

## Trabajo Fin de Grado

“The (Closest) Cry from E.A. Poe Imaginable”: The  
Influence of Poe on Stephen King’s *The Shining*

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## **Abstract**

Poe's influence on North American literature has been widely recognized. "Who has not been influenced by Poe?" claimed Joyce Carol Oates. Stephen King, the bestseller-favorite, is not an exception. Although the majority of critical works devoted to analyzing *The Shining* argue that the most obvious influence on this work by Poe's "The Masque of the Red Death", I have deviated from this general consensus and will compare it with two other short stories instead, also by Poe: "The Fall of the House of Usher" and "The Black Cat". Therefore, the present paper aims to put forward the similarities between the most popular US writers of the horror genre: Edgar Allan Poe and Stephen King. More precisely, it focuses on the influence of "The Fall of the House of Usher" and "The Black Cat" on Stephen King's novel *The Shining* as far as themes and motifs of the Gothic in the United States are concerned.

## **Resumen**

Han sido numerosos los críticos que han reconocido la influencia de Edgar Allan Poe en la literatura norteamericana. "¿Quién no ha sido influenciado por Poe?", afirmaba tajantemente Joyce Carol Oates. Stephen King, cuyas obras se han convertido en *best sellers*, no escapa a esta influencia. A pesar de que la mayoría de obra crítica dedicada a analizar *El resplandor* argumentan que la influencia poeana más evidