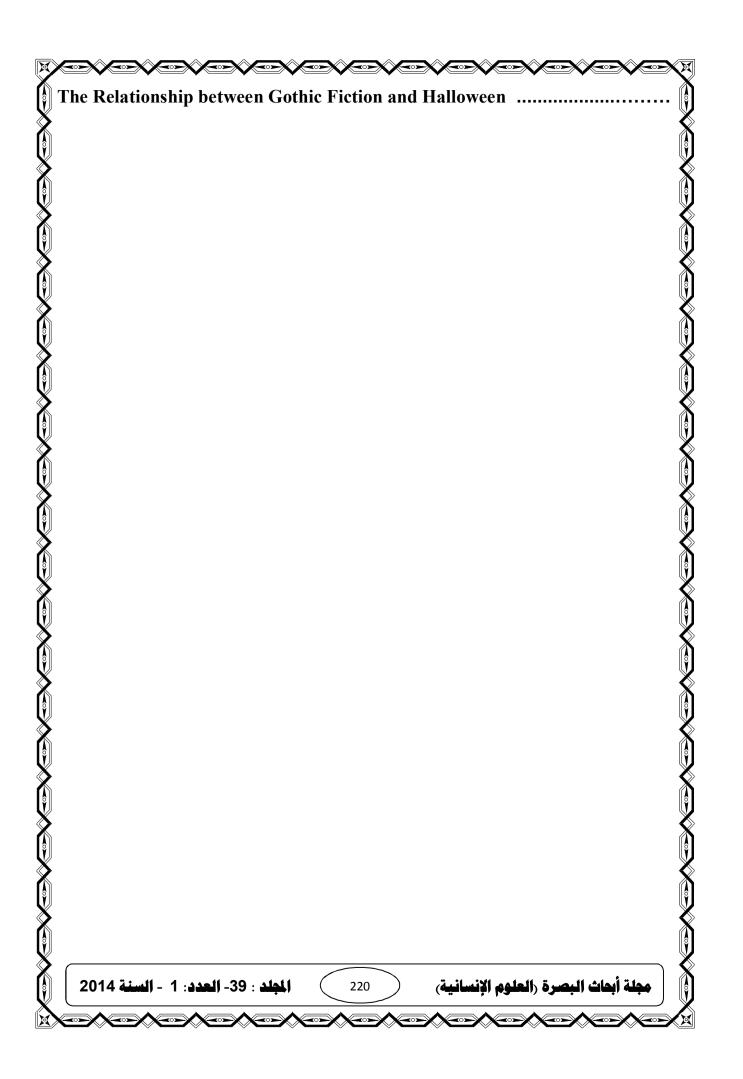# The Relationship between Gothic Fiction and Halloween with Reference to Poe's The Masque of the Red Death

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## الخلاصة

تستكشف هذه الدراسة العلاقة بين ادب الرعب القوطي و الهالوين (عيد القدّيسين)، بما ان كليهما يستخدم عناصر مخيفة وسارة لترفيه الناس. تعتمد الدراسة على ثلاث اسس نظرية و هي الادب القوطي و ادب الهالوين و نظرية باختين الكرنفالية في محاولة لسبر اغوار قصة 'قناع الموت الأحمر' للكاتب الاميركي ادغار الان بو الذي اشتهرت قصصه بأجوائها المرعبة و بتناولها لموضوع الموت و ما بعده . جاءت النتائج لتؤكد ان القصة موضع البحث 'قناع الموت الأحمر' احتوت على مزيج من الادب القوطي بما انها تدور حول الرعب و الموت، كما انها قصة هالوين لأنها تتعلق بمهرجانات الرعب كما انها غنية بالاجواء الاحتفالية و الكرنفالية.

## Abstract

This study explores the relationship between Gothic fiction and Halloween as both use scary yet pleasing elements to entertain people. Further, the theoretical basis of this study makes use of Bakhtin's notion of Carnivalesque, which refers to a literary mode that subverts and frees the assumptions of the dominant style or atmosphere through humour and chaos. Edger Allan Poe's Gothic short story *The Masque of the Red Death* (henceforth ***MRD***) is chosen for this study, since it is both a Gothic story that centers around horror and death, and a Halloween story that invests horror festivals.

