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## Gothic Style In The Poe's The Fall Of The House Of Usher

Gothicism is defined as a style in fictional literature characterized by gloomy settings, violent or grotesque action, and a mood of decay, degeneration, and decadence. This style of writing can be found in numerous different pieces of literature. An example of literature that uses this is Edgar Allen Poe's "The Fall of the House of Usher". In Poe's "The Fall of the House of Usher", he tells a mysterious tale about the unknown narrator and his friend Roderick Usher. Roderick's mental health begins to deteriorate, and the unknown narrator travels up to the Usher mansion to meet with Roderick. The use of gothicism is evident throughout this piece due to the setting, language, and supernatural themes.

To start, it is important to establish the setting. This story takes place at the Usher mansion in the middle of nowhere. When the unknown narrator begins to approach the mansion, they describe their surroundings in an unsettling way. As the narrator observes the mansion in front of them, they say, "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..."(Poe 299). This creates an eerie setting for the reader, and sets the tone of what the rest of the story will feel like. After this, the narrator hops off their horse and starts to make their way into the disheveled mansion. Once inside, the narrator discovers the inside is just as spooky as the outside. Taking in the sight of the rooms around them, the narrator describes:

The windows were long, narrow, and pointed, and at so vast a distance from the black oaken floor as to be altogether inaccessible from within. Feeble gleams of encrimsoned light made their way through the trellised(Sic) panes... Dark draperies hung upon the walls. The general furniture was profuse, comfortless, antique, and tattered. (Poe 301-302)

The deeper the narrator travels into this structure, the more mysterious and eerie everything that dwells inside of it becomes. More evidence of this can be found in the article, "Disfiguration in 'The Fall of the House of Usher'; or, Poe's Mad Lines". In this article, it explains, "The general "gloom" and "melancholy" (397) that pervades the atmosphere of the house also pervades the spirit of its inhabitants"(Pahl). It is evident that the unsettling surroundings of the Usher mansion creates a gloomy setting that sets the tone for the story. The dark details the narrator sees outside and inside this mansion brings the essence of gothicism to life.

In the same way, the language Edgar Allen Poe uses in this story plays an important role in establishing gothicism. As stated, the general feeling the reader gets while reading "The Fall of the House of Usher", is gloominess. The language Poe uses from beginning to end further demonstrates the gothic traits. The article, "Edgar Allen Poe's Gothic Aesthetics of Things: Rereading "The Fall of the House of Usher"" reports this same view:

The existing interpretations concerning the two key questions in Poe's 'The Fall of the House of Usher,' that is, the causes of the 'nervous agitation' of Roderick Usher and the fall of the House... which are variously described as, among others, being 'dark,' 'gloom(y),' 'desolate,' and 'hideous'. (Weisheng)

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There are numerous instances when the narrator uses this type of language. To illustrate, there is a moment when the narrator begins to describe his feelings towards the Usher mansion after seeing it for the first time. The narrator dejectedly states, "...With an utter depression of the soul which I can compare to no earthly sensation... —the bitter lapse into everyday life—the hideous dropping of the veil. There was an iciness, a sinking, a sickening of the heart... (Poe 299). This proves how speech is used to describe how dark and "unearthly" the atmosphere feels, which fits into the underlying gothicism of the piece. Adding on, there is evidence of this type of language later on in the story as well. This gloomy speech can be seen in the last verse in the poetic song, "The Haunted Palace":

...Vast forms that move fantastically

To a discordant melody;

While, like a rapid ghastly river,

Through the pale door,

A hideous throng rush out forever,

And laugh—but smile no more. (Poe 307)

Within this poetic verse, it flows with the dark attitude to let the reader feel of the nature of the situation. In each of the previous quotes given, there is the same type of gloomy speech used that is found throughout the entire story. Therefore, the evidence of gothicism is clear and concise due to the language Edgar Allen Poe and the unknown narrator use.

Furthermore, the most prominent factor that contributes to the evidence of gothicism in "The Fall of the House of Usher" are the supernatural themes. The supernatural can be seen in a plethora of ways in this piece of literature. In an article pertaining to gothic themes in literature we read, "Although Gothic novelists often included supernatural incidents in their works, they also pursued other concerns, particularly those related to eighteenth-century morals and manners. Such concerns precluded the single-minded focus and inventiveness of their successors in portraying weird and ghostly phenomena"(Mabbott). For this story, there are several examples of these phenomenons. Firstly, this can be seen when the unknown narrator meets Roderick in the mansion. The narrator notices Roderick is in a bad state of mind, and it worsens once he talks. According to the narrator, "He was enchained by certain superstitious impressions... in regard to an influence whose supposititious(Sic) force was conveyed in terms too shadowy here to be restated—an influence which some peculiarities in the mere form and substance of his family mansion... obtained over his spirit"(Poe 303). This scene describes how there is some sort of influence taking over Roderick to prevent him from moving forward. The narrator insinuates this influence has something to do with his departed family. Later, the narrator finds out about deceased family member lady Madeline and places her in the donjon with Roderick. As they lay down to sleep, the narrator cannot seem to rest due to an unshakable feeling. The narrator says, "...I know not why, except that an indistinctive spirit prompted me—to certain low and indefinite sounds which came, through the pauses of the storm..."(Poe 309-310). In the previous quote, the narrator senses something has come over Roderick, and now it has come over him as well. This heightens the reader's awareness of the supernatural in this gloomy story. However, the most blatant and important example of the

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supernatural comes towards the end of this story. Roderick starts to speak to the unknown narrator about how lady Madeline is alive, though the narrator cannot comprehend what he is saying. However, to his dismay, the narrator speaks: ...It was the work of the rushing gust—but then without those doors there did stand the lofty and enshrouded(Sic) lady Madeline of Usher. There was blood upon her white robes, and the evidence of some bitter struggle upon every portion of her emaciated frame. For a moment she remained trembling and reeling to and fro upon the threshold—then, with a low moaning cry, fell heavily inward upon the person of her brother, and in her violent and now final death-agonies, bore him to the floor a corpse, and a victim to the terrors he had anticipated. (Poe 313)

This scene proves that all of the narrators fears and assumptions about the mansion, and all the strange things that were happening were true. These supernatural phenomena coincide with the gothic tone that this piece of literature illustrates.

In summary, gothic is evident throughout “The Fall of the House of Usher”, by Edgar Allan Poe due to the setting, language, and supernatural themes. Throughout the entirety of this piece of literature, all three of these factors were present. The dark and descriptive settings set the tone for the story and what was to come. Also, the language Poe used in the story helped unveil more feelings of gothic as the story went on. Lastly, the evidence of multiple experiences with the supernatural validate the gothic tone of the story as well. All in all, the story “The Fall of the House of Usher”, by Edgar Allan Poe is a great example of well written gothic literature.

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