

# #01

# “THE FALL OF THE HOUSE OF USHER”: POE’S PERVERTED PERSPECTIVE ON THE “MAIMED KING”

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**Abstract** || The themes of medieval literature had a profound effect on the works that would follow in later generations regardless of the writer's recognition of this influence, and one can see the way Poe leaves traces of the popular medieval motif of the "Maimed King" in his short story, "The Fall of the House of Usher". This thematic device, which predates the medieval period, gained prominence in the tales of King Arthur and the Grail Quest. Although there is no clear indication that Poe intentionally set out to create a gothic rendition of this traditional theme, that does not discount the possibility of "Usher" having been conditioned in some respect by this medieval notion. Through implementing a close reading of the story and comparing it to a framework of this conception of the "Maimed King", this paper points out a number of striking similarities between the two, as well as demonstrates the far-reaching influence of medievalism in one of nineteenth-century America's preeminent fiction writers, Edgar Allan Poe.

**Keywords** || Poe | "The Fall of the House of Usher" | "Maimed King" | XIX century | Medievalism.

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The medieval theme of the “Maimed King” employs a ruler who is suffering from either a wound or malady that has rendered him impotent and unable to provide order and peace to his kingdom. His land is changed from a place of harmony and prosperity to a wasteland suggesting a symbiotic relationship between the king and his kingdom –the well being of one will directly affect the well being of the other –. Healing is only brought to the land through the healing of its king, whereupon order is restored throughout the kingdom.

In Edgar Allan Poe’s short story, “The Fall of the House of Usher,” we are presented with Roderick Usher, the last heir to the Usher household. Roderick Usher embodies many aspects of the Maimed King if in a twisted approach. There is potentially a self-inflicted malady with the insinuation of an incestuous relationship with Madeline (be it in thought or deed), and the effects of this possible union of brother and sister can easily be seen throughout the House of Usher – both the family and the house itself –. Unlike the Maimed King of medieval literature, however, the only healing for Roderick, Madeline, and the entire house of Usher is found in their eventual demise. This lends itself to the more demented and perverted image of the motif of the Maimed King.

In order to accurately draw comparisons from “The Fall of the House of Usher” to this medieval theme of sickness and renewal, it is important to outline this theme of the Maimed King. Roger Loomis best summarizes the arc of the Maimed King as consisting of “the mortal hero [that] visits a supernatural place, is hospitably entertained, witnesses strange happenings, and sometimes wakes in the morning to find that his host and dwelling have disappeared” (Loomis, 1991: 47). He does not mean that the hero is the Maimed King, but instead, the individual “who was invited by the [...] King to his home” (48). The king is most often described as being “wounded through the thighs or the legs [...] entertained his guests sumptuously”, and ruled “a country laid under a spell which can be lifted only by the asking of a question” (54). We have then the framework for the arc of the Maimed King: the ruler of a domain who has suffered an injury to his thighs (often suggestive of his genitals and potency), which in turn, has laid waste to his kingdom. In order to bring healing and restoration to the wasteland, he sends for a hero who is presented with the opportunity of rejuvenating both the king and the land to a new state of increased health and happiness. This connection between the ruler and his lands is demonstrated clearly in Thomas Malory’s *Le Morte D’Arthur*, when

Balyn saw the spere he gate hit in hy honed and turned to kynge Pellam and felde hym and smote hym passyngly sore with that spere, that kynge Pellam [felle] downe in a sowghe. And therewith the castell brake rooffe and wallis and felle downe to the erthe [...] and moste party of that castell was dede throrow the dolorous stroke. Ryght so lay kynge Pellam [...] sore wounded, and might never be hole tulle that Galaad the Hawte Prynce heled hym in the queste of the Sankgreal. (Malory, 1971: 53-4)

This one example provides some context for what this motif looks like in its original use. King Pellam is wounded by Sir Balin (a brash, young knight), and the wound that follows results in both the laying waste of the ruler and the realm. It isn't until the coming of Galahad and the Holy Grail that restoration can be achieved in Pellam's kingdom. When comparing it to the story of Roderick Usher, however, we will see that while there are a number of similarities, Poe's work moves in an altogether different direction.

The story opens with Roderick Usher's boyhood friend, the narrator, receiving "a letter from him... out of an earnest desire to see me... with a view of attempting, by the cheerfulness of my society, some alleviation of his malady" (Poe, 1996: 318). Roderick has summoned the narrator, like the hero, in hopes of his being able to provide healing for (or at least relief of) the "mental disorder which oppressed him" (318). Nowhere at this point in the story are we told what specific malady allays Roderick. The narrator does, however, mention that "the stem of the Usher race, all-time honored as it was, had put forth, at no period, any enduring branch... the entire family lay in the direct line of descent" possibly indicating the notion of incest within the family of Usher (318). A parallel could be drawn between a sexual act of this nature (thought or deed), as it would be considered sinful – a "wounding" of the soul, and a "wound in the thighs" as was the case for the Maimed King–. It is important to understand that while it is not directly stated that Roderick and his sister Madeline consummated or acknowledged desire for an incestuous relationship, the seeds of doubt are certainly sown throughout the story. Indeed, his acts are highly suspicious when looked at from this perspective. Coupling his "wound" and his status as the proprietor of the family and house, one can begin to see the connections forming between Roderick and the Maimed King.

As the story continues, there are more facts that Poe presents to the reader that reinforce this connection. As Loomis mentioned, the domain of the Maimed King is a supernatural place that has been placed under a spell as a result of the wound to its ruler – a bond between the man and the land where the well being of one affects the well being of the other–. After wounding Pellam, Sir Balin leaves the castle only to discover that "so he rode for the [...] and founde the peple dede sleyne on every side [...] for the dolorous stroke gaff unto

Pellam thes three contryes ar destroyed” (Malory, 1971: 54).

In Poe’s adaptation of the story, the narrator provides a lengthy description of the house where the family of Usher resides, with its “vacant eye-like windows [...] minute fungi overspread the whole exterior [...] no portion of the masonry had fallen; and there seemed to be [...] the crumbling condition of the individual stones” and running through it all, “a barely perceptible fissure [that] made its way down the wall [...] until it became lost in the sullen water” (Poe, 1996: 318 - 320). The narrator presents the reader with the image of an immensely ancient house that appears to be held together only by the vegetative material covering it as the rest of the house has decayed to such an extent it seems improbable that it should still be standing. The narrator also makes an important observation when he mentions the fissure running through the center of the house. As we will see the effects of Roderick’s malady, so too do we see it surfacing in his “kingdom” as well through the fissure. Silverman states that these stones, apparently solid when looking at the building as a whole actually show rot acting as “expressions of the deficiency” that was passed down from generation to generation in the incestuous Usher line (Silverman, 1993: 60 - 61). If we are to accept the concept of the ruler possessing a supernatural connection to the lands under his domain, then this is a clear sign that there is a fatal flaw within Roderick that could spell doom for him as this structural flaw indicates with the house.

Poe takes this connection a step further, however, with the House of Usher in presenting this symbiotic relationship as malignant where the land too can have an affect on its ruler –not simply the ruler affecting his kingdom–. Roderick makes specific reference to “the sentience of all vegetable things [...] connected (as previously suggested) with the gray stones of the home of his forefathers, fulfilled in the method of collocation of these stones” (Poe, 1996: 327). He continues to explain that the arrangement of these stones and “the many fungi spread over them [...] was to be seen [...] in the gradual yet certain condensation of an atmosphere” (327-8). Roderick not only believes there is a connection with his family to the house, but that the house is in fact alive, and the vegetable matter encompassing the building is sentient as demonstrated by the near-breath that Roderick describes the mist clinging around the estate to be. Poe reinforces the blurring of the boundaries between the landlord and the land when the local peasants tell the narrator that time had “merge[d] the original title of the estate in the quaint and equivocal appellation of the “House of Usher” [...] which seemed to include [...] both the family and the family mansion” (319). The house is alive, and through its bond with the Ushers, has had a “terrible influence that has for centuries moulded the destinies of his family” (328). Because the “undeviating

transmission” of Ushers has given rise to the fissure in the house, the home itself is seen to repay its owners in its own malevolent shaping of the family generations, as Roderick points to himself as an example of this “suppositious force [...] in the mere form and substance of his family [...] had obtained over his spirit –an effect which the physique of the gray walls [...] had brought about upon the morale of his existence–” (Poe, 1996: 328).

The narrator is briefly introduced to Madeline only a short time before she “dies” and is described as a “tenderly beloved sister” whose “approaching dissolution” appears to be the result of a mysterious illness characterized by a “partially catelyptical character” causing her to fall into a death-like state (323). On the “closing of the evening” that the narrator arrives, Madeline “succumbed to the power of the destroyer”, and appears to have died (324). Roderick states his intention to lay Madeline in the vaults below the house for fear of grave robbers. During Madeline’s burial, the narrator uncovers two important facts: the first is his observing the blush in the bosom and face of the lady causing the reader to ask whether she had in fact died, and secondly, that Madeline and Roderick were twins.

These are two especially important points. First, we have already been told of Madeline’s death-like trances that she would fall prey to -this clearly indicating she has suffered yet another-. Secondly, Roderick admit to “sympathies of a scarcely intelligible nature [that] had always existed between them” (329). The second point is particularly interesting, as we have already seen the development of a malignant relationship between Roderick and the House of Usher. It then begs the question that if Madeline and Roderick shared a sort of symbiotic relationship as well, the three entities (Roderick, Madeline, and the house) would have formed some sort of shared existence. In fact, Thomas Mabbott suggests that, “The House of Usher has only one soul which has its abode in the mansion, and in the members of the family [...] since they are twins and childless, this soul is interdependent with them and the building [...] if one dies, all must perish together” (Mabbott, 2000: 394). This would strongly reinforce the idea of the ruler’s connection and well being to his domain. There is, however, the first issue that the narrator points out regarding the state of Madeline. While he glosses over her medical condition, the reader understands that she is not dead, and is being buried alive. One must wonder about Roderick’s reasoning behind burying Madeline if they shared some form of “intelligible connection”.

Kenneth Silverman asserts Roderick is attempting murder a part of himself through the premature burial of Madeline, and that his “problems are only overcome by self-annihilation” (Silverman, 1991: 151). He continues to state Roderick will not be able to avoid this

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problem as his twin is a part of himself, and as such, the issues shared between Madeline and him are unavoidable –“nothing stays buried” (Silverman, 1991, 150)–. This becomes clearer when considering the actions Roderick takes following Madeline’s burial in his retreat to singing dirges, painting, and the general immersing in various forms of art as an outlet for his grief. Despite his attempt at finding solace in the familiar, however, “his ordinary manner had vanished. His ordinary occupations were neglected or forgotten” (150). It is evident that he is unable to hide from this act, and Roderick possibly realizes this at a subconscious level. As Silverman states, “Madeline’s body was not properly disposed but kept in the house” (151). While Roderick says that he is concerned about grave robbers, it can be inferred that his keeping of Madeline’s body within the home suggests both “the past endures due to the characters’ enamourment with it” (150). Roderick’s love for Madeline betrays his belief that she is actually dead, and desires to keep her nearby. His refusing to let her go to the grave also demonstrates the possibilities of Roderick’s “wound in the thighs” –the unhealthy fascination with his sister suggesting the incestuous relations between the two–. The premature burial of his sister is an act of attempting to “hide the evidence” of either Roderick and Madeline having physically consummated the relationship, or as a precaution to prevent the act from happening. He further admits to the narrator to hearing Madeline’s voice for days after, and yet dared not speak (Poe, 1996: 334). If there was true concern on the part of Roderick for his sister, what reason could there be in keeping her buried alive in the catacombs of the mansion? Where the possibility for incest gains credence is in considering the inter-connected joining of bodies within the house, and here, Roderick and Madeline would be physically representing what has already taken place between their spirits all occurring within the confines of the house of Usher –all three physically and spiritually united–. Silverman puts it in this way: “latent in the undercurrent of an apparent sexual incestuous wish is the wish for spiritual merger” (Silverman, 1993: 62). This will be seen even more clearly at the end of the story.

As mentioned before, in order for the Maimed King to regain potency and return health and happiness to his domain, he must seek out a hero to assist him. Poe, in this story, provides Roderick Usher with the narrator; however, it is not a ‘Sir Galahad’ sort of individual. “Though the narrator strives to impress us with his altruism and therapeutic zeal, one suspects that he has responded to Roderick’s summons in order to gratify his personal quest” (55). The question of the narrator’s motivations for coming to see Roderick is raised when we are told that “many years had elapsed since our last meeting [...] I knew little of my friend” (Poe, 1996: 318). What he does tell us is that he is aware of the Ushers’ “peculiar sense of temperament [...] in many works of art, and manifest of late, in repeated deeds of munificent yet

unobtrusive charity” (Poe, 1996: 318). Like many points in the story, Poe does not directly state the narrator’s true intentions, but there is some indication this narrator has come for less altruistic reasons. This does not mean to say that the narrator acts completely out of self-centered reasons, but only to suggest Poe’s ever so slightly twisting of the traditional notion of the selfless knight gallant.

As the narrator does wish to provide some means of alleviation to Roderick’s vexed spirit, the two indulge themselves in the arts. While it would seem that by singing dirges, playing guitar, and painting would preoccupy Roderick from his malady, it does not provide him with the permanent remedy he sought after. In the Maimed King story arc, there is an icon of healing, often represented by the Holy Grail. It is this grail object that is presented to the king, and provides the healing to both ruler and land. The one object that could be seen as possessing a healing quality for Roderick then is his art. In his Poem, “The Haunted Place”, Roderick describes in the third stanza what could be envisioned as the House of Usher in its most ideal state. “Spirits moving musically [...] in his state of glory well befitting/ the ruler of the realm was seen” (322). This serves well as an image of the renewed Roderick. But, the poem does not end at this point seeing instead “evil things, in robes of sorrow/ assail[ing] the monarch’s high estate” followed by his fall (322). This unnamed evil thing causes the fall of this monarch and his land, leaving it a “discordant melody” which others would avoid (322). Something evil has penetrated the land, the ruler, and the one thing that seems to be redeeming in the story –art–.

As they sit in the parlor room, the narrator reads to Roderick “The Mad Trist”, which is nothing more than an “uncouth and unimaginative prolixity that could have little interest for the loft and spiritual identity of my friend” (322). The narrator intends to distract Roderick and provide some temporary healing with the reading of this story. This isn’t a work of real art, however, and it does not bring any relief to Roderick. Poe does not keep Roderick waiting for healing, but will provide it in an unexpected manner compared to the Maimed King arc.

We see that Roderick grows increasingly agitated while the narrator continues to read the story with each sound in the story corresponding to the sounds heard growing closer to the study. Roderick realizes Madeline has survived her burial and was working her way through the vaults of the House to reach him declaring, “Madman! I tell you she now stands without the door!” (335). The next image we see is one of Madeline Usher with blood upon her white robes, and the evidence of some bitter struggle upon every portion of her emaciated frame” (335). She then fell upon Roderick, and both were dead before they



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hit the floor, one on top of the other. Between the suggestive image of the bloody nuptial sheets, and the bodies connected one on top of the other, there should be little doubt at this point of the possibility of incest having entered into the relationship of Roderick and Madeline. “Madeline’s return from the walled off place [...] represents the return of Usher’s repressed desires and the granting of his forbidden wishes” (Silverman, 1993: 63). Whether this death scene is representative of a sexual and/or spiritual merger, Madeline’s “final enactment represents a destruction of the symbolic order and violation of social morality” (63). Both the spiritual and societal order is upset through violation of these accepted boundaries of marriage and familial relations. The storm outside, the wind blowing through the windows, and the clouds pressing against the house as if the building were breathing heavily suggests this realm anticipates the consummation of Roderick and Madeline. As all three, united in a perverted existence are outsiders to the natural order, they will fall. David Grantz likens this to “all elements come crashing inward, consummating yet another dance in a cycle of dances” (Grantz, 2001). Just as Madeline and Roderick come together in one final, deadly embrace, the House of Usher falls in on itself as well as embracing its lord and lady carrying them into “the deep and dark tarn [...] which closed sullenly and silently over the fragments of the “House of Usher” (Poe, 1996: 335).

One can see how there are many parallels between “The House of Usher” and the Maimed King storyline. The afflicted ruler resides over his afflicted land, is visited by someone who attempts to bring healing to the king and kingdom, and in the end, restoration is brought about –though certainly not in the expected manner here –. True to form, Poe perverts this motif. Instead of being wrongly injured, Roderick inflicts upon himself his “wound” to the “thighs”. Instead of a beautiful queen, Roderick is paired with his sister, Madeline. We do see a definitive connection between the lord and his land, however the House seems to possess a mind of its own resulting in both sickness being passed down from one generation to the next as well as the lord’s being negatively influenced by the very home in which he lives. We find Poe’s “hero”, the narrator, does appear to be mostly altruistic in nature if somewhat questionable at some points, but is unable to render the aid that Roderick needs to be healed –if that were at all possible–. The only healing Poe offers his “Maimed King”, his court, and his land is to purge them. In one instant, they fall into the earth and are swallowed up –a truly twisted, and perverted perspective to this traditional medieval story–.

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# #01

# “THE FALL OF THE HOUSE OF USHER”: LA PERSPECTIVA PERVERSA DE POE SOBRE “EL REI PESCADOR”

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**Resum** || Els temes de literatura medieval varen tenir un profund efecte als treballs que seguirien a les següents generacions malgrat el reconeixement o no d'aquesta influència per part de l'escriptor, i es pot veure com Poe deixa traces del motiu popular medieval del Rei Pescador en aquesta història curta, "The Fall of the House of Usher". Aquesta temàtica, que és anterior a l'època medieval, va cobrar importància als contes del Rei Artús i la recerca del Sant Graal. Tot i que no hi ha una indicació clara que Poe intencionadament intentés crear una versió gòtica d'aquest tema tradicional, això no descarta la possibilitat que "Usher" hagi estat condicionada d'alguna manera per aquesta noció medieval. Implementant una lectura acurada de la història i comparant-la amb un marc d'aquesta concepció del Rei Pescador, aquest paper senyala una sèrie de similituds entre els dos, així com demostra el llarg abast de la influència del medievalisme en un dels escriptors preeminentes de l'Amèrica del segle XIX, Edgar Allan Poe.

**Paraules clau** || Poe | "The Fall of the House of Usher" | "Rei Pescador" | Segle XIX | Medievalisme.

**Abstract** || The themes of medieval literature had a profound effect on the works that would follow in later generations regardless of the writer's recognition of this influence, and one can see the way Poe leaves traces of the popular medieval motif of the "Maimed King" in his short story, "The Fall of the House of Usher". This thematic device, which predates the medieval period, gained prominence in the tales of King Arthur and the Grail Quest. Although there is no clear indication that Poe intentionally set out to create a gothic rendition of this traditional theme, that does not discount the possibility of "Usher" having been conditioned in some respect by this medieval notion. Through implementing a close reading of the story and comparing it to a framework of this conception of the "Maimed King", this paper points out a number of striking similarities between the two, as well as demonstrates the far-reaching influence of medievalism in one of nineteenth-century America's preeminent fiction writers, Edgar Allan Poe.

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El tema medieval del “Rei Pescador” parla d’un governant que pateix d’una ferida o malaltia que el deixa impotent i incapaç de proporcionar pau i ordre al seu regne. La seva terra ha passat d’un lloc d’harmonia i prosperitat a una terra erma suggerint una relació simbiòtica entre el rei i el seu regne –el benestar d’un afectarà directament al benestar de l’altre–. La terra sols es curarà a través de la curació del seu rei, la qual cosa farà que l’ordre es restableixi en tot el regne.

Al conte d’Edgar Allan Poe “The Fall of the House of Usher,” se’ns presenta Roderick Usher, el darrer hereu de la casa Usher. Roderick Usher encarna molts aspectes del Rei Pescador, en una retorçada aproximació. Hi ha potencialment una malaltia auto infligida amb la insinuació d’una relació incestuosa amb Madeline (ja sigui en pensament o acció), i els efectes d’aquesta possible unió de germà i germana poden fàcilment ser vistos a la Casa dels Usher –ambdues la família i la casa mateixa–. A diferència del Rei Pescador de la literatura medieval, la única curació per a Roderick, Madeline, i la casa sencera dels Usher es troba en la seva eventual desaparició. Això porta a la més demencial i perversa imatge del motiu del Rei Pescador o Mutilat.

De cara a dibuixar amb precisió comparacions entre “The Fall of the House of Usher” i aquest tema medieval de malaltia i renovació, és important esbossar aquest tema del Rei Mutilat. Roger Loomis és el que millor resumeix la línia argumental del Rei Mutilat com a “the mortal hero [that] visits a supernatural place, is hospitably entertained, witnesses strange happenings, and sometimes wakes in the morning to find that his host and dwelling have disappeared” (Loomis, 1991:47). No vol dir que l’heroi és el Rei Mutilat, sinó l’individu “who was invited by the [...] King to his home” (48). El rei és descrit sovint com “wounded through the thighs or the legs [...] entertained his guests sumptuously”, i governava “a country laid under a spell which can be lifted only by the asking of a question” (54). Tenim llavors el marc del Rei Mutilat: el governant d’un domini que ha sofert una lesió en la seva cuixa (sovint una suggestió dels seus genitals i potència), que al seu torn, ha malbaratat el seu regne. Per a portar curació i restauració a la terra erma, envia a buscar un heroi que és presentat amb la oportunitat de rejuvenir ambdós el rei i la terra i portar-los a un nou estat de incrementada salut i felicitat. Aquesta connexió entre el governant i la seva terra està clarament demostrat a *Le Morte D’Arthur*, de Thomas Malory, quan

Balyn saw the spere he gate hit in hy honed and turned to kynge Pellam and felde hym and smote hym passyngly sore with that spere, that kynge Pellam [felle] downe in a sowghe. And therewith the castell brake rooffe and wallis and felle downe to the erthe [...] and moste party of that castell was dede throrow the dolorous stroke. Ryght so lay kynge Pellam [...] sore wounded, and might never be hole tylle that Galaad the Hawte Prynce heled hym in the queste of the Sankgreal. (Malory, 1971: 53-4)

Aquest exemple proporciona un context per al que aquest motiu es veu com en el seu ús original. El Rei Pellam és ferit per Sir Balin (un temerari i jove cavaller), i la ferida que en resulta esdevé en la decadència tant del governant com del regne. No és fins l'arribada de Galahad i del Sant Grial que s'assoleix la restauració al regne de Pellam. Quan es compara amb la història de Roderick Usher, tanmateix, veurem que tot i havent un nombre de similituds, el treball de Poe les mou totes juntes en una altra direcció.

La història comença amb l'amic de la infantesa de Roderick Usher, el narrador, rebent "a letter from him... out of an earnest desire to see me... with a view of attempting, by the cheerfulness of my society, some alleviation of his malady" (Poe, 1996: 318). Roderick ha convocat el narrador, com l'heroi, amb l'esperança que sigui capaç de proporcionar curació (o almenys socors) al "mental disorder which oppressed him" (318). En cap lloc d'aquest punt de la història se'ns diu quina malaltia específica pateix Roderick. El narrador, de totes maneres, esmenta que "the stem of the Usher race, all-time honored as it was, had put forth, at no period, any enduring branch... the entire family lay in the direct line of descent" indicant possiblement la noció de l'incest a la família dels Usher (318). Es podria dibuixar un paral·lelisme amb un acte sexual d'aquesta natura (en pensament o acció), ja que es podria considerar pecaminós –una "ferida" de l'ànima, i una "ferida a les cuixes" com era el cas del Rei Mutilat–. És important entendre que tot i que no està directament establert que Roderick i la seva germana Madeline consumissin o reconeguessin un desig d'una relació incestuosa, la llavor del dubte està clarament sembrada al llarg de la història. Realment, els seus actes són molt sospitosos quan es miren amb perspectiva. Juntant la seva "ferida" amb els seu status de titular tant de la família com de la casa, un pot començar a veure les connexions que es formen entre Roderick i el Rei Mutilat.

Conforme la història segueix, hi ha més fets que Poe presenta al lector per a reforçar aquesta connexió. Tal i com Loomis va esmentar, el domini del Rei Mutilat és un lloc sobrenatural que s'ha posat sota un encanteri com a resultat de la ferida del seu governant –un vincle entre l'home i la terra on el benestar d'un afecta el benestar de l'altre–. Després de ferir Pellam, Sir Balin abandona el castell per a descobrir que "so he rode for the [...] and founde the peple dede sleyne on every side [...] for the dolorous stroke gaff unto Pellam

thes three contryes ar destroyed” (Malory, 1971: 54).

En l'adaptació de Poe de la història, el narrador proporciona una llarga descripció de la casa on la família dels Usher resideix, amb les seves “vacant eye-like windows [...] minute fungi overspread the whole exterior [...] no portion of the masonry had fallen; and there seemed to be [...] the crumbling condition of the individual stones” i recurrent-ho tot, “a barely perceptible fissure [that] made its way down the wall [...] until it became lost in the sullen water” (Poe, 1996: 318 - 320). El narrador presenta al lector la imatge d'una casa immensament antiga que sembla que es mantingui unida tan sols pel material vegetal que la cobreix al mateix temps que la resta de la casa s'ha degradat fins a tal punt que sembla improbable que es segueixi mantenint en peu. El narrador també fa una observació important quan esmenta l'esquerda que recorre tot el centre de la casa. Tal i com veurem els efectes de la malaltia de Roderick, també la veurem recurrent el seu “regne” a través de la fissura. Silverman declara que aquestes pedres, aparentment sòlides quan es mira l'edifici en la seva totalitat, realment mostren la putrefacció actuant com a “expressions de la deficiència” que passen de generació en generació a la línia incestuosa dels Usher (Silverman, 1993: 60-61). Si hem d'acceptar el concepte del governant amb una connexió sobrenatural amb les terres sota el seu domini, llavors és un signe clar que hi ha una falla fatal dins Roderick, que podria significar un càstig per a ell tal i com la falla estructural ho és per a la casa.

Poe porta aquesta connexió un pas més enllà, amb la Casa dels Usher presentant aquesta simbiòtica relació com a maligne on la terra pot també afectar al seu governant –no simplement el governant afectant el seu regne-. En Roderick fa una referència específica a “the sentience of all vegetable things [...] connected (as previously suggested) with the gray stones of the home of his forefathers, fulfilled in the method of collocation of these stones” (Poe, 1996: 327). Continua explicant que l'acord d'aquelles pedres i “the many fungi spread over them [...] was to be seen [...] in the gradual yet certain condensation of an atmosphere” (327-8). En Roderick no sols creu que hi ha una connexió de la seva família amb la casa, sinó que la casa està realment viva, i la matèria vegetal que abasta l'edifici és sensible com es demostra per la manera en què en Roderick descriu la boira al voltant de la finca: gairebé respirant. Poe reforça la confusió dels límits entre el propietari i la terra quan els camperols locals expliquen al narrador que el temps havia “merge[d] the original title of the estate in the quaint and equivocal appellation of the “House of Usher” [...] which seemed to include [...] both the family and the family mansion” (319). La casa és viva, i a través dels seus lligams amb els Usher, havia tingut una “terrible influence that has for centuries moulded the destinies of his family” (328). A causa de la “transmissió sense desviacions” dels Usher s'ha creat la fissura a la casa, i la casa mateixa retorna als seus propietaris en la

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seva pròpia deformació malèvola de les generacions de la família, tal i com Roderick s'assenyala ell mateix com a exemple de la seva "suppositious force [...] in the mere form and substance of his family [...] had obtained over his spirit –an effect which the physique of the gray walls [...] had brought about upon the morale of his existence–" (Poe, 1996: 328).

El narrador és presentat breument a Madeline poca estona abans que ella "mori" i és descrita com una "tendrament estimada germana" la "aproximació a la dissolució" de la qual sembla ser el resultat d'una malaltia misteriosa caracteritzada per un "partially cateltypical character" fent que caigui en un estat de semi-mort (323). El "tancament de la nit" en què el narrador arriba, Madeline "succumbed to the power of the destroyer", i sembla que hagi mort (324). Roderick declara la seva intenció d'enterrar Madeline als voltants de la casa per por als lladres de tombes. Durant l'enterrament de Madeline, el narrador descobreix dos fets importants: el primer és quan observa el rubor al pit i la cara de la dama fent que el lector es preguntí si està realment morta; i el segon, que Madeline i Roderick eren bessons.

Aquests són dos punts especialment importants. Primer, ja se'ns ha parlat dels tràngols de la quasi-mort de Madeline de la qual anava a ser presa –això ens indica clarament que ja n'havia sofert un altre– Segon, Roderick admet "sympathies of a scarcely intelligible nature [that] had always existed between them" (329). El segon punt és particularment interessant, tal i com ja hem vist el desenvolupament d'una relació maligne entre Roderick i la Casa dels Usher. A continuació es planteja la qüestió de si Madeline i Roderick compartien també una mena de relació simbiòtica, llavors las tres entitats (Roderick, Madeline, i la casa) haurien format una mena d'existència compartida. De fet, Thomas Mabbott suggereix que "The House of Usher has only one soul which has its abode in the mansion, and in the members of the family [...] since they are twins and childless, this soul is interdependent with them and the building [...] if one dies, all must perish together" (Mabbott, 2000: 394). Això reforçaria fortament la idea de la connexió entre el benestar del governant i el del seu domini. Hi ha, de totes maneres, el primer tema que el narrador destaca pel que fa al estat de Madeline. Mentre ell passa per alt la condició mèdica de Madeline, el lector entén que ella no està morta, i que està sent enterrada viva. Un s'ha de preguntar per les raons de Roderick a l'enterrar Madeline si havien compartit una mena de "connexió intel·ligible".

Kenneth Silverman afirma que Roderick està intentant assassinar una part d'ell mateix a través de l'enterrament prematur de Madeline, i que els seus "problems are only overcome by self-annihilation" (Silverman, 1991: 151). Continua afirmant que Roderick no serà capaç d'evitar aquest problema donat que la seva bessona és



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part d'ell mateix, i com a tal, els punts compartits per Madeline i ell mateix són inevitables –“nothing stays buried” (Silverman, 1991, 150)–. Això queda clar quan considerem les accions que Roderick pren després de l'enterrament de Madeline en el seu retir per a cantar complantes, pintar, i una immersió general en les diverses formes d'art com una sortida per al seu patiment. Tot i el seu intent de trobar consol en allò familiar, “his ordinary manner had vanished. His ordinary occupations were neglected or forgotten” (150). És evident que és incapaç d'amagar-se d'aquest acte, i Roderick possiblement fa això a un nivell subconscient. Tal i com Silverman declara, “Madeline's body was not properly disposed but kept in the house” (151). Mentre Roderick diu que està preocupat pels robatoris de tombes, es pot inferir que el fet de mantenir el cos de Madeline a la casa suggereix que “the past endures due to the characters' enamoring with it” (150). L'amor de Roderick per Madeline traeix la seva creença de què està realment morta, i desitja mantenir-la a prop seu. El seu rebuig de deixar-la anar a la tomba també demostra les possibilitats de Roderick de ser “ferit a les cuixes” – la poc saludable fascinació que té amb la seva germana suggereix les relacions incestuoses entre els dos–. L'enterrament prematur de la seva germana és un acte d'intentar “amagar l'evidència” de que tant Roderick com Madeline hagin consumat físicament la relació, o com a precaució per a prevenir que aquest acte succeeixi. Ell admet més tard al narrador haver escoltat la veu de Madeline durant dies després, i, tanmateix, no s'atreveix a parlar (Poe, 1996: 334). Si de veritat hi havia una preocupació real per part de Roderick per la seva germana, quina raó hi podria haver en mantenir-la enterrada viva a les catacumbes de la mansió? Quan la possibilitat de l'incest guanya crèdit és en considerar la inter-connectada unió dels cossos dins la casa, i aquí, Roderick i Madeline haurien representat físicament el que ja havia passat entre els seus esperits, tot succeint dins els límits de la casa dels Usher –tots tres física i espiritualment units–. Silverman ho expressa d'aquesta manera: “latent in the undercurrent of an apparent sexual incestuous wish is the wish for spiritual merger” (Silverman, 1993: 62). Això es veurà més clarament al final de la història.

Tal i com s'ha esmentat abans, per a que el Rei Mutilat recuperi la potència i retorni la salut i la felicitat al seu domini, ha de buscar un heroi que l'assisteixi. Poe, en aquesta història, proporciona Roderick Usher un narrador; de totes maneres, no es un individu tipus ‘Sir Galahad’. “Though the narrator strives to impress us with his altruism and therapeutic zeal, one suspects that he has responded to Roderick's summons in order to gratify his personal quest” (55). La pregunta de les motivacions del narrador per anar a veure Roderick sorgeix quan se'ns diu que “many years had elapsed since our last meeting [...] I knew little of my friend” (Poe, 1996: 318). El que sí ens diu és que ell és conscient del “peculiar sense of temperament [...] in many works of art, and manifest of late, in repeated deeds of

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munificent yet unobtrusive charity” dels Usher (Poe, 1996: 318). Com molts punts de la història, Poe no indica les veritables intencions del narrador, però hi ha alguna indicació que ens diu que aquest narrador ha vingut per raons menys altruistes. Això no vol dir que el narrador actuï totalment sense cap raó egocèntrica, sinó que sols suggereix la sempre tant poc torçada noció tradicional d'en Poe de l'abnegada galanteria del cavaller.

A mesura que el narrador desitja proporcionar alguns mitjans de alleugeriment al enfadat esperit de Roderick, els dos es complauen ells mateixos en les arts. Mentre semblaria que cantar complantes, tocar la guitarra, i pintar alleugeriria Roderick de la seva malaltia, no li proporciona el remei permanent buscat més tard. En la línia argumental de la història del Rei Mutilat, hi ha una icona de la curació, sovint representada pel Sant Grial. És aquest objecte que és presentat al rei, i que proporciona curació tant al governant com a la terra. L'únic objecte que es podria veure com a posseïdor d'una qualitat curativa per a Roderick és l'art. En aquest poema, “The Haunted Place”, Roderick descriu en la tercera estrofa el que es podria preveure com la Casa dels Usher en el seu estat més ideal. “Spirits moving musically [...] in his state of glory well befitting/ the ruler of the realm was seen” (322). Això serveix perfectament com una imatge del renovat Roderick. Però aquest poema no acaba en aquest punt veient en canvi “evil things, in robes of sorrow/ assail[ing] the monarch's high estate” seguides de la seva mort. (322). Aquest dimoni innumerable causa la caiguda del monarca i de la seva terra, deixant una “discordant melody” que altres evitarien (322). Alguna cosa diabòlica ha penetrat la terra, el governant, i la única cosa que sembla redemptora a la història –l'art–.

Mentre seuen al saló, el narrador llegeix a Roderick “The Mad Trist”, que no és més que un “uncouth and unimaginative prolixity that could have little interest for the loft and spiritual identity of my friend” (322). El narrador intenta distreure Roderick i li proporciona una curació temporal amb la lectura d'aquesta història. No és un treball d'art real, de totes maneres, i no proporciona cap alleujament a Roderick. Poe no manté Roderick esperant la curació, però la proporcionarà d'una manera inesperada comparat amb la línia narrativa del Rei Mutilat.

Veiem que Roderick creix cada cop més agitat mentre el narrador segueix llegint la història amb cada so a la història corresponent als sons que es senten cada cop més a prop de l'estudi. Roderick s'adona que Madeline ha sobreviscut al seu enterrament i que estava treballant la seva sortida a través del panteó de la Casa per a atrapar-lo tot declarant, “Madman! I tell you she now stands without the door!” (335). La següent imatge que veiem és Madeline Usher amb sang per damunt del seu vestit blanc, i la evidència d'una amarga lluita en cada part de la seva demacrada aparença” (335). Llavors ella cau damunt de Roderick, i els dos moren abans de tocar el terra, un damunt

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de l'altre. Entre la suggestiva imatge dels llençols nupcials plens de sang, i els cossos connectats un damunt de l'altre, hi haurien d'haver pocs dubtes arribat aquest punt de la possibilitat d'un incest a la relació de Roderick i Madeline. "Madeline's return from the walled off place [...] represents the return of Usher's repressed desires and the granting of his forbidden wishes" (Silverman, 1993: 63). Si aquesta escena de mort és representativa d'una fusió sexual i/o espiritual, l'actuació final de Madeline "represents a destruction of the symbolic order and violation of social morality" (63). Ambdós l'ordre espiritual i social es disgusten a través de la violació d'aquests límits acceptats del matrimoni i les relacions familiars. La tempesta fora, el vent bufant a través de les finestres, i els núvols pressionant contra la casa com si l'edifici estigués respirant pesadament suggereix que el regne anticipa la consumació de Roderick i Madeline. Com tots tres, units en una existència pervertida són aliens a l'ordre natural, cauran. David Grantz compara això a "all elements come crashing inward, consummating yet another dance in a cycle of dances" (Grantz, 2001). Tal i com Madeline i Roderick es reuneixen en un final, en una abraçada mortal, la Casa dels Usher cau també abraçant el seu senyor i la seva dama i els porta a "the deep and dark tarn [...] which closed sullenly and silently over the fragments of the "House of Usher" (Poe, 1996: 335).

Un pot veure com hi ha molts paral·lelismes entre "The House of Usher" i l'argument del Rei Pescador. El governant afectat resideix per damunt de la seva afectada terra, és visitat per algú que intenta portar curació tant al rei com al regne, i al final, la restauració es porta a terme –tot i que no de la manera esperada–. Fidel a la forma, Poe perverteix aquest motiu. En comptes de ser mal ferit, en Roderick s'infligeix a sí mateix la seva "ferida" a les "cames". En comptes d'una reina preciosa, Roderick s'emparella amb la seva germana, Madeline. Veiem una connexió definitiva entre el senyor i la seva terra, de totes maneres la Casa sembla posseir una ment pròpia resultant tant en una malaltia passant de generació en generació com en el senyor sent negativament influenciat per la pròpia casa on viu. Trobem que "l'heroi" de Poe, el narrador, sembla ser força altruístic en naturalesa tot i que una mica qüestionable en alguns punts, però és incapaç de proporcionar l'ajuda que Roderick necessita per a ser curat –si això fos possible–. La única cura que Poe ofereix al seu Rei Pescador, la seva cort, i la seva terra és purgar-los. En un instant, cauen a terra i són empassats –una veritablement retorçada i perversa perspectiva d'aquesta història medieval tradicional–.

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#01

“LA CAÍDA  
DE LA CASA  
USHER”:  
LA PERSPECTIVA  
DISTORSIONADA  
DE POE SOBRE  
EL “REY TULLIDO”

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**Resumen** || La temática de la literatura medieval tuvo un gran efecto sobre las obras de las generaciones posteriores independientemente del reconocimiento de esta influencia por parte del escritor. Este hecho se puede observar en las huellas del popular tema medieval del “Rey Tullido” que Poe deja en su relato, “La caída de la Casa Usher”. Dicha tendencia temática, que precede al período medieval, ganó importancia en los cuentos del rey Arturo y la búsqueda del Grial. Aunque no existan claros indicios de que Poe tuviera la intención de adoptar una interpretación gótica de este tradicional tema, eso no significa que “Usher” no haya podido ser condicionada, en cierto sentido, por este concepto medieval. A través de una lectura atenta de la historia y de su comparación con las bases de esta concepción del “Rey Tullido”, este artículo señala una cantidad de asombrosos parecidos entre ambos y demuestra la gran influencia del medievalismo en uno de los escritores de ficción más relevantes del siglo XIX en América, Edgar Allan Poe.

**Palabras clave** || Poe | “The Fall of the House of Usher” | “Rey Tullido” | Siglo XIX | Medievalismo.

**Abstract** || The themes of medieval literature had a profound effect on the works that would follow in later generations regardless of the writer’s recognition of this influence, and one can see the way Poe leaves traces of the popular medieval motif of the “Maimed King” in his short story, “The Fall of the House of Usher”. This thematic device, which predates the medieval period, gained prominence in the tales of King Arthur and the Grail Quest. Although there is no clear indication that Poe intentionally set out to create a gothic rendition of this traditional theme, that does not discount the possibility of “Usher” having been conditioned in some respect by this medieval notion. Through implementing a close reading of the story and comparing it to a framework of this conception of the “Maimed King”, this paper points out a number of striking similarities between the two, as well as demonstrates the far-reaching influence of medievalism in one of nineteenth-century America’s preeminent fiction writers, Edgar Allan Poe.

**Keywords** || Poe | “The Fall of the House of Usher” | “Maimed King” | XIX century | Medievalism.

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La temática medieval del “Rey Tullido” utiliza a un gobernante que padece una enfermedad o herida transformándole en alguien incapaz de procurar orden y paz a su reino. Su territorio ha pasado de ser un lugar donde reinaba la armonía y la prosperidad a un lugar descuidado, sugiriendo una relación simbiótica entre el rey y su reino (el bienestar de uno afectará directamente al bienestar del otro). El reino sanará cuando el rey sane, por lo que el orden será restaurado a través del reino.

En el relato de Edgar Allan Poe, “La caída de la Casa Usher”, se nos presenta a Roderick Usher, el último heredero de la casa Usher. En un enfoque distorsionado, Roderick Usher encarnaría muchos de los aspectos del “Rey Tullido”. Potencialmente, tiene un enfermedad autoinflingida donde se insinúa una relación incestuosa con Madeline (ya sea en pensamiento o en acto), y los efectos de esta posible unión entre hermano y hermana pueden observarse fácilmente en la “Caída de la Casa Usher” (tanto en la familia como en la casa en sí misma). Sin embargo, a diferencia del “Rey Tullido” de la literatura medieval, la única curación para Roderick, Madeline, y para la casa de la familia Usher es la desaparición final de todos ellos. Esto se adapta a la imagen más demente y distorsionada del tema del “Rey Tullido”.

Con el fin de establecer una comparación entre “La caída de la casa Usher” con este tema medieval de enfermedad y renovación, es importante resumir la historia del “Rey Tullido”. Roger Loomis es el que mejor resume esta historia que trata de “the mortal hero [that] visits a supernatural place, is hospitably entertained, witnesses strange happenings, and sometimes wakes in the morning to find that his host and dwelling have disappeared” (Loomis, 1991: 47). Esto no significa que el héroe sea el “Rey Tullido”, sino que será, en su lugar, el individuo “who was invited by the [...] King to his home” (48). El rey a menudo es descrito como “wounded through the thighs or the legs [...] entertained his guests sumptuously”, y gobernando “a country laid under a spell which can be lifted only by the asking of a question” (54). Ya tenemos, por lo tanto, las bases para la historia del “Rey Tullido”: el gobernante de un reino que ha sido herido en los muslos (a menudo es una referencia a sus genitales y a su potencia), que poco a poco ha llevado a su reino a la desolación. Con el fin de sanar y restaurar esta tierra consumida, manda a buscar a un héroe que se presenta con la oportunidad de traer, tanto al rey como a su reino, un nuevo estado de salud y felicidad. Esta conexión entre el gobernante y su tierra se observa claramente en *Le Morte D’Arthur*, de Thomas Malory, cuando:

Balyn saw the spere he gate hit in hy honed and turned to kynge Pellam and felde hym and smote hym passyngly sore with that spere, that kynge Pellam [felle] downe in a sowghe. And therewith the castell brake rooffe and wallis and felle downe to the erthe [...] and moste party of that castell

was dede throrow the dolorous stroke. Ryght so lay kynge Pellam [...] sore wounded, and might never be hole tylle that Galaad the Hawte Prynce heled hym in the queste of the Sankgreal. (Malory, 1971: 53-4)

Solo este ejemplo sirve de contexto para darse cuenta de que este tema se parece a su uso original. El Rey Pellam es herido por Sir Balin (un atrevido y joven caballero) y la herida que le provoca trae consecuencias tanto para la destrucción del gobernante como para el reino. No será hasta la llegada de Galahad y el Santo Grial que se podrá recomponer el reino de Pellam. Sin embargo, cuando se compara esto con la historia de Roderick Usher, se observa que, aunque hay un gran número de similitudes, el trabajo de Poe avanza en una dirección completamente diferente.

La historia comienza con el amigo de infancia de Roderick Usher, el narrador, que recibe “a letter from him... out of an earnest desire to see me... with a view of attempting, by the cheerfulness of my society, some alleviation of his malady” (Poe, 1996: 318). Roderick convoca al narrador, como al héroe, con la esperanza de que cure (o al menos alivie) el “mental disorder which oppressed him” (318). Hasta este punto de la historia, nada nos ha indicado qué enfermedad tiene exactamente Roderick. Sin embargo, el narrador menciona que “the stem of the Usher race, all-time honored as it was, had put forth, at no period, any enduring branch... the entire family lay in the direct line of descent” indicando posiblemente la idea de incesto en la familia de los Usher (Poe, 1996, 318). Se podría establecer un paralelismo con un acto sexual de esta naturaleza (pensado o realizado), ya que podría ser considerado como un pecado (una “herida” del alma, y “una herida en los muslos”, como en el caso del “Rey Tullido”). Es importante entender que, aunque no se haya indicado directamente que Roderick y su hermana Madeline tuvieron o reconocieron deseo por mantener una relación incestuosa, nos queda la duda a lo largo de toda la historia de lo que pasaba. Efectivamente, sus actos son muy sospechosos cuando se mira desde esta perspectiva. Al asociar esta “herida” y la condición de Roderick como propietario de la familia y la casa, se puede comenzar a ver la conexión entre Roderick y el “Rey Tullido”.

Conforme la historia avanza, Poe va presentando más hechos al lector que refuerzan esta conexión. Tal y como Loomis menciona, el dominio del “Rey Tullido” es un lugar sobrenatural que se encuentra bajo un hechizo como consecuencia de la herida de su gobernante (un vínculo entre el hombre y la tierra donde el bienestar de uno afecta al bienestar del otro). Tras herir a Pellam, Sir Balin abandona el castillo solo para descubrir que “so he rode for the [...] and founde the peple dede sleyne on every side [...] for the dolorous stroke gaff unto Pellam thes three contryes ar destroyed” (Malory, 1971: 54).



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En la adaptación de Poe de la historia, el narrador hace una larga descripción de la casa donde la familia Usher reside, con sus “vacant eye-like windows [...] minute fungi overspread the whole exterior [...] no portion of the masonry had fallen; and there seemed to be [...] the crumbling condition of the individual stones” and running through it all, “a barely perceptible fissure [that] made its way down the wall [...] until it became lost in the sullen water” (Poe, 1996: 318 - 320). El narrador ofrece al lector la imagen de una casa excesivamente antigua que parece estar sostenida únicamente por el material vegetal que la cubre, mientras el resto de la casa está deteriorada hasta tal punto que parece poco probable que todavía se mantenga en pie. El narrador también hace una observación importante cuando menciona la grieta que atraviesa el centro de la casa. A medida que iremos observando los efectos de la enfermedad de Roderick, también iremos viendo cómo ésta aparece en su “reino” a través de la grieta. Silverman señala que estas piedras, aparentemente sólidas cuando se contempla el edificio en su conjunto, en realidad muestran la podredumbre, manifestando “la expresión de la deficiencia” que ha sido transmitida de generación en generación en la incestuosa estirpe de los Usher (Silverman, 1993, 60 – 61). Si aceptamos el concepto del gobernante de poseer una conexión sobrenatural con las tierras que están bajo su dominio, entonces existirá una clara señal de que existe un terrible defecto en Roderick que podría augurar su muerte, tal y como este defecto estructural indica en la casa.

Sin embargo, Poe va un paso más allá respecto a esta conexión con la Casa de los Usher presentando dicha relación simbiótica como una unión destructiva y donde el reino también puede afectar a su gobernante (no solo el gobernante afecta a su reino). Roderick hace una clara referencia a “the sentience of all vegetable things [...] connected (as previously suggested) with the gray stones of the home of his forefathers, fulfilled in the method of collocation of these stones” (Poe, 1996: 327). Continúa explicando que la colocación de estas piedras y “the many fungi spread over them [...] was to be seen [...] in the gradual yet certain condensation of an atmosphere” (327-8). Roderick no solo cree que existe una conexión entre su familia y la casa, sino que, de hecho, cree que la mansión está viva, así como la materia vegetal que ocupa toda la casa es sensible. Esto se puede observar en la intensidad con la que Roderick describe la neblina que se aferra a la propiedad para no desaparecer. Poe quiere reforzar la idea de difuminar los límites entre el dueño y la propiedad cuando los campesinos del lugar le cuentan al narrador aquella vez que “merge[d] the original title of the estate in the quaint and equivocal appellation of the “House of Usher” [...] which seemed to include [...] both the family and the family mansion” (319). La casa está viva y a través de su vínculo con los Usher ha tenido una “terrible influence that has for centuries moulded the destinies of his family” (328). Debido a que la “transmisión directa” de los Usher ha

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dado lugar a la grieta que atraviesa la casa, la mansión en sí misma es percibida como un ente que devolverá a sus dueños la propia forma perversa de las generaciones familiares, tal y como Roderick se dice a sí mismo como ejemplo de esta “suppositious force [...] in the mere form and substance of his family [...] had obtained over his spirit –an effect which the physique of the gray walls [...] had brought about upon the morale of his existence–” (328).

Al narrador se le hace una rápida y única presentación de Madeline antes de que “muera”, que se le describe como una “hermana tiernamente querida” cuya “desaparición evidentemente próxima” parece ser el resultado de una misteriosa enfermedad caracterizada por un “carácter parcialmente cataléptico”, haciendo que ésta caiga en un estado de naturaleza cataléptica (323). Al caer la tarde del día en el que el narrador llega, Madeline “sucumbe al poder del destructor” y parece haber muerto (Poe, 1996, 324). Roderick manifiesta su intención de poner a Madeline en las criptas situadas bajo la casa por miedo a los ladrones de tumbas. Durante el entierro de Madeline, el narrador desvela dos hechos importantes: el primero es que observa un rubor en el pecho y rostro de la joven, haciendo plantearse al lector si en realidad ésta ha muerto, y segundo, que Madeline y Roderick eran gemelos.

Existen dos aspectos especialmente importantes. El primero es que ya hemos sido informados de los estados de naturaleza cataléptica que sufre Madeline (esto indica claramente que ha sufrido otro ataque más). Segundo, Roderick admite “sympathies of a scarcely intelligible nature [that] had always existed between them” (329). El segundo punto es especialmente interesante, ya que hemos observado con anterioridad el desarrollo de una relación destructiva entre Roderick y la Casa Usher. Esto da por sentado que Madeline y Roderick compartieron una especie de relación simbiótica también. Las tres entidades (Roderick, Madeline y la casa) habrían establecido algún tipo de existencia compartida. De hecho, Thomas Mabbot sugiere que “The House of Usher has only one soul which has its abode in the mansion, and in the members of the family [...] since they are twins and childless, this soul is interdependent with them and the building [...] if one dies, all must perish together” (Mabbott, 2000: 394). Esto reforzaría la idea de la conexión entre el gobernante y el bienestar de su reino. Sin embargo, hay un aspecto que el narrador señala en relación al estado de Madeline: mientras le quita importancia a su condición médica, el lector entiende que no está muerta y que va a ser enterrada viva. Uno se pregunta cuáles son las razones por las que Roderick entierra a Madeline si compartían un tipo de “conexión inteligible”.

Kenneth Silverman afirma que Roderick está intentando matar una parte de sí mismo a través del prematuro entierro de Madeline, y que sus “problems are only overcome by self-annihilation” (Silverman, 1991: 151). Continúa explicando que Roderick no será capaz de

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evitar este problema ya que su gemela forma parte de sí mismo y por lo tanto, los problemas entre Madeline y él son inevitables –“nothing stays buried” (150). Esto se ve aún más claramente cuando, dándose cuenta de sus acciones, Roderick, tras el entierro de Madeline, se retira para cantar, recitar cantos fúnebres, pintar y sumergirse en otras manifestaciones artísticas como una forma de desahogo por su pena. Sin embargo, a pesar de sus intentos por encontrar consuelo en lo familiar, “his ordinary manner had vanished. His ordinary occupations were neglected or forgotten” (150). Es evidente que es incapaz de olvidar lo que ha hecho, y Roderick posiblemente se da cuenta de esto de forma inconsciente. Tal y como señala Silverman, “Madeline’s body was not properly disposed but kept in the house” (Silverman, 1991, 151). Cuando Roderick dice que está preocupado por los ladrones de tumbas, se puede deducir que el hecho de mantener el cuerpo de Madeline en la casa hace referencia a estos dos aspectos: “the past endures due to the characters’ enamorment with it” (150). El amor de Roderick por Madeline hace que éste no crea que ella está muerta, por lo que desea mantenerla cerca. Su rechazo por trasladarla al cementerio también manifiesta la posible “herida en los muslos” de Roderick (la insana fascinación por su hermana sugiere la incestuosa relación entre los dos). El prematuro entierro de su hermana constituye un acto para intentar “esconder la evidencia” de que Roderick y Madeline han consumado físicamente su relación, o como una precaución para impedir que esto suceda. Roderick admitirá más adelante al narrador escuchar la voz de Madeline durante los días posteriores, aunque no se atreve a hablar (Poe, 1996, 334). Si fuera cierta la preocupación de Roderick por su hermana, ¿qué razón podría tener para tenerla enterrada viva en las catacumbas de la mansión? La posibilidad de incesto obtiene mayor credibilidad cuando se tiene en cuenta la interconexión de los cuerpos en la casa, donde Roderick y Madeline estarían representando físicamente lo que ya ha sucedido entre sus espíritus, lo cual ha ocurrido todo en el interior de la Casa Usher (la unión de los tres, física y espiritualmente). Silverman lo explica de la siguiente manera: “latent in the undercurrent of an apparent sexual incestuous wish is the wish for spiritual merger” (Silverman, 1993: 62). Esto se observa aún más claramente al final de la historia.

Como se ha mencionado anteriormente, con el fin de que el “Rey Tullido” recupere la potencia y devuelva la salud y felicidad a su reino, deberá buscar a un héroe para que le ayude. Poe, en su historia, le ofrece el narrador a Roderick Usher. Sin embargo, no es como “Sir Galahad”. “Though the narrator strives to impress us with his altruism and therapeutic zeal, one suspects that he has responded to Roderick’s summons in order to gratify his personal quest” (55). El tema de las motivaciones del narrador para ir acudir a la llamada de Roderick es planteado cuando somos informados de que “many years had elapsed since our last meeting [...] I knew little of my friend”

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(Poe, 1996: 318). Después nos dice que es consciente del “peculiar sense of temperament [...] in many works of art, and manifest of late, in repeated deeds of munificent yet unobtrusive charity” (Poe, 1996: 318). Como en muchos momentos de la historia, Poe no explica directamente las verdaderas intenciones del narrador, pero existen algunos indicios de que las motivaciones del narrador son poco altruistas. Eso no quiere decir que el narrador solo se guíe por razones egocéntricas, pero sí sugeriría la idea de que Poe está, en cualquier caso, dándole un sentido ligeramente diferente a la noción tradicional del valiente caballero desinteresado.

Cuando el narrador desea proporcionar algún tipo de alivio para el espíritu afligido de Roderick, ambos se entregan a las artes. Cuando parecía que recitando cantos fúnebres, tocando la guitarra y pintando, Roderick se distraería de su enfermedad, esto no le proporciona el remedio permanente que busca después. En la historia del “Rey Tullido”, existe un icono de curación, a menudo representado por el Santo Grial, que es ofrecido al rey y que proporciona la curación tanto a este último como a su reino. El único objeto que podría poseer características curativas para Roderick es el arte. En su poema, “The Haunted Place”, Roderick describe en la tercera estrofa lo que podría imaginar como un estado ideal para la Casa Usher. “Spirits moving musically [...] in his state of glory well befitting/ the ruler of the realm was seen” (322). Esto sirve como imagen del nuevo Roderick. Sin embargo, el poema no acaba aquí, sino que se ven, en cambio, a “evil things, in robes of sorrow/ assail[ing] the monarch’s high estate” (322), seguido de su caída. Este ser maléfico sin nombre provoca la caída del monarca y su reino, dejando una “discordant melody” que otros evitarán (322). Un ente maléfico ha penetrado en el reino y en el gobernante, y la única cosa que parece ser liberadora en la historia es el arte.

Cuando se sientan en el salón, el narrador le lee a Roderick “Mad Trist”, que no es más que una “uncouth and unimaginative prolixity that could have little interest for the loft and spiritual identity of my friend” (322). El narrador intenta distraer a Roderick y ofrece una curación temporal con la lectura de esta historia. Sin embargo, esto no es una obra de arte verdadera, por lo que no alivia a Roderick. Poe no mantiene a Roderick esperando su curación, sino que la obtendrá de forma inesperada en comparación con la historia del “Rey Tullido”.

Mientras el narrador lee la historia, observamos que Roderick se irrita cada vez más con los sonidos de la historia que se corresponden con los sonidos, cada vez más fuertes, producidos cerca del estudio. Roderick se da cuenta de que Madeline ha sobrevivido a su entierro y que ha ido haciendo un camino a través de las criptas de la casa para conseguir llegar hasta él, por lo que exclama: “Madman! I tell you she now stands without the door!” (Poe, 1996, 335). La siguiente

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imagen que vemos es la de Madeline Usher “with blood upon her white robes, and the evidence of some bitter struggle upon every portion of her emaciated frame” (335). Entonces cae sobre Roderick y ambos mueren antes de desplomarse contra el suelo, uno encima del otro. Con la sugerente imagen de las sangrientas vestiduras nupciales y los cuerpos unidos uno encima del otro, en este momento no nos queda casi lugar a la duda sobre la posibilidad de incesto que ha iniciado la relación entre Roderick y Madeline. “Madeline’s return from the walled off place [...] represents the return of Usher’s repressed desires and the granting of his forbidden wishes” (Silverman, 1993: 63). Si esta escena de muerte puede representar la unión sexual y/o espiritual, la aparición final de Madeline “represents a destruction of the symbolic order and violation of social morality” (63). Tanto el orden espiritual como el social se ven afectados por la violación de dichos límites aceptados del matrimonio y las relaciones familiares. La tormenta del exterior, el viento golpeando las ventanas y las nubes oprimiendo la casa, como si el edificio estuviera jadeando, indica que este mundo prevé el fin de Roderick y Madeline. Debido a que los tres, unidos en una existencia depravada, se encuentran fuera del orden natural, perecerán. David Grantz lo compara con “all elements come crashing inward, consummating yet another dance in a cycle of dances” (Grantz, 2001). Sólo cuando Madeline y Roderick acaban juntos en un último abrazo mortal, la Casa Usher se derrumba y abraza también a sus dueños sumergiéndolos en el “the deep and dark tarn [...] which closed sullenly and silently over the fragments of the “House of Usher” (Poe, 1996: 335).

Se puede observar cómo existen numerosos paralelismos entre el argumento de “La Casa Usher” y el “Rey Tullido”. El atormentado gobernante que reside en su afligido reino es visitado por alguien que intenta curar al rey y el reino y, al final, se restablecen (aunque, desde luego, no de la manera esperada). Fiel a la forma, Poe desvirtúa este tema. En vez de estar herido injustamente, Roderick se provoca a sí mismo una “herida” en los “muslos”. En vez de una hermosa reina, Roderick es emparejado con su hermana, Madeline. Se observa una conexión definitiva entre el señor y su tierra. Sin embargo, la casa parece poseer un alma propia provocando que la enfermedad se transmita de generación en generación y que el señor esté siendo influenciado negativamente por la misma casa en la que vive. Encontramos al “héroe” de Poe, el narrador, que parece ser de naturaleza bastante altruista, si bien un tanto cuestionable en algunos aspectos, pero que es incapaz de proporcionar la ayuda que Roderick necesita para curarse (si acaso eso es posible). La única curación que Poe ofrece a su “Rey Tullido”, a su corte y a su reino es su desaparición. En solo un instante, caen a la tierra y son devorados por ella: una perspectiva verdaderamente retorcida y distorsionada de la tradicional historia medieval.

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# #01

# “THE FALL OF THE HOUSE OF USHER”: ERREGE ELBARRIA POEREN IKUSPUNTUTIK

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**Laburpena** || Erdi Aroko literatura gaiak eragin handia izan zuten ondorengo belaunaldietako obretan, nahiz eta egileak ez ziren eragin honen jabe. Poerengan Erdi Aroko gai herrikoia zen “Errege Elbarritua”ren eragina islatzen da “The Fall of the House of Usher” istorio laburrean. Gai tematiko hau, erdi arotik datorrena, Arturo erregea eta Grial Santuaren bilaketari buruzko kondairetan egin zen ezagun. Ez dago argi Poek nahita sortu ote zuen gai tradizional honen interpretazio gotikoa; dena dela, “Usher”rengan eragina izan zuen. Lan honetan istorio horren irakurketa sakona egin eta “Errege Elbarrituaren” kontzeptuarekin konparatzen da. Horrela, bien artean antzekotasunak daudela frogatzen da, eta Erdi Aroak XIX mendeko Ameriketako fikzio idazle nagusienetako batean, Edgar Allan Poerengan, eragina izan zuela demostratzen da.

**Hitzak** || Poe | “The Fall of the House of Usher” | Errege elbarria | XIX mendea | Mediebalismoa.

**Abstract** || The themes of medieval literature had a profound effect on the works that would follow in later generations regardless of the writer’s recognition of this influence, and one can see the way Poe leaves traces of the popular medieval motif of the “Maimed King” in his short story, “The Fall of the House of Usher”. This thematic device, which predates the medieval period, gained prominence in the tales of King Arthur and the Grail Quest. Although there is no clear indication that Poe intentionally set out to create a gothic rendition of this traditional theme, that does not discount the possibility of “Usher” having been conditioned in some respect by this medieval notion. Through implementing a close reading of the story and comparing it to a framework of this conception of the “Maimed King”, this paper points out a number of striking similarities between the two, as well as demonstrates the far-reaching influence of medievalism in one of nineteenth-century America’s preeminent fiction writers, Edgar Allan Poe.

**Keywords** || Poe | “The Fall of the House of Usher” | “Maimed King” | XIX century | Medievalism.



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“Errege Elbarriaren” gaia Erdi Aroan azaltzen zaigu lehen aldiz. Gaixotasun edo zauri baten ondorioz bere herrialdean bakea eta ordena ezartzeko gaitasuna galdu duen agintari bat da Errege Elbarria. Bere lurrek galdu dute lehenago zuten armonia eta zoriona, eta izugarritzko galeran sartu dira. Gertakari honek erregea eta bere erreinuaren arteko harreman sinbiotikoa agerian uzten du –baten ongizateak zuzenean izango du eragina bestearengan–. Lurraldea sendatuko da soilik erregea sendatzen bada; horrela ezarriko da ordena erreinu osoan..