## Introduction

Literature as the art of the written word purposes, among others, to save the human heritage, promotes the intellectuality of human being and noticeably lets people read and enjoy it. Recently, readers have become eager to taste new literary genres other than the traditional ones. This has revived Gothic fiction, a genre that uses horror as a means to amuse people. Gothic fiction used to lodge in Folklore, the oral literature and popular tradition preserved among the people. It consists of legends, music, oral history, proverbs, jokes, popular beliefs, fairy tales, stories, tall tales, rituals, practices and customs that are the heritage of cultures, subcultures, or groups. The revival of these practices and rituals is to save human heritage not to mention entertainment. Halloween is one of the folklore practices that use horror, strange and scary costumes for celebration and enjoyment. It is an annual holiday celebrated mainly by Christians. Halloween activities include attending costume parties, ghost tours, bonfires, apple bobbing,

visiting haunted attractions, telling scary stories, and watching horror films. Accordingly, Halloween uses the same Gothic tools to scare and entertain people.

This study attempts to explore the presence of Gothic hand in hand with Halloween elements in Poe's *MRD* being both a Gothic and Halloween story. To find out the relationships between Gothic Fiction and Halloween, Bakhtin's notion of Carnivalesque is adopted to examine Edger Allan Poe's *MRD*. Further, the study touches on the notion of contrariness or oppositeness where opposed elements of horror and pleasure seem to operate jointly despite their disparity. Poe's *MRD* seems to be ideal for such an investigation as it is rich in both the Gothic and Halloween perspectives, not to mention that it blends elements relevant to both humor and horror elements.

## Gothic Fiction: An Overview

The word 'Gothic' refers to many things according to the context in which it comes. First, it refers to the Germanic tribes called 'Goths' who settled in Europe from the third to fifth centuries AD. Second, it is thought to have come from the Germanic tribes that invaded England at one point of history. These tribes are thought to be the same as the Jutes who lived in Denmark and what is now North Germany and the name was changed or mistakenly used for Goths with the passage of time (Andersen et. al, 1998, online). Third, in architecture, it refers to "a revival…or a cultural reconstruction…of a medieval aesthetic that was in vogue in Britain from the early eighteenth to the late nineteenth century" (Smith, 2008: 2).

The Goths were barbarians who destroyed the classical Roman civilization and threw the civilized world into centuries of ignorance and darkness (Ellis, 2000: 22). As a German tribe which lived on the northern and eastern borders of the Roman Empire, the Goths invaded the Empire with the help of the Lombards, Vandals and Huns. They crossed the Danube and defeated the Roman forces many times before they controlled Rome in 410 AD. Despite the fact that the Goths founded their own kingdom, they were described, unfairly, as destroyers and tyrants, and not as founders of new Empire or civilization. In England, the Goth is a blanket term for the German tribes, including the Angles, Saxons and Jutes who settled England after 449 AD (ibid).

In the eighteenth century, the term Goth was revised and transformed from a term connoting unfavorable and ruinous, to a more positive and confident understanding. The emergence of the Gothic as a literary genre "represents one of the defining moments when the older chivalric past was idealized at the expense of a classical past". The term 'Gothic' no longer represents an error of taste or corrupting influence, but rather a positive attribute. The past is revalued and it is found that the Gothic is superior to the present (Ellis, 2000: 23). Similarly, the Gothic was:

> A general and derogatory term for the Middle Ages…conjured up ideas of barbarous customs and practices, of superstition, ignorance, extravagant fancies and natural wildness. Manifestations of the Gothic past - buildings, ruins, songs and romances - were treated as products of uncultivated if not childish minds. But characteristics like extravagance, superstition, fancy and wildness which were initially considered in negative terms became associated, in the course of the 18th century, with a more expansive and imaginative potential for aesthetic production (Botting, 1996: 22).

Both of the Goths and the Gothic Architecture may be combined together and, then, can refer to Gothic Fiction. Since the Goths were barbaric tribes, the term Gothic Architecture could have been called after them, since, as stated above, this kind of architecture is also associated with these barbaric German tribes. Accordingly, though some state that the Gothic Fiction has nothing to do with either the Goths themselves, or with the Gothic Architecture, the three entities, that is to say the Goths, the Gothic Architecture and Gothic Fiction, are very relevant in that they all refer to characteristics of barbarism, horror, fear and everything that is unusual.

As to the reason behind the emergence of the Gothic fiction, Botting states that the Gothic could have emerged as a reaction to the Enlightenment movement in the eighteenth century, which was an age of reason and rationalism. He adds that "Enlightenment rationalism displaced religion as the authoritative mode of explaining the universe and altered conceptions of relations between individuals and natural, supernatural and social worlds" (ibid: 23). Gothic works, with their disturbing ambivalence which can be seen as reactions to fear and anxiety, therefore lend themselves as instruments which could be used in an attempt to explain and debate that which the Enlightenment had left unexplained. These attempts also aimed to "reconstruct the divine mysteries that reason had begun to dismantle, to recuperate pasts and histories that offered a performance and unity in excess of the limits of rational and moral order" (Botting, 1996:23).

The growth of Gothic style was given a new push in the mid-eighteenth century when beliefs of the Enlightenment appeared praising the virtue of rationality. These ideas were not accepted in Britain by the Romantics at the end of the eighteenth century. They argued that "the complexity of human being could not be explained by inhuman rationalism" (Smith, 2008: 2). The Romantics believed that the world of emotions and imagination exceeded the world of rationalism. The Gothic is closely related to these Romantic ideas, since the role of irrational could play the role of criticizing the rational. This view of irrational

versus rational is supported by philosophies that explored the limits of thought and feeling.

Edmund Burke suggests that "the sublime (a key Romantic concept) was associated with the feeling of Terror". According to him "transgressive [and] frightening feelings…are the most powerful that people are subject to and therefore the most sublime". Immanuel Kant, in his philosophical accounts of the sublime, observed a distinction between "nomena (a world of objects) and noumena (a world of ideas)" trying to distinguish between the mind and the external world (ibid: 2). In Kant's dichotomy, 'noumena' is important because Gothic focuses on thoughts and feelings. For him, the sublime indicates the limits of subjective experience. The Gothic shares some anti-Enlightenment ideas since it focuses on thought and feelings, while the Enlightenment focuses on mind only. It is also important to admit that the early Gothic relied on a particular setting such as "castles, monasteries, and ruins, and with characters, such as aristocrats, monks, and nuns" (ibid: 3).

Coleridge, in one of his lectures on medieval literature in 1818, reinforced the idea that there is an analogy between the Gothic literature and Gothic history. He argued that "the rude and uncivilized manners of 'our remote ancestors from the forests of Germany, or the deep dells and rocky mountains of Norway' made an important contribution to the predilections and general tone or habit of thought or feeling of English literature and culture"(Ellis, 2000: 24). Accordingly, the Gothic was not the "destroyer of the civilized values of classical Rome", but it was rather considered to be "the source of some of the unique, valuable, and essential elements in English literature" (Ellis, 2000: 24).

**Gothic Fiction and Halloween**

The origin of what is known as Halloween in the Western culture is thought to be pagan, though its etymology is Christian. The word 'Halloween' is derived from "All Hallow Even, or the eve of All Saints' day", which is the first of November and it is taken together with All Souls' Day, on the 2 November. In the Christian calendar, this time is assigned to honor the saints and the newly departed. Since Halloween is associated with the supernatural, it is believed to have strong pagan roots, which was not eliminated by the subsequent Christianization. Halloween had been linked to the Celtic festival of Samhain or Samuin, which means the end of summer. The Samhain, an old pastoral and agricultural festival, refers to the four quarter days, when the summer goes to its rest in the Medieval Irish calendar. Samhain refers also to the winter and the dark nights ahead (Rogers, 2003: 11).

The feast of Samhain was "the occasion of stock-taking and ingathering, of recognizing communities for the winter months, including the preparation of quarters for itinerant warriors and shamans". This period is also the time for

supernatural intensity, when the forces of darkness and decay were said to be abroad. And to get rid of these spirits, the Irish built huge and symbolically regenerative bonfires and invoked the help of gods through animal and perhaps human sacrifice. Not all writers agree to the rituals of the feast, but what many stress the fact that it has primitive elements and its legacy contributes to the form of Halloween, especially its omens, propitiations and its links to the otherworld, the world of the dead (ibid: 12).

The idea of sacrifice and especially human sacrifice linked to the sacrifice in Samhain, came from the pens of Strabo, Julius Caesar and Diodorus who referred to "the huge human-like wicker structures into which living men were cast before they perished in fire". Julius Caesar himself believed that "unless for a man's life a man's life be paid, the majority of the immortal gods may not be appeased" (ibid: 15). The sanguinary aspect of Samhain is represented by the annual slaughter of animals to reduce livestock in the months of winter rather than the ritual killing of humans whether criminals or first-born children or tribal enemies. The fact that Samhain is a pagan feast does not root from its sacrificial evidence, but from a different set of practices, which revolve around the fact that Samhain is a festival of the dead and a time of supernatural intensity referring to the beginning of the winter (Rogers, 2003: 19).Some argue that Samhain is a satanic feast and thus Halloween is a satanic ritual as well, simply because the two glorify the dead and the notion of sacrifice. The concept of 'Satanism' is somehow thought to be of a Christian creation, since it appeared after the struggle between the Gods of Light and the Gods of Darkness represented by the fall of the rebel angel, Lucifer (ibid: 13).

The relationship between Gothic fiction and Halloween is apparent in the sense that both of them have many features in common. Gothic fiction and Halloween, both of which originated in Europe, are similar in that the former originated from barbarous superstitious customs and practices, natural wildness, and songs and romances of childish minds. The latter originated from pagan celebration in the form of pastoral and agricultural festivals, devoted to getting rid of the spirits and forces of darkness and decay and the glorification of the dead when the days of summer end. Thus both of the two have their origins in social customs and norms that are devoted to the supernatural world or the world of the dead. The most important mutual theme in Gothic fiction and Halloween is the use of elements of horror. In both, such themes as horror, death, monsters, and such characters as vampires, ghosts, skeletons, witches, and devils are strongly present.

On the one hand, the prominent features of Gothic fiction include psychological and physical terror, mystery, the supernatural, ghosts, haunted houses, Gothic architecture, castles, abbeys, darkness, death, decay, doubles,

madness, secrets, and hereditary curses (De Vore, 2010: 1). The characters typical of this genre include tyrants, villains, bandits, maniacs, Byronic heroes, persecuted maidens, monks, nuns, madwomen, magicians, vampires, werewolves, monsters, demons, angels, fallen angels, revenants, ghosts, skeletons, and the Devil himself. On the other hand, the most obvious features of Halloween are costume parties, haunted houses, cemeteries. Halloween's themes tend to involve death, evil, the occult, magic, and mythical monsters. Traditional characters include the Devil, the Grim Reaper, ghosts, ghouls, demons, witches, pumpkin-men, goblins, vampires, werewolves, Martians, zombies, mummies, pirates, skeletons, black cats, spiders, bats, owls, crows, and vultures (*Halloween Party Themes*, 2010: 1). The imagery surrounding Halloween is taken from works of Gothic fiction, in particular such novels as Frankenstein and Dracula.

The celebration of the dead is also a mutual theme between Gothic fiction and Halloween. The theme of death and the dead is a cornerstone in the Gothic fiction genre. When one hears the word Gothic fiction, the first thing that comes to mind is dead bodies and vampires that come to life again to horrify people. Likewise, the most notable themes in the celebration of Halloween are death and the dead. In Halloween, people normally dress in the form of dead people in white garments with ugly faces. They parade about as ghosts, vampires, witches and the like. Thus, the theme of death and the dead is an essential element in both Gothic fiction and Halloween.

