

UNIT 3

EDGAR ALLAN POE (1809-1849)

LIGEIA & THE CASK OF AMONTILLADO

I. INTRODUCTION: BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES

Boston, 1809, David Poe disappears (1810), Elizabeth dies 1811

John Allan - <--> Frances + (adoption)

England 1815 (5 years) permanent memories

Jane Craig Stanard (first love) dies 1824 --> indelible mark

Elmira Royster (also fiancée) ---> Mrs. Elmira Shelton (1875)

Fragile appearance, big gray eyes & melodious voice + self-confident,

southern gentleman + superior feeling --> Richmond aristocracy

Poems *Tamerlane and Other Poems, By a Bostonian*, 1827

1830, West Point + disputes with John Allan (economy) --> leaves West Point

& ends up relationship --> 1834, John Allan dies + no money for him 1833,

Folio Club award with "MS Found in a Bottle" (\$50) --> articles, literary

reviews & short-story writer (*Southern Literary Messenger...*)

Great desire = own a magazine

1835, marries Virginia Clemm (13) & lives with aunt Maria Clemm

Virginia = heroine ("Ligeia", "Morella", "Eleonora" y "Berenice"): black hair, pallid & round face & peculiar accent (lisp)

1838, "The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym" & "Ligeia"

1839, *Burton's Gentleman's Magazine* --> critiques & "The Fall of the House of Usher" & "William Wilson" --> *Tales of the Grotesque and Arabesque*

The Stylus --> "The Masque of the Red Death" & "The Pit and the Pendulum" (1842) & "The Gold Bug" (1843)

Moves New York from Philadelphia --> "The Purloined Letter" (*Godey's Lady's Magazine*) --> country cottage (Maria + Edgar & Virginia)

Poem "The Raven" --> widens popularity --> *The Philosophy of Composition*

1847, Virginia dies --> symptoms of brain injury --> other women (Fanny

Osgood, Mrs. Shew, Jane Ermina Locke, Mrs. Lewis, and Sarah Helen

Whitman & Annie Richmond (objects of adoration)

1848, "Landor's Cottage", "Mellonta Tauta", "Von Kempelen and His Discovery" & "Hop-Frog", but peak with "Eureka"

Lecture "The Poetic Principle" --> from fame to indifference

Fiancée Elmira Shelton --> 1849 Poe dies (40) Baltimore (alcohol?)

Self-destruction = death wish (meet deceased & dead remembrances)

Death of woman lover ("Ligeia", "Eleonora", "The Fall of the House of Usher", "The Oblong Box") --> reencounter with real deceased women

Woman as idealized figure (beauty) <--> fatal woman (romantic destruction)

Life after death: hypnotism ("The Facts of the Case of Mr. Valdemar",

"Mesmeric Revelations"), metempsychosis ("Ligeia"), doubles ("Eleonora"),

impossibility of dying ("The Fall of the House of Usher") & premature burial

("The Premature Burial") ==> opposition to death & knowledge

II. DESIGN OF POE'S TALE.

XIX, German (theory) & British (experience) develop short-story

Poe --> adapt to magazine (future demand)

"Poetic feeling" --> truth through literature

Poetry (beauty -rhythm) <--> Short-story (truth through effect -tone)
 Schlegel's *Einheit des Interesse* (also Coleridge) = unity --> not novel, but
 short-story (brief reading) ---> Poe's "unity of effect"
 Absolute unity = God --> Poe's universe = great poem
 Artist try to reach coherence & unity ---> truth
 Poe's "plot" = construction model <--> "story" = today's plot (action)
 1st step = choosing effect (originality & vividness)
 Originality = not intuition, but searched & found (negation)
 Vividness (efficacy of effect) <== (all elements in short-story)
 End of short-story --> effect --> speech (norms & conventions) --> topic,
 incidents, ambiance, secondary effects ==> unity of effect
 Meanings & 2nd interpretations --> not allegorical (no unity of effect & less
 verisimilitude, secondary interpretations --> dissipates reading)

III. POE'S *HORROR TALE*

1812, Rush, *Medical Inquiries and Observations upon the Diseases of the Mind* --> revolution of ideas about insanity & its origins --> heal through sudden impressions of fear, horror & ridicule --> reader to conquer fear
 Poe's formula --> 3 «efs»- *freezing, flight* or *fight* = 3 reactions
 To overcome fear = nature, education & reasoning (readings)
 Basic fears = death, dissolution, thunder, darkness, supernatural powers, public speech, water, height, riding, animals & insanity
 Please great audience + intellectual elite
 Gothic novel (locus) + German influences --> nightmare formula =

(1) reader's isolation (1st person omniscient narrator (= victim) + physical limits + 2 tenses + 'decomposition' characters) ==> unconscious identification ==> (2) defenseless reader ==> (3) double victimization of reader (conscious & unconscious suffering with protagonist-victim-narrator?) ==> (4) 'premature burial' = lack of control over narrated action --> temporal psychosis (after nightmare) --> no resolution = unity of effect

