting numerous aspects which are basic for the compelling visual perception. Moreover, it has a powerful impact on our mind. Within a few seconds, color can change the way we feel about an object as well as makes people react and even take certain actions. According to *The Merriam-Webster dictionary* one can define color as being a phenomenon of light or visual perception that permits one to differentiate otherwise identical objects. Simply put, color is a quality of an object which is caused due to the light being reflected or emitted by this object. However, color can be verified visually by measurement of its properties such as hue, saturation, chromaticity, and value. (Color Glossary for Design).

Color can, also, be a tool used to create an art or a part of the art itself. As it is mentioned in the *Cambridge Dictionary* a color is a substance that you add to something to make it have the appearance of a specific color. Shelley Esaak, a formal writer stated that:

Color is the element of art that is produced when light, striking an object, is reflected back to the eye: that's the objective definition. But in art design, color has a slew of attributes which are primarily subjective. Those include characteristics such as harmony—when two or more colors are brought together and produce a satisfying affective response; and

temperature—a blue is considered warm or cool depending on whether it leans towards purple or green and a red whether it leans towards yellow or blue.

In the first decades of the 20th century, the American painter, artist and teacher Albert Henry Munsell developed the first successful and widely accepted color system. Nowadays, his system is an internationally recognized standard used by the American National Standards Institute and the USDA, among others, and provided the theoretical basis for many modern-day color systems. Munsell System are usually seen in design and fashion industries, which must match the colors of paint, ink, and dyed fabric; archaeological description of soil color and environmental; forensic pathologists' identification of hair, skin, and eye color ; and food products normalized and graded by color. . (The Munsell Color System: A scientific compromise from the world of art).

### **2.2.2 Colors characterization**

We usually characterize colors through three main elements that help us gain more proper awareness of color meaning:

#### **2.1 Hue**

One should understand that the term hue does not mean color, its meaning is mostly confounded and mistaken. Color is a general term which people use to name all the hues, tints, and tones. However, a hue is exactly the thing we mean asking about its color. Basically, it is a family of twelve pure colors presented on the color wheel. A hue, a basic material that can be transformed into three different manners: tinting, shading and toning, it can be modified according to the application technique that one can opt for. (288. Color Glossary).

Tint = hue + white

Shade = hue + black

Toning= hue + white+ black

#### **2.2 Value**

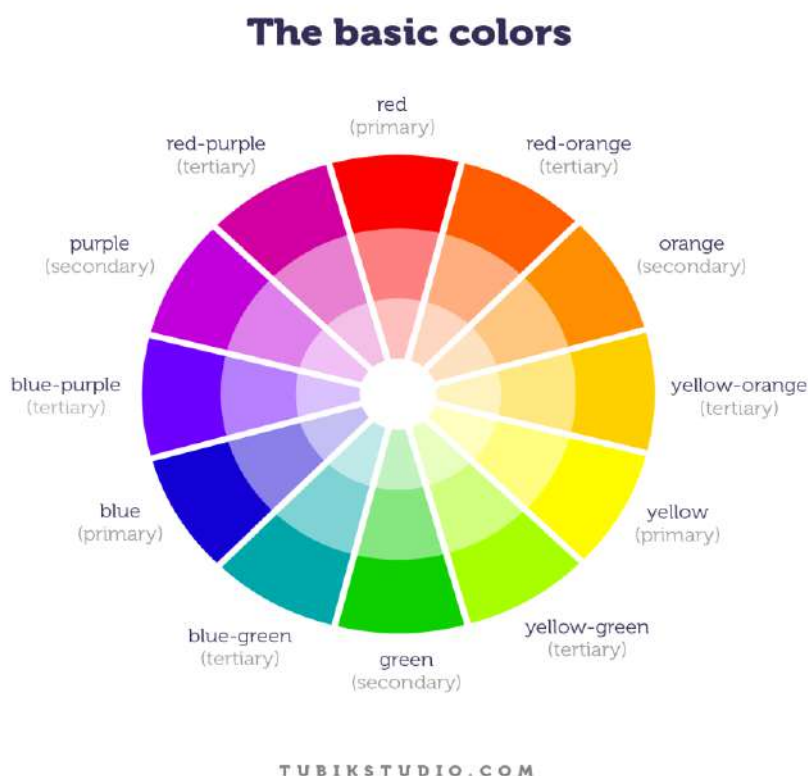
Value is a property telling how light or dark a color is. The characteristic is defined by the level of whiteness. The whiter has been added to a hue, the higher value it receives. That is to say, it depends on the clarity of the results of the mixed colors.