Lastly, the popularity of the scary yet exciting nature of Gothic fiction and Halloween is once again a similarity. Before concluding this section, it is important to explore the following questions for a while: Why do people like to look on what they fear? And why is terror literature, in other word Gothic fiction, popular? It is difficult to say, but Andrea Dean Van Scoyoc (2010: 1) states that "people love to be afraid…it's human nature to look forward to being scared… from the comfort of your sofa**".** He adds that these questions have been asked all throughout the ages and will probably never be answered. Nevertheless, many say that they like to read gothic fiction and see horror films, because they made them laugh, so people are not really scared of them; on the contrary, people find them funny and entertaining. As for Halloween, it is exactly the same because people enjoy wearing all these frightening clothes and the onlookers are happy to see them.

**Bakhtin's Carnivalesque**

Carnivalesque originally comes from the word Carnival, a festive season celebrated in the month of February. The carnival "typically involves a public celebration or parade combining some elements of a circus, mask and public street party. People often dress up or masquerade during the celebrations"

(Tuchman, 1979: 32). The term 'carnivalesque' is coined by the Russian critic Mikhail Bakhtin, and it refers to a literary mode that undermines and liberates the assumptions of the dominant style or atmosphere through humour and chaos. As mentioned above, the origins of the carnivalesque are traced to the concept of carnival. Bakhtin links the origins of carnival itself to the Feast of Fools, a medieval festival originally of the sub-deacons of the cathedral, held about the time of the Feast of the Circumcision, in which the humbler cathedral officials burlesqued the sacred ceremonies (ibid).

The Feast of Fools had its main origins in the French cathedrals, although there are some English sources of it, particularly in Lincoln Cathedral and Beverley Minster. Carnival is originally linked with Mardi Gras, a time of revelry that instantly comes before the Christian celebration of Lent. In nowadays Mardi Gras, normal life with all rules and regulations are momentarily suspended and moved backward, such that the riot of Carnival is juxtaposed with the control of the Lenten season. It is argued that "modern Mardi Gras should not be compared with this Medieval Carnival, because "the latter is a powerful creative event, whereas the former is only a spectacle" (ibid: 33).

Since the term carnivalesque is mainly coined to refer to literature, Bakhtin likens the carnivalesque in literature to the type of activity that frequently happens in the carnivals of popular cultures. In the carnival festivals, social categorization of the daily life with all their dignities, pieties and formal behaviours are disrespected and turned upside down by quelled people. Accordingly, foolish people become wise and rich people become beggars.

Nehama Aschkenasy states:

> Bakhtin's thematization of humor and the comic has made him popular in postmodern critical circles precisely because his studies expand the theory of carnival beyond a single folk event and identify the carnivalesque as a semiotic cultural code ...Bakhtin's theory of carnival, manifested in his discussions of Rabelais and 'forbidden laughter' in medieval folk culture, argued that folk celebrations which allowed for rowdy humor and the parody of authority offered the oppressed lower classes relief from the rigidity ... the church and an opportunity for expressing nonconformist, even rebellious views. The carnivalesque spirit is a form of popular, low humor which celebrates the anarchic and grotesque elements of authority and of humanity in general and encourages the temporary "crossing of boundaries" where the town fool is crowned, the higher

classes are mocked, and the differences between people are flattened as their shared humanity, the body, becomes subject of crude humor. Bakhtin saw in carnivalesque humor a social force that allowed a text to enter a sociopolitical discourse" (Aschkenasy, 2010: online).

The word 'carnivalesque' had been used before Bakhtin by historians such as Ernest Cassirer, in *Rabelais and His World*; however, it is endowed with a new and broadened meaning so that it becomes a kind of incantation. Bakhtin's carnivalesque invokes laughter linked to the overturning of authority (Hyman, 2000: 15).

Unlike many other versions of the new metatexts applied to "Rabelais New-Critical formalist, and structuralist ideas of self-generating textuality, Bakhtin employs historical and ideological as well as structural and semiotic methods of analysis. He does this by alluding to something inherent in the text, its structure, and its semiotics: the "carnivalesque spirit" (Kinser, 1990: x). The meaning of Carnival and that of Rabelais's novels are said to be twisted, because Bakhtin mentions the meaning of a pre-Lenten festivity found in the sixteenth century. Nevertheless, he does not refer to descriptions of specific medieval or Renaissance Carnivals. Bakhtin's carnivalesque is an umbrella term for many sixteenth century activities, such as marketplace, slang, student farces, charivaris, and other public amusement and festivities. Bakhtin does not even examine in details the only place in Rabelais's work where Rabelaistalks about Carnivals (ibid).