Poe = German tradition --> *novelle* (marvelous, suggesting, unreal, allusive) + British (macabre horror, eerie imagery of castles, underground passages, secret corridors & ghosts)

Reader's response --> order of elements in the whole

Poe's characters = flat, static, blurred & sketchy --> atmosphere (not all)

Todorov --> author of extreme, excessive, superlative --> comparisons, superlatives, hyperbole & antithesis --> exaggerated & old-fashion

Suggestion without naming --> structure = announcement + presentation of action plan + rhythm in crescendo + end (climax) + reveal mystery

Style = rhythm & musicality + use of adjective + 'sintagmas no progresivos' (ternary structures) + interrogative sentences + enumeration of lexical & phonetic elements, events & chronological moments, brief style & thematic structures + often abstract vocabulary + abundance of punctuation signs (dashes, question & exclamation marks, capital letters & italics + lexical borrowings (Gallicisms, Latinisms & Italianisms...))

Style = clarity + brevity + intensity (traditional) & intelligibility + conciseness --> enrich & intensify effect (unexpected end & extreme limits)

Poe = great physiologist of fear (descriptions + scary emotions + loneliness + mental & physical dissolution + death) ==> maximum effect

Lovecraft = fond of Poe --> fear = most intense human emotion (unknown)

IV. *LIGEIA* (1838)

Romanticism & Gothic novel --> narrator's mind = main character

Ligeia & Rowena = flat, images painted with quick brush strokes

Sounds, colors & movements with life in themselves

Vocabulary & syntax repetitive --> accurate & dramatic

Poetic quality --> rhythm & musicality

Mysterious atmosphere --> intermediate world reality/supernatural

First inflection point = Ligeia is alive

Narrator lost in eternal present (midnight) --> confound "real"/"unreal"

Repeats vocabulary & structures --> sense of ambiguity

Opposition life/death + nouns fill tale with content + connectors & verbs

confer rhythm/rhyme + adjectives give detail

Cyclic rhythm from past ---> cycle of life & death --> insecurity & fear

Intensity increases --> quicker rhythm = more doubtful/agitated the narrator

Final climax (day) --> narrator introduces us in his world of confusion/doubt --

> very little doubt left, still narrator shrieks & doubts

Both climaxes = intermediate state everyday world/supernatural world ==>

vacillation = uncertainty + doubt + confusion + psychological fear

Portrait of woman's personality = object of desire + cultural/spiritual --> pale

face + big/melancholy eyes & weak step + romantic features <--> firmness &

broad culture --> near diabolic (for XIX century man)

German philosophy + Rhine --> German Romanticism

Transmutation Ligeia in Rowena = opium-confounded vision of hero -->

"spiritual necrophylia" = moral degradation

Woman = center/axis of universe

Second level interpretations not replace first one (never allegorical)

Ligeia = German idealism <--> Rowena = English Romanticism

Ligeia = narrator's own nightmare & product of own psyche --> desire for sustaining life as consciousness

Nightmarish world from which we cannot escape for the end lacks a certain resolution (not fantastic but uncanny) ==> terror + circular world

V. THE CASK OF AMONTILLADO (1846)

Godey's Magazine and Lady's Book, November 1846

Narrator-protagonist in 1st person (also "hero") --> theoretical & rational argumentation over Montresor's criminal strategy (Luchesi)

Grotesque feeling of Fortunato's defenselessness (sound of bells)

Montresor's dress = "Masque of the Red Death"

Tension gradually increases (somber fate) + Gothic ambiance

Fortunato's cough --> suspense + 'inverse psychology' (envy) --> irony

Bells + Medoc + subsequent dialogue --> predicts dénouement

Montresor's motto + bells --> deep vaults (catacombs --> confessor?)

--> obscurity & horror in own reader's soul --> prepare dénouement

Fortunato defenseless --> to his fatality --> Montresor cruel expression = questioning himself? --> Climax = "*For the love of God!*" (double, soul)

Rhythm = plays on words, dialogue & ironic & fatalistic anticipations Ternary structures & word repetitions --> rhythm of narration

Repetitions of short structures accelerate rhythm + Alliterative sounds Lexical borrowings --> space & time of story + adjectives --> verticality & descent + adjectival binary combinations

Horror tale --> unity of effect (no supernatural) --> journalistic report (*reality show*) --> spectacularly dramatic effects --> horror

Criminal remains legally unpunished (no scruple?!) --> guilt & remorse Love-hate relationship --> laughter/sadness + serenity/anxiety + silence/screams + life/death --> human contradiction --> madness

Important = how we reach the intended effect (not what we say) --> best structured for its objectives (effect) --> everything works towards goal
1st & 2nd interpretations subtly combine through carnival imagery