## 2.2 Chromaticity

One can see the purity of the hue by its chroma, or chromaticity. It is measured by the presences of the white color, the grey color or the black one in the mixer. The Twelve basic hues have the highest level of chromaticity since they don't contain any additional elements. Colors with high chroma usually look bold and vivid.

## 2.3 Saturation

Saturation has much in common with value and chroma, so sometimes they may be mistaken. Still, it's vital to understand the differences. Unlike two previous properties, saturation doesn't apply mixing hues with any other colors yet it is about how a color looks under different lighting conditions. Saturation describes how bold or pale a color is according to its look in the daylight and weak light. The property is also known as the intensity of a color.



**Figure 05: The color circle**

### **2.2.3 The main colors used in the Gothic Literature**

Colors used in the gothic literature are mainly dark and rich. In architecture, for instance, and since the Victorian era the main colors that were used are black, red, purple, gold, ochre, ruby, forest green and gold added complemented the heavy furniture and rich design. (free interior design and decorating education to the world). However, Gothic Literature is known for its use of Red and Black as the symbolism associated with these colors really draw the readers in to evoke an emotional response while creating an atmosphere. (Color Symbolism in Literature: What Do Colors Mean in Literature and Poetry)

#### **2.3.1 Black**

In Gothic literature, black is used to symbolize evil, death, power, formality, elegance, mystery, depression and fear. It also has negative connotations especially in poetry. When combined with red or orange, black can create a highly aggressive color scheme. Black is related to the hidden, the secretive and the unknown, and as a result it creates an air of mystery. It keeps things hidden from the world. In color psychology this color gives protection from external emotional stress; it hides the inner feelings that one can feel but has not the attention to show. Black creates a barrier between itself and the outside world, providing comfort while protecting its emotions and feelings, and hiding its vulnerabilities, insecurities and lack of self confidence. To add more, black is the absorption of all color and the absence of light. That means that the color black is the opposite of the white one because it covers and hides the light yet the white color uncovers it. Black can also imply submission to another, similar to the priest wearing black robes in submission to God.

However, black is not always a sign of darkness it may have some positive traits. "Black is the end, but the end always implies a new beginning. When the light appears, black becomes white, the color of new beginnings".

That is to say, black symbolizes comfort, protection, strength, power, confidence and the control of the self. It can be, also, seen as a color of sophistication, it is a culture bound. For example, affluent and success orientated women often choose black as it can give an impression of elegance, sophistication and confidence.



Addams Family... Morticia and Wednesday....it is the best color in the world!

**Figure 06: Morticia and Wednesday from the “Addams family”**

### 2.3.2 Red

In Gothic literature, red often means aggression, passion and intensity it symbolize the blood. According to a study published in 2004 by psychology majors in Alabama, red is a very dominant color that can have an exciting and stimulating effect. Gothic writers use it for drawing both positive and negative emotions; it depends on the given circumstances. These include, typically, passion and warmth and aggression or intensity. However, red is also the color of fire and blood and can symbolize energy, war, danger, strength, determination, passion, as well as love. Red is known to trigger and enhance appetite and metabolism, raise the rate of respiration and also increase blood pressure. It has high visibility and is used to symbolize danger. Color Symbolism in Literature: (What Do Colors Mean in Literature and Poetry?)

Red has been used in gothic novels due to its dangerous connotation such as *Jane Eyre* for dramatic effect. When Jane is locked in the red room, she faints out of fear of a ghost or in Edgar Allan Poe's *The Death of the Red Mask*. (Colors in literature)



**Figure 07: Edgar Allan Poe's "The mask of the red Death"**



### 2.3.3 Purple

Purple is associated with royalty. It symbolizes power, nobility, luxury, and ambition; it is the reason why gothic writers often use it in their writings. It conveys wealth and extravagance. Purple is associated with wisdom, dignity, independence, creativity, mystery, and magic. The later combines the stability of blue and the energy of red. However, Light purple evokes romantic and nostalgic feelings. On the other hand, dark purple evokes gloom and sad feelings. It can cause frustration. . (Color wheel pro). According to the website colormatters:

“Purple is the color of mourning or death in many cultures (U.K., Italy, Thailand, Brazil)”



**Figure 08: example of the purple color in a gothic atmosphere**



### 2.3.4 Silver

Like gold, silver is a precious metal often symbolizes riches and wealth. It is believed to be a mirror to the soul, helping us to see ourselves as others see us. As a gemstone silver represents hope, unconditional love, meditation, mystic visions, tenderness, kindness, sensitivities, and psychic abilities.(Bourncreative)

Silver affects the mind and body, it is believed to draw negative energy out of the body and replace it with positive energy. In gothic literature, silver is mostly seen in the architecture and design of their houses also in their accessories as well as the clothing's.