In the middle of his career, laughter and parody appeared to be the most essential aspects of Bakhtin's writings. In an essay entitled 'From the Prehistory of Novelistic Discourse' (1940), he "traces the propensity of the novel towards parody and a mockingly critical skepticism of all respected forms of language back to its origins in a variety of ancient comic and popular forms" (Morris, 1996: 20). These comic and parody forms developed out of this persisting dialogic literary consciousness and they were increased in the coming periods, especially during the Middle Ages by the popular forms of carnival, feasts, the licensed figure of clowns, fools and rogues. The adequate details of this tradition are found in *Rabelais and His World* (1965). Carnival is considered to be one of the most significant concepts by Bakhtin, and it is often linked with laughter, parody and mockery (Morris, 1996: 20).

Bakhtin does not introduce carnival as an unspecific progressive or anarchistic force in language. He gives a full and scholarly account of carnival as a complicated system of meaning. Carnival, according to him, is derived from two bases. The first basis is that carnival is not by itself a literary phenomenon at all,

but it is a *syncretic pageantry* of a ritualistic sort, as mentioned in Bakhtin's *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*. It is "a symbolic network of concretely sensuous forms accumulating over a centuries-long tradition of popular festivals, carnivals, celebratory and seasonal rituals, market-place spectacles" (ibid: 21). The second basis of the meaning of carnival is related to the verbal form. Bakhtin associates this basis of meaning with the tradition of the comic vernacular literature that prevailed in the ancient world with the high norms chooses the important influence of three ancient forms, which are the Socratic dialogue, the Menippean satire and the symposium as banquet dialogue (ibid).

In his book '*Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*', Bakhtin (1984: 107) states that literature was affected in a direct or indirect way by one or another form of ancient or medieval carnivalistic folklore, and thus it should be called *carnivalized literature*. He, while talking about serio-comical genres of literature, which is a genre of literature, adds that these genres are united by their deep bond with carnivalistic folklore. They are all filled with a specific *carnival sense of the world*. He thinks that the problem of the carnivalized literature is one of the very important problems in historical poetics, and in particular of the poetics of genre.

## Poe's MRD

Poe's **MRD** is about Prince Prospero who tried to escape the Red Death, a plague whose symptoms were agony and blood instead of water sweat. People have taken refuge in a walled abbey to escape the plague. One night, Prospero holds a masquerade ball in seven colored rooms of the abbey. Six of the rooms are painted in specific colors: blue, purple, green, orange, white, and violet. The last room is decorated in black and is illuminated by a blood-red light. At midnight, Prospero noticed one figure wearing clothes like the victims of the Red Death. Prospero wanted to know the identity of that guest, but no one obeyed to uncover him. Prospero pursues him with a dagger through the seven rooms until the person hides in the seventh room. When the person turned to face him, the Prince fell dead at a glance.

When talking about its genre, **MRD** is both a gothic and Halloween story. On the one hand, it is a gothic story because it contains scenes of horror, as attendants are afraid of entering the colored rooms; it has also scenes of death at the end, when the red death invades the masquerade ball and kills all the attendants, and finally prince Prospero. On the other hand, it is a Halloween story since it is full of scenes of Halloween celebrations, the most important of which is the masks worn in the masquerade ball.

H. H. Bell (1973: 101) states that after reading **MRD**, one can come to the conclusion that the story is another example of Poe's many examinations of the theme of death. This theme of death is, of course, represented by the red death,

and therefore it signals Gothicism. The red death in **MRD** conveys horror and Gothicism at their best, since the story involves no normal scenes of death, but rather something horrible and overwhelmingly devastating, represented by the death of half of the people in Prospero's kingdom by the red death and the last horrible death of Prospero himself. **MRD** opens with the description of the situation of that time "THE 'Red Death' had long devastated the country. No pestilence had ever been so fatal, or so hideous. Blood was its Avatar and its seal" (Poe, 1850: Online). Also, when examining the text of the story, one can discover that Prospero is a feelingless prince.