Edgar Allan Poeren “The Fall of the House of Usher” istorio laburrean Roderick Usher aurkezten zaigu, Usher Etxearen azken oinordekoa. Roderick Usherrek Errege Elbarriaren antzeko ezaugarriak biltzen ditu, baina modu nahasiagoan. Madelinekin intzestu harreman bat izan duela iradokitzen zaigu (bai pentsamenduan izan zein ekintzetan), eta anai-arrebak ezkontzearen aukera errez ikusi dezakegu Ushertarren Etxean –bietan, familian zein etxean, azken hori zentzu fisikoan hartuta–. Hala ere, Erdi Aroko Errege Elbarriaren kasuan ez bezala, Roderick sendatzeko modu bakarra Madelin da. Azkenean, Ushertarren etxe osoak amaitzen du heriotzara bidean. Beraz, Errege Elbarriaren motiboaren irudirik eroena eta galduena ematen digu Poek istorio honetan.

“The Fall of the House of Usher” eta Erdi Aroko Errege Elbarriaren gaiaren artean konparazioak egiteko, beharrezkoa da, lehenbizi, Erdi Aroko gai hori zer den azaltzea. Roger Loomisek oso ondo laburbiltzen du: Errege Elbarria da “the mortal hero [that] visits a supernatural place, is hospitably entertained, witnesses strange happenings, and sometimes wakes in the morning to find that his host and dwelling have disappeared” (Loomis, 1991: 47). Loomisek ez du esan nahi heroia Errege Elbarria denik, baizik eta norbanakoa, zeina “was invited by the [...] King to his home” (Loomis, 1991: 48). “The king is most often described as being “wounded through the thighs or the legs [...] entertained his guests sumptuously,” eta bere agintepean zegoen “a country laid under a spell which can be lifted only by the asking of a question” (Loomis, 1991: 54). Badaukagu, beraz, Errege Elbarriaren testuingurua: herrialde bateko agintari bat izterrean zauritua izan da (iradokitzen du sexu-organoak direla, eta beraz sexurako gaitasuna galtzen duela) eta ondorioz bere erreinua galeran sartzen da. Sendatu eta ordena berrezartzeko heroi bat eskatzen du. Azken honek bai erregea zein erreinua gaztetu ditzake eta osasuna eta zorientasuna ekarri. Thomas Maloryren *Le Morte D’Arthur*ren argi azaltzen da erreinua eta agintariaren arteko harreman hau:

Balyn saw the spere he gate hit in hy honed and turned to kynge Pellam and felde hym and smote hym passyngly sore with that spere, that kynge Pellam [felle] downe in a sowghe. And therewith the castell brake rooffe and wallis and felle downe to the erthe [...] and moste party of that castell was dede throrow the dolorous stroke. Ryght so lay kynge Pellam [...] sore wounded, and might never be hole tulle that Galaad the Hawte Prynce heled hym in the queste of the Sankgreal. (Malory, 1971: 53-4)

Adibide honek ondo azaltzen du motiboa zertan datzan bere jatorrizko erabileran. Sir Balinek (zaldun trebe eta gazteak) Pellam erregea zauritzen du eta zauri honek bai erregea zein lurraldea galzorira eramaten ditu. Galahad eta Grial Santua etortzen diren arte ez da ordena berrezartzen Pellam erregearen erreinuan. Baina, Roderick Usherrekin konparatzeko orduan, antzekotasunak badauden arren, ikusiko dugu Poeren lana beste norabide batean doala.

Istoria Roderick Usheren umetako lagun batekin hasten da, “a letter from him... out of an earnest desire to see me... with a view of attempting, by the cheerfulness of my society, some alleviation of his malady” (Poe, 1996: 318) jasotzen duenean. Roderickek, heroiak bezalaxe, narratzaileari dei egiten dio honek sendatu dezan (edo behintzat gaixotasuna arindu dezan) bere “mental disorder which oppressed him” (Poe, 1996: 318). Ez zaigu oraindik esaten zein gaixotasun mota duen Roderickek. Narratzaileak, ordea, aipatzen du: “the stem of the Usher race, all-time honored as it was, had put forth, at no period, any enduring branch... the entire family lay in the direct line of descent” (Poe, 1996: 318). Baliteke esaldi horrekin iradoki nahi izatea Usherrtarrean intzestua gertatu izan dela. Paralelo bat egin daiteke era honetako sexu-ekintza baten (pentsatua zein ekintzetara eramana), arima “zauritzen” duen bekatu bat delako, eta “gauzak zauritzearen” artean, Errege Elbarrituaren kasuan gertatu bezala. Garrantzitsua da ulertzea ez dela zuzenean esaten Roderickek eta bere arreba Madelinek sexu-harremanak izan zituztenik edo nahi izan zituztenik; zalantza zantzuak testu osoan zehar dira ageriak. Izan ere, Rodericken ekintzak susmagarriak dira ikuspuntu honetatik begiratzuz gero. Bere “zauri” hori eta familia eta etxearen jabea dela kontutan hartuz gero, Roderick eta Errege Elbarriaren arteko antzekotasunak nabarmen agertzen zaizkigu.

Istorioak aurrera egin ahala, Poek gertaera gehiago aurkezten ditu, antzekotasun horiek sendotuz. Loomisek esan bezala, Errege Elbarriaren lurrak naturaz gaindiko eremuan daude. Agintariaren zauriak eragindako madarikazio baten pean daude –gizona eta lurraren arteko lotura honek eragiten du bataren ongizateak bestearrean eragina izatea–. Pellam zauritu eta gero, Sir Balinek gaztelua utzi eta honakoa jakiten du: “so he rode for the [...] and founde the peple dede sleyne on every side [...] for the dolorous stroke gaff unto Pellam thes three contryes ar destroyed” (Malory,

1971: 54).

Poeren egokitzapenean narratzaileak Usher sendia bizi den etxearen deskribapen luzea egiten du: “vacant eye-like windows [...] minute fungi overspread the whole exterior [...] no portion of the masonry had fallen; and there seemed to be [...] the crumbling condition of the individual stones” and running through it all, “a barely perceptible fissure [that] made its way down the wall [...] until it became lost in the sullen water” (Poe, 1996: 318-320). Narratzaileak etxe izugarri zahar bat aurkezten dio irakurleari. Badirudi estaltzen duten landareek eusten dutela; izan ere, gainbehera izugarrian dago eta ezinezkoa da bakarrik zutik mantentzea. Garrantzitsua da narratzaileak aipatzen duen pitzadura, etxea gurutzatzen duen hori. Rodericken gaixotasunaren ondorioak ikusten joango garen heinean, ikusiko dugu pitzadura honek nola bere “erreinua” ere hartzen duen. Silvermanek dio harri hauek, itxuran sendoak, benetan ustelak direla, belaunaldiz belaunaldi intzestua praktikatu izanaren ondorioz Ushertarrenean dagoen “expressions of deficiency”ak erakusten baitituzte (Silverman, 1993: 60-61). Onartzen badugu agintariak bere agintepean dagoen lurrarekiko naturaz gaindiko harremana duela, orduan etxearen egoera hau zeinu argi bat da, agerian uzten baitu Roderick zorigaiztokoa dela eta ondorioz bere patua iluna dela.

Poek harreman hau gehiago garatzen du: The Fall of the House of Usherren harreman sinbiotiko hau erabat kaltegarria da, lurraldearen egoerak eragina izan dezakeelako bere agintariarengan –eta ez bakarrik agintariaren egoerak lurraldearengan–. Roderickek erreferentzia zuzena egiten du: “the sentience of all vegetable things [...] connected (as previously suggested) with the gray stones of the home of his forefathers, fulfilled in the method of collocation of these stones” (Poe, 1996: 327). Aurrera jarraitzen du azalduz zein den harremana harri hauen artean eta “the many fungi spread over them [...] was to be seen [...] in the gradual yet certain condensation of an atmosphere” (Poe, 1996: 327-8). Roderickek sinisten du familiaren eta etxearen artean harremana dagoela. Gainera, bere ustetan etxea ere bizirik dago; horren erakusle argiak dira etxea inguratzen duen landaretza eta bere lurretan zabaltzen doan lainoa. Poek jabea eta bere lurren arteko muga lausoaren ideia indartzen du nekazariak narratzaileari esaten diotenean denborak “merge[d] the original title of the estate in the quaint and equivocal appellation of the “House of Usher” [...] which seemed to include [...] both the family and the family mansion” (Poe, 1996: 319). Etxea bizirik dago, eta Ushertarrekin duen lotura honen bidez baduela “terrible influence that has for centuries moulded the destinies of his family” (Poe, 1996: 328). Ushertarren “desbideratu ezineko oinordetzak” etxea zeharkatzen duen pitzadura eragin du; badirudi etxeak berak jabeei ordaindu arazten diela familiaren oinordetza trakestu izana.

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Hain zuzen, Roderickek berak bere burua honelaxe aurkezten du: "suppositious force [...] in the mere form and substance of his family [...] had obtained over his spirit –an effect which the physique of the gray walls [...] had brought about upon the morale of his existence–" (Poe, 1996: 328).

Narratzailea Madelini labur-labur aurkezten zaio emakumea "hil" aurretik. "Tenderly beloved sister" dela esaten du eta bere "approaching dissolutiona" gaixotasun misterioitsu baten ondorio dela, "partially catelyptical character" a duena sintoma nagusi, eta horrek eragiten duela hilda dagoela ematen duen itxura (Poe, 1996: 323). Arratsaldean, "closing of the evening", heltzen da narratzailea eta Madeline "succumbed to the power of the destroyer", eta badirudi hil egin dela (Poe, 1996: 324). Roderickek dio gustatuko litzaiokeela Madelinen gorpua etxearen azpian dagoen kriptan gordetzea, lapurrengandik babesteko. Madelinen hiletan narratzaileak bi datu garrantzitsu ematen ditu: lehengoa da emakumearen aurpegi eta bularraren kolorea, zalantzan jartzen duena ea benetan hil ote den eta bigarrena da Madeline eta Roderick anai-arreba bikiak zirela.

Garrantzitsuak diren bi detaile dira. Lehenbizi, esan dugu dagoeneko Madelinek "hildako" baten itxura zuela eta erraza dela, beraz, okertu eta hilda dagoela uste izatea –aurrekoetan hori bera gertatu izan dela adierazten da–. Bigarren, Roderickek onartzen du "sympathies of a scarcely intelligible nature [that] had always existed between them" (Poe, 1996: 329). Bigarren puntua bereziki garrantzitsua da, ikusi dugun bezala, Roderick eta Ushertarren etxearen artean dagoen harremana maltzurra delako. Gure buruari galdetu arazten digu Madeline eta Roderickek harreman sinbiotikoren bat ere izan ote duten beraien artean, eta ondorioz, hiru entitateak (Roderickek, Madelinek eta etxeak) izate bateratu baten atal ote diren. Izan ere, Thomas Mabbottek honakoa aipatzen du: "The House of Usher has only one soul which has its abode in the mansion, and in the members of the family [...] since they are twins and childless, this soul is interdependent with them and the building [...] if one dies, all must perish together" (Mabbott, 2000: 394). Honek indartu besterik ez luke egingo agintaria eta bere jabetzaren artean lotura bat dagoela. Ez dugu ahaztu behar, hala ere, narratzaileak Madelinen egoera azaltzean adierazten duen lehen puntua. Bere osasun-egoera deskribatzen duenean irakurleak ulertzen du emakumea ez dagoela hilda eta bizirik ari direla ehorzten. Norberak bere buruari galdetu behar dio zein ote den Rodericken arrazoa Madeline ehorzteko beraien artean nolabaiteko harremana egon baldin bada.