**Figure 09: Water colors silver or grey for sky The Murders in the Rue Morgue.**

### 2.3.5 Blue

According to a color study conducted in 2004, it was found that the color Blue elicited a high number of positive emotional responses, including feelings of relaxation and calmness,

happiness, and comfort, peace, and hope, with a low number of negative response, including sadness and depression. The Color Theory examines Blue and believes that the most associate emotion it connects with is depth and stability. "It symbolizes trust, loyalty, wisdom, confidence, intelligence, faith, truth and heaven. ...Dark Blue represents knowledge, power, integrity, and seriousness." In the contrarily, Blue evoked negative emotions because of its association with the night and dark skies, thus making some people feel depressed.( Color symbolism in american-gothic literature) .



**Figure 10: The Castle of Otranto: The creepy tale that launched gothic fiction. Concrete illustration of the blue color in gothic fiction.**

## **2.3 Edgar Allan Poe and the black color in the *Black Cat***

### **2.3.1 Summary**

At first, the narrator explains how from his childhood he was noted for his tenderness and humanity, as well as his ultimate love for animals. When he married, he and his wife acquired a number of pets, including a black cat, named Pluto which was his favorite.” *Pluto-*

*this was the cat's name-was my favorite pet and playmate. I alone fed him, and he attended me wherever I went about the house. It was even with difficulty that I could prevent him from following me through the streets"* (Poe,A.1843). But unfortunately as the years wore on, the narrator became more irritable and prone to snap. One night the narrator came home, intoxicated with alcohol, he felt the black cat was avoiding him for some reasons and so chased him and picked up the animal. The animal bit him slightly on the hand, and the narrator possessed by a sudden rage, under the anger influence, took a pen-knife from his pocket and enters one of the cat's eyes. Although the cat seems to recover from this, the narrator finds himself growing more irritated and out of anger and sorrow at his lost friend, he takes, eventually, the poor cat out into the garden and hangs it from a tree.

***One morning, in cold blood, I slipped a noose about its neck and hung it to the limb of a tree;—hung it with the tears streaming from my eyes, and with the bitterest remorse at my heart (Poe, A.1843).***

Later that night, the narrator wakes to find his house on fire, and he, his wife, and his servant, barely escape alive. All of the narrator's wealth is lost in the flames. After that a huge number of persons has gathered around the smouldering remains of the house. The narrator finds the strange figure of a gigantic hanging cat on one of the walls, when setting foot in the ruins, the dead cat has become embedded in the plaster. The narrator thought that one member of the crowd has done this in order to blame him for his murder. (A Summary and Analysis of Edgar Allan Poe's 'The Black Cat')

A short while after this a new cat appears. The narrator is befriended by a black cat he finds in a local tavern, a cat that has shown up seemingly out of nowhere, and resembles Pluto in every respect, except that this cat has some white among its black fur. The cat takes a shine to the narrator, so he and his wife take it in as their pet.

Eventually, in time the narrator comes to loathe this cat, too, and once, when he nearly trips over the pet while walking downstairs into the cellar, he picks up an axe and aims a blow at the animal's head. His wife intervenes and stops him but, in a fit of rage, he buries the axe in his wife's head, killing her instantly. He conceals the body, but when the police call round to look into his wife's disappearance, a sound from the place where the narrator has concealed the body exposes the hidden corpse. When the body is revealed, the black cat is there and it was the cat that had made noise that gave away the location of the corpse. The narrator had

walled up the animal when he had hidden his wife's body. The police reveal what the man has done and his punishment is to be hung. (A Summary and Analysis of Edgar Allan Poe's 'The Black Cat').

### **2.3.2 Analyzing the color Black and the Symbol "Black Cat" in the short story**

#### **3.2.1 The Black color in the story**

The color black is the archetypal symbol associated with the black cat. Obviously, one can know that black cat one is symbolic of evil because of its color, black. This color is associated with the well known superstition that black is symbolic of evil, death, murder, depression and darkness. As it is mentioned in the short story when the narrator remembers how his wife used to talk about the superstition that black cats are all witches in disguise. (Black cat symbolism).