In the text of **MRD**, there is an implicit reference that the prince could be insane, as the story tells the reader that Prospero was "happy, dauntless and sagacious" (ibid), despite the fact that half the people in his kingdom had been killed by the Red Death. Such a reaction of a ruler would not be expected of a man who decides to isolate himself from most of his followers and withdraw with a thousand friends into a castellated abbey to escape the Red Death, being motivated by his fear of death. Prince Prospero's death represents the most horrible gothic scene in the story because he is the hero and subject of all attention.

The intertextual use of the name Prospero in Poe's **MRD** is similar to Shakespeare's Prospero in *The Tempest* in which Shakespeare's Prospero is a master of magic with his book of magic laid open to control the supernatural spirit of (Ariel) and cause the famous tempest to revenge on his prosecutors. The two Prosperos share mutual social status, the first being a prince and the other being a duke; and the two are both tyrants. As Poe's Prospero was a tyrant, Frank Riga states that Shakespeare's Prospero is "a negative figure, an abusive and vengeful tyrant who enslaves Galiban, the savage yet hapless inhabitant of the island Prospero has stolen from him" (2007, 199). His tyranny is represented by his control of Miranda, Ariel and Galiban, his senseless orders to his daughter Miranda and his threats to her with hatred, and his freedom promises to Ariel, which he failed to keep (ibid, 201). The fates of the two Prosperos are not the same though. Shakespeare's Prospero was about to die in a gothic situation, where his boat drowned and he was saved by miracle to live in exile on an island. Poe's Prospero dies in a gothic situation at the end of the story.

The second gothic element in **MRD** is the use of masks in the masquerade ball. The use of masks in **MRD** can be utilized in interrelating all the three aspects tackled in this study, namely, Gothic fiction, Halloween and Carnivalesque. The mask is a gothic phenomenon in itself because it is associated with fear, horror and terror invoked by mystery; it is a Halloween aspect because it invests disguise and false intimidation; and it has a Carnivalesque element because it is linked

with festive celebrations and fun. Efrat Tseëlon states that human beings react to the mask with a combination of admiration and avoidance. She adds that

> We want to speak about the mask because it is like us, but it responds with strangeness because it is not like us [….]. Like the uncanny, it is familiar and unfamiliar simultaneously. The mask stands in an intermediary position between different worlds. Its embodiment of the fragile dividing line between concealment and revelation, truth and artifice, natural and supernatural, life and death is a potent source of the masks metaphysical power (2001: 20).

The last gothic element in **MRD** is use of the seven rooms. H.H. Bell (1973: 102) clarifies that architecturally, all of the seven rooms, except the last one, has two Gothic windows and two doors. The room of death, or the seventh room, seems to dispense with the exit door. One door would be enough for entry because the person who comes in will not go out since s/he would meet death right there, which is another gothic reference. Each of the Gothic windows has a fire brazier behind it in the closed corridor, so that the fire would shine on the window panes. Thus, the architectural design of the rooms is Gothic, a matter that redounds to its air of mystery and the unknown which constantly terrify people. Poe describes the architectural components of the seven rooms or chambers, as he also calls them, in **MRD** as:

> There were arabesque figures with unsuited limbs and appointments. There were delirious fancies such as the madman fashions. There were much of the beautiful, much of the wanton, much of the bizarre, something of the terrible, and not a little of that which might have excited disgust. To and fro in the seven chambers there stalked, in fact, a multitude of dreams (1850: Online).

H.H. Bell (1973: 103-4) claims that the colors and number of the rooms carry a lot of symbolism about Prospero's life. Each room represents one decade of Prospero's 70 years life; and each colour of each 'decade' room is related to his mental and physical condition in that decade. The first room is located in the eastern end and it is blue, which has the symbolism of the unknown and thus the beginning of life. The second room is purple, and it is related to achievement, which could be moving into maturity. The third room is green, which is verdant and full of life and it is the middle of life. The fourth room is orange, and it signifies the autumn of life. The fifth room is white which refers to the old age. The sixth room is violet which stands for gravity and chastity. The seventh and final is room is black, the colour always associated with death. Hence, the colour

symbolism nourishes and reinforces the Gothic atmosphere the mysterious rooms promulgate.