Kenneth Silvermanek baieztatzen du Roderickek bere izatearen zati bat hil nahi duela Madeline garaiz kanpo ehorztearekin, eta bere arazoak "are only overcome by self-annihilation" (Silverman, 1991:

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151). Gero, esaten du Roderickek ezingo duela arazo hau ekidin bere bikia bere izatearen zati delako, eta beraz, Madelinek eta berak partekatzen dituzten gauzak saihestezinak direla –“nothing stays buried” (Silverman, 1991: 150)–. Hau argi eta garbi geratzen da Madelinen ehorzketa eta gero Roderickek duen jarrerarengatik: dolu kanta tristeak abesten eta margotzen hasten da; barruko tristura hori arintzeko jardun artistiko anitzetan murgiltzen da. Nahiz eta eguneroko gauza ezagunak eginez bere pena arintzen saiatzen den, “his ordinary manner had vanished. His ordinary occupations were neglected or forgotten” (Silverman, 1991: 150). Argi dago ezin diola gertakari horri ihes egin, eta Roderickek ziur aski badaki hori bere sakon-sakonean. Silvermanek dioen bezala, “Madeline’s body was not properly disposed but kept in the house” (Silverman, 1991: 151). Roderickek dio hilobia lapurtuko ote duten beldur dela, baina suposatu daiteke Madelinen gorpua etxean gorde nahi izate horrek bi esanahi izan ditzakeela: “the past endures due to the characters’ enamorment with it” (Silverman, 1991: 150). Sentitzen duen maitasunak eragiten dio Rodericki Madeline gertu mantendu nahi izatea hilda badago ere. Ez du lurperatu nahi, eta honek berriro agerian uzten du bere “wound in the thighs”, izterretan duen zauria zein den –bere arrebarekiko duen lilurak berriz ere iradokitzen digu bien arteko harremana–. Arreba garaia baino lehenago ehortzi nahi izatea “probak estaltzeko” modu bat besterik ez da, inork jakin ez dezan Roderickek eta Madelinek harremana amaierara eraman dutela (edo hori gertatu ez dadin). Aurrerago narratzaileari onartzen dio Madelinen ahotsa ehortzi eta gero ere entzuten zuela, baina ez zela hitz egitera ausartzen (Poe, 1996: 334). Baina, Roderickek kezka hori benetan baldin bazuen bere arrebarekiko, zergatik onartzen du bizirik ehorztea etxeko kriptan? Intzestua gertatu dela iradokitzen duen beste zantzu bat da protagonistak elkarri lotutako bi gorputzak etxean mantendu nahi dituela. Orain arte beren izpirituek Ushertarren etxeko toki guztietan egin izan dutena fisikoki gertatu denaren adierazle da –hirurak fisikoki eta espiritualki lotuta baitaude–. Silvermanek honela adierazten du: “latent in the undercurrent of an apparent sexual incestuous wish is the wish for spiritual merger” (Silverman, 1993: 62). Istorioaren amaieran are argiago ikusten da.

Aurretik azaldu bezala, Errege Elbarriak bere aginte ahalmena berriro izateko eta osasuna eta zorientasuna bere erreinura berrekarri ahal izateko, lagunduko dion heroi bat aurkitu behar du. Poek narratzailea ematen dio Roderick Usherri; hala ere, hau ez da “Sir Galahad”en moduko pertsona bat. “Though the narrator strives to impress us with his altruism and therapeutic zeal, one suspects that he has responded to Roderick’s summons in order to gratify his personal quest” (Silverman, 1993: 55). Zergatik nahi duen narratzaileak Rodericki lagundu honakoa esatean azaleratzen da: “many years had elapsed since our last meeting [...] I knew little of my friend” (Poe, 1996: 318).

Esaten zaiguna da ezagutzen duela Ushertarren "peculiar sense of temperament [...] in many works of art, and manifest of late, in repeated deeds of munificent yet unobtrusive charity" (Poe, 1996: 318). Istorioko beste zenbait gertakariarekin egiten duen bezala, Poek ez du zuzenean esaten zein den narratzailearen benetako asmoa, baina nabarmena da beste interes batzuk ere badituela. Hala ere, honek ez du esan nahi narratzailea arrazoi pertsonalengatik soilik joaten dela laguntza ematera. Besterik gabe, Poek egiten duen bakarra da zaldun atsegin eskuzabalaren motiboa apur bat aldatu.

Narratzaileak Roderick lasaitu nahi duenez, bai bera zein protagonista nagusia arte mota desberdinak probatzen hasten dira. Badirudi dolu kantuek abestuz, gitarra joz eta margotzen Roderickek bere gaixotasunak eragiten dion kezka ahaztuko duela; baina ez da hala gertatzen, ez baitu bilatzen zuen sendabidea aurkitzen. Errege Elbarriaren istorioan beti azaltzen da beste norbait sendatzeko ahalmena duen horren ikono gisa, askotan Grial Santua. Grial hau erregeari ematen zaio eta agintaria eta bere lurak sendatzen dira. Rodericken kasuan, sendatzeko ahalmena duen objektu hori artea da. "The Haunted Place" olerkian Roderickek hirugarren estrofan deskibatzen du nolakoa izango ote zen Ushertarren Etxea egoera ideal batean: "Spirits moving musically [...] in his state of glory well befitting/ the ruler of the realm was seen" (Poe, 1996: 322). Rodericken irudi eraberritua ematen digu honek. Baina, olerkia ez da honela amaitzen, baizik eta: "evil things, in robes of sorrow/ assail[ing] the monarch's high estate" followed by his fall (Poe, 1996: 322). Izenik gabeko gauza maltzur honek erregea eta bere erreinuaren gainbehera eragiten du, "discordant melody" egoeran utzita; amaiera hori beste egile batzuek ekidingo zuten (Poe, 1996: 322). Oso maltzurra den zerbaitek lurraldea, erregea eta istorioa bide onetik eramango duen gauza bakarra –arte– hartu ditu.

Egongelan eserita, narratzaileak Rodericki "The Mad Trist" irakurtzen dio –"uncouth and unimaginative prolixity that could have little interest for the loft and spiritual identity of my friend" (Poe, 1996: 322) besterik ez dena–. Narratzaileak Rodericken arreta beste nonbaitera eraman nahi du, istorioa irakurtzeak aldi baterako sendatu dezan. Ez da benetako artelan bat eta ez dio inolako lasaitasunik ekarriko Rodericki. Poek ez du Roderick hori uzten, osatuko duen horren zain; modu harrigarri batean ekarriko dio sendagaia, Errege Elbarrituaren tradizioan ezagutzen ez den moduan.

Lasaitu ordez, narratzaileak istorioa irakurtzen jarraitzen duen heinean Roderick gero eta gehiago urduritzen da. Roderick konturatzen da Madeline bizirik atera dela hilobitik eta kriptatik ateratzen saiatzen ari zela. Gizonarengana heltzean esaten dio: "Madman! I tell you she now stands without the door!" (Poe, 1996:

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335). Ematen zaigun ondorengo irudia Madeline Usherren odolarena da, jantzi zurian sakabanatuta, borroka latza egon denaren seinale (Poe, 1996: 335). Gero, Rodericken gainera erori eta, lurra jo baino lehen, biak hiltzen dira, bata bestearen gainean. Ezkontza-arropak odoletan eta gorputz bat bestearen gainean ezarrita, argi dago orain Roderick eta Madelinen arteko harremanean intzestua egon dela. “Madeline’s return from the walled off place [...] represents the return of Usher’s repressed desires and the granting of his forbidden wishes” (Silverman, 1993: 63). Heriotza eszena hau lotura sexual edo/eta espiritual baten isla den edo ez alde batera utzita, argi dago Madelinen azken jokabide honek “represents a destruction of the symbolic order and violation of social morality” (Silverman, 1993: 63). Gizarte ordena eta ordena espirituala, biak urratzen ditu ezkontza eta familia harreman hauek gainditzea onartzen dituen giroa da nagusi. Kanpoan dagoen ekaitzak, leihoetatik sartzen den haizeak eta etxearen aurka presioa egiten duten hodeiek, eraikinari arnasa hartzen utziko ez baliote bezala, Roderick eta Madelinek harremana mantendu dutela iradokitzen dute. Hirurak eroriko dira, ordena naturalaren aurka baitaude konektatuta bata bestearekin. David Grantzek gertakari hori honela lotzen du: “all elements come crashing inward, consummating yet another dance in a cycle of dances” (Grantz, 2001). Madeline eta Roderick amaieran elkartzeko direnean, heriotza-besarkada batean, Ushertarren etxea erortzen da, bi jabeak berak ere besarkatuko balitu bezala eta “the deep and dark tarn [...] which closed sullenly and silently over the fragments of the “House of Usher”era eramanez (Poe, 1996: 335).

Argi dago paralelismoak daudela “The House of Usher” eta Errege Elbarriaren gaiaren artean. Gaixotutako erregea gaixotutako lurraldean bizi da, eta sendagaia ekarriko dion norbaiten bisita jasotzen du. Amaieran egoera normaltzea lortzen du –Poeren istorioan espero ez dugun moduan gertatzen da hau–. Forma errespetatzen badu ere, motiboa aldatzen du Poek. Zauria konturatu gabe egin ordez, Roderickek “zauri bat” dauka “izterretan”. Erregina ederraren ordez, Rodericken bikotekidea bere arreba da, Madeline. Ez da jauntxoa eta lurraren arteko harremana argi ikusten; horren ordez, badirudi etxeak berezko jokabidea duela. Ondorioz, bertako nagusiek belaunaldiz belaunaldi egindako intzestuak etxea bera ere gaixotzen du. Bestalde, etxeak berak jabearen osasunean eragina dauka. Poeren heroia, narratzailea, modu altruistan agertzen da, baina ez da gai Rodericki behar duen sendabidea emateko –hori posible ote den ere zalantzan jartzekoa da–. Poek bere Errege Elbarriari, gorteari eta lurrei eskaintzen dien sendabide bakarra hauek zigortzea da. Momentu batean, lurrera erori eta desagertu egiten dira –Erdi Aroko istorio honen benetan aldrebestutako eta aldatutako ikuspuntua, beraz–.

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