#### **3.2.2 The Symbol "Black Cat" in the story**

In Poe's "The Black Cat," symbolism is used to show the narrator's capacity for violence, madness, and guilt. The story serves as a reminder for all of us; the capacity for violence and horror lies within each of us, no matter how docile and humane our disposition might appear. For instance, In this story, the narrator portrays a man who is fond of animals, had a tender heart, and is happily married. Within several years of his marriage, his general temperament and character make a radical. (Black cat symbolism).

#### **2.1.2 The title**

In this story, the most important of symbolic reference is the title itself, "The Black Cat" since onyx cats have long connoted bad luck and misfortune.

The title prepares the reader to be on the lookout for the black cat, it shows to what extent the cat is important to the story. This might sound obvious, but what if the story was called "The Murder," or "An Unhappy Man," or "Why I did so "?, or "Did I Killed my Wife?" The first would focus attention on the narrator himself, the second on the idea of "home,» the third on the issue of the narrator's unstable mind and the fourth on the murder of his wife. All these are important aspects of the story and all are connected to the cat. But, the title of this short story "the black cat "would still take center stage of this tale.

The title only references one black cat. However, none can know whether if the story contains only one cat or more or whether Pluto did really die. As a result Pluto survives somehow the hanging and escapes the plaster cast according to the last scenario. Then, either on purpose or by coincidence, the cat meets the man at the place where he's drinking.

### **2.2.2 The two main characters: The cats**

The two black cats have a specific impact on reader's mind. Poe gave characteristics as well as similar ones that really disturbs the narrator itself.

#### **2.2.1 The first cat "Pluto"**

It seems obvious that the first cat's name is Pluto. An uncommon name to hold no meaning or symbolism at all. Edgar Poe rarely named characters in his stories unless it might have been to make the tales universal. However, when he did give them names this was of great importance. "Like many other writers, Poe was keenly aware of significant underlying implications in names, so he sometimes used place names that extend beyond face value". In Greek Mythology Pluto is a euphemism for Hades who was the god of the dead and the underworld. The paths to hell and the dominion of the dead are repeated many times in the entire story.

Also, When Pluto becomes a victim of the violence; he is deprived of one of his eyes by his drunken angry owner. Eyes are a commonly used symbol in Poe's novels, stories or poems.

The narrator did not blind Pluto only for punishing him. one can say that he did it in the purpose simply because her was conscious about his deterioration, he does not want his beloved pet, Pluto to find it as well. he was convicted that Pluto does understand while seeing him. So he preferred to blind him rather than to fall in Pluto's eyes. At the same time one might interpret the mutilation of Pluto as a solution for the narrator to get rid of a mirror in the cat's eye that shows him all the disappointment. In his once beloved and close friend he sees the confusion for the change and violence that the cat experiences. However, the deed had not such an effect as he had wished for and by blinding Pluto he sets in motion the cause and effect that leads him to his own death, his self-destruction. Karma is the law of cause and effect; something that the narrator is reluctant to admit as being the reason for his circumstances: "I am above the weakness of seeking to establish a sequence of cause and effect, between the disaster and the atrocity". Yet there seems to be a fear of getting in return



what he had given to others, and as it happens Pluto's demise evidently becomes the narrator's fate. Adding to the above, Pluto's one-eyed appearance refers to another one-eyed person Odin. In Norse mythology he, also called the terrible one, was once a god of the dead, the ones who died in battle reached Valhalla over which Odin was the leader. Odin was a very wise god. He could see all that took place on earth and in heaven, with the help of his two ravens. However, Odin wanted to gain the wisdom of the depths so he sacrificed one of his eyes to the well of wisdom which was guarded by the giant Mimir. Through his sacrifice he became the god of foresight. Yet, Odin's quest for wisdom did not end there. He wanted also to gain the wisdom of the occult, which only was possessed by those who were dead. To win that knowledge, Odin hanged himself with an ash tree which surrounded the whole world; Yggdrasill, speared his side and hanged for nine days before he was resurrected with the knowledge in his possession

The similarities between Pluto and Odin's fate are the loss of one eye, the hanging and Resurrection. The two characters can be considered that they are from fantasy, for that reason Pluto can be interpreted as have been brought back from the dead. Moreover, Pluto's double has a white mark on his chest which grows with time into the shape of a gallows in addition, the only thing which remains of the narrator's house after the fire is an imprint of a gallows. Pluto's fate as well as the narrator's one have been made by these recurrent images of the gallows. In the story, however, it seems that the narrator is possessed by the supernatural powers which gradually drove him insane. While hanging Pluto in the tree to kill it the narrator cannot escape from his deeds as there are constant reminders which appear to torture him with guilt.