As for the relationship between Halloween and **MRD**, the main point of that relationship is represented by the use of masks. **MRD**, in its entirety, is a rather good example of gloomy, ironic and Gothic humour (ibid: 101). In this Gothic humour, the use of mask can be connected with what is called Grotesque. Grotesque, in modern English, has come to be used as a general adjective for the strange, fantastic, ugly, incongruous, unpleasant, or disgusting, and thus is often used to describe weird shapes and distorted forms such as Halloween masks. In literature, Grotesque refers to something that simultaneously invokes in an audience a feeling of uncomfortable strangeness, where the use of horror and terror could be a means to invoke joy and happiness (Rarignac, 2012: Online).

Bakhtin states that the grotesque usually expresses fear of the world, and is marked by the disappearance of laughter, and even, sometimes, it is characterized by madness, called 'festive madness', being acquired by tragic factors (1965:39). Bakhtin's statement is questionable and maybe not applicable to the nowadays Halloween festivals, where no fear of the world exists and laughter is a key element in the fests, though madness is there anyway. **MRD** is a Halloween story, at least, for one reason, which is the use of masks and parties. The use of masks always comes alongside with parties and joy to mark and emphasize the fun and merriment involved in the festivals, and therefore Poe's story moves first into the world of fun and joy, before it explores fear and horror. This shift from joy and easiness to horror and morbidity, hence from humour to tragedy, is thematic as Poe draws the attention to what lies beneath sheer pleasure, he laments the unawareness and ignorance prevalent and expresses distrusts and sceptism with which humans should handle the transient offers of this world. What is affirmed here is despair and gloom wrapping the human world whose final destination is none other than a black, horrifying room.

The thematic link between the masquerade ball, masks and joyfulness in that ball is found to relate to Bakhtin's Carnivalesque. Bakhtin, in his monumental work of carnival quoted in Castle, states that the history of human pleasures manifested in festivity, games, jokes and amusement has been seldom met with the same dignified attention accorded the history of human suffering. Wars, plagues and collective miseries of all kinds have always been controversial historical and philosophical topoi, laughter has not (1986: 1). Accordingly, laughter is something beyond dispute and it is a means of fun and joy. Bakhtin argues that the mask is associated with joy, change and reincarnation (1965:39).

The relationship between **MRD** and Bakhtin's Carnivalesque is represented by the use of masks and the masquerade ball by Prince Prospero. This masquerade ball is considered a carnival festival, because people put on masks and this gives

them a feeling of liberation in terms of behaviour and enjoyment. Whatever people yearn but are ashamed to do openly would be allowed once they are incognito. Further, the use of masks changes the atmosphere of the masquerade ball and gives a sense of pleasure. The use of the seven colourful rooms, in which one part of the setting of *MRD* takes place, has also something to do with carnivalesque, because the use of the colours in the rooms changes the mood of the story and lets in some sense of caution and fear.

**Conclusion**

Throughout the analyses of this study, the following conclusion can be sketched: First, Gothic fiction and Halloween have many mutual aspects. Mainly, both of them, which originated in Europe, use horror and terror as a means of enjoyment. Gothic fiction employs such elements as the supernatural, ghosts, haunted houses etc., in dark and gloomy castles, abbeys and other horrible settings to horrify readers, and ultimately amuse them. Similarly, Halloween utilizes the themes of death, evil, demons, vampires, and zombies to frighten and please people. Moreover, both of the two celebrate the theme of death and the dead throughout the use of the dead's shrouds and ugly faces.

Second, Poe's *MRD* is a blend of Gothic fiction and Halloween. It is a Gothic story because it contains scenes of death. The red death has killed half of the people of Prospero's kingdom, the thing that frightened Prospero who himself faces death at the hands of the red death. Also, the masquerade ball and the differently colored seven rooms represent gothic elements, not to mention the disguise of the red death which comes to the ball in the form of one of the victims of the red death and hides in the black room. Lastly, it is a Halloween story because it makes use of masks and celebrates joy in the masquerade ball. The mask is said to be one of the key elements in Halloween and its use in the story is clear evidence that the story is a Halloween one.

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