Like Odin, Pluto might have gained inner sight and the ability to read the narrator's mind by the forced sacrifice of his eye, at least in the mind of the narrator. The narrator knew that he was doing that sin for no specific reason. Even on that brutal moment he felt pity for Pluto as well as for himself because he understood from his instinct that he was unable to repent for what he had done

### **2.2.2 Pluto as a child**

The cat might also be a symbol of a child. Furthermore, one can have notice that the man and his wife do not have children. This story is concerned with the idea of home and family, and children, like animals, are at the mercy of the adults in charge of them. Poe himself did not have children, and children seem mostly absent from his writings. In paragraph 31, the narrator even likens the second black cat's cry to "the sobbing of a child".

But may God shield and deliver me from the fangs of the Arch-Fiend! No sooner had the reverberation of my blows sunk into silence, than I was answered by a voice from within the tomb!—by a cry, at first muffled and broken, like the sobbing of a child, and then quickly swelling into one long, loud, and continuous scream, utterly anomalous and inhuman—a howl—a wailing shriek, half of horror and half of triumph, such as might have arisen only out of hell, conjointly from the throats of the damned in their agony and of the demons that exult in the damnation (Poe 1843).

### 2.2.3 The second cat

One can define the second black as being a kind of supernatural version of Pluto. How, can we explain the fact that the second black cat misses an eye, if he isn't Pluto undead? There is a possibility that Pluto never died. But, Poe told us that Pluto was not only hanged, he was hanging all day and night, and then embedded in the plaster wall thereafter. It is impossible that the cat survived after all this torture.

If we raise the question about the missing eye we come with the result that in Poe's time there were probably plenty of stray cats with missing eyes. One can have a second hypothesis with is that the second cat could have been a victim of another owner or it may have lost it in fighting with another animal, everything is allowed in the supernatural. but if we focus on heaven it distracts us from the narrator's abuse of the creature. However, the man's own account the cat seems to work against a supernatural possibility. This is the man's description of the cat voice coming from inside the tomb:[It was] :

[It was] at first muffled and broken, like the sobbing of a child, and then quickly swelling into one long, loud, and continuous scream, half of horror and half of triumph, such as might have arisen only out of hell...If the cat was such a cunning monster, why would he 1) wait so long before crying out, and 2) cry like a baby when he did cry? If you were a poor animal, on the verge of release from being buried alive, wouldn't you be both horrified and triumphant? This terrible moment is effective in making us think of the cat as an innocent victim. ()

## **2.4 Edgar Allan Poe and the red color in *The Mask of the Red Death***

### **2.4.1 Summary**

The main character in the short story, Prince Prospero is hiding from the plague in an abbey, along with a group of other nobles. Despite the plague being quite horrific and consisting of symptoms as sweating blood and dying within 30 minutes, the nobles think they are safe in the abbey. In fact, they are so relaxed about their situation that Prospero hosts a big masquerade ball. The decor is the only downside of the abbey, which is quite luxurious. However, there are seven colored rooms that are color-coded and arranged east to west. Decorated in black and scarlet, the last of these rooms is a creepiest one. Because of its huge clock, mostly all guests are scared and terrified for it whenever it chimes on the hour.

However, the clock does not disrupt the masquerade that the prince is preparing his guests for until it strikes midnight. A mysterious figure, however, appeared. The most terrifying thing is that the doors to the abbey are welded shut to keep all the plague-infested people out. The strange figure is dressed in a bloody robe and hiding its figure with a mask look like someone who has died from the Red Death. Finally, Prospero chases the figure through the abbey until he corners the figure in the creepy room, which is the room farthest to the west. When the stranger looks at Prospero, Prospero drops dead. The other noblemen corner the stranger and unmask him. Once he is unmasked, they realize that he does not possess a body. Everyone in the abbey catches the Red Death and dies. (The Masque of the Red Death by Edgar Allan Poe: Summary, Symbolism & Analysis n.d).

### **2.4.2 The Red color in the story**

The most obvious color symbolism in "The Masque of the Red Death" is in its title. Death and blood are the ultimate symbols of the color red. The horrible description of the Red Death gives the color a ghastly and furious connotation, especially in light of the red window panes contained in the death room at the far western end of the imperial suite. (A guide to symbolism n.d). The red color represents the terror, horror and the ending of life in Edgar's unhappy life.

### **2.4.3 The Symbol "Red Death" in the story**

The red death symbolizes the inevitability of death. Although there is no specific disease with the exact symptoms described in the story, yet critics stated that the disease's description has elements of tuberculosis, many of those close to Poe were killed by this



illness. It is not all, it also symbolize the forth memories of the Black Death which depopulated much of Europe during the Middle Ages. . (A guide to symbolism n .d).

From this discretion one can conclude that this story is related to Poe's real life in which he wanted to express his high level of anger and injustice. He wanted to express how life can take once life in a brief moment in which no one can predict it or expect it and this is linked with the appearance of the strange figure that symbolizes death. How can one explain the fact the T all the seven doors were closed?. In fact, this is done in purpose to show that death is everywhere, very close to us yet we cannot see it.

Red death also represents blood and blood mainly represents death in gothic literature. However, Poe symbolizes the deadly disease that killed most of his relatives including his parents with the ugly figure that killed all guests. The hidden message from this illustration is that non can escape his destiny. Although the prince Prospero were a powerful man, yet he could not take away the red mask.

## 2.5 Conclusion

*"The Black Cat"* a story full of symbolism which tell the story of disturbed man who suffered from a radical mental change that leded his to hater and anger, he ended up killing his wife as well as his favorites pet; Pluto. *"The Death of the Red Mask"* also tells a strange story of a masked man who finished killing all characters. Edgar Allan Poe used black to symbolize the instable mind of his protagonist as well as death, murder and guilt.

The title *"Black Cat"* is a symbol itself. In addition to the title, we have the two main characters Pluto and the second cat. They both symbolize the dark side of the narrator's mind while enjoying killing his favorite cat. Yet, he feels guilty and ashamed for his committed sin.

On the other hand, *"The red Death"* is a symbol that refers to the ultimate death. Poe's relatives died one after the other after that the disease has taken them souls. However, the color red in this story is a symbol of death and blood. Edgar Allan Poe made use of such symbols in both stories to transmit his message.

# **General conclusion**

## General conclusion

In this work we have attempted to examine and explain the Gothic Literature in Edgar Allan Poe's short stories "*The Black Cat*" and "*The Mask Of The Red Death*"; in which the author specialized in this literary genre. It demonstrated that Edgar Allan Poe's life experiences played a major role in valuating his writings. From his biography, one can note that literary art mirrors the artist's life. Therefore, life experience influences the works of many artists as evidenced through Allan Poe.

*The Black Cat* is one of Poe's masterpieces in which much madness and mind troubles are gathering; that is why it reflects the psychology of Edgar Allan Poe (Skipp 1992).

In our work we have attempted to give an overall review of the Gothic literature and the major colors used by its writers. However, a symbol is usually defined as an object, character or an action that suggests meanings, notions or emotions beyond what is expected at first time from its meaning or function (Huch& Brown 1995).

The goal we have set for this work is to make learners and student of literature aware of the meanings of symbolism, and then paving the way for the interpretations of the symbols in any literary text, in the stories by Edgar Allan Poe who has owned a simple writing but effective style, easy to be understood but not easy to be interpreted (Skipp 1992).

The symbol, Black Cat, is the most important feature in Poe's short story as well as red death in the author selects short story. They reveal a special meaning in the work. This device implies several interpretations by the reader. In addition, the present study has focused not only on the symbolism, but also provided a general survey of the story such as the summary and presenting the major characters in the second story applying the psychoanalysis to investigate the personality of Allan Poe with the use of the symbols.

Edgar Allan Poe suffered in his real life from psychological troubles, he was depended on alcohol, he considered it as a treatment to calm down his pain. thus, the secret behind writing black cat is to find some answers. He wanted to feel what really happened to him, was it all the alcohol substance he took, or was it the cat's spirit and the second cat was actually a ghost. He presented the same elements of fear with the correspondence of the use of red and black colors in the mask of the red death to illustrate his pain behind the loss of his relatives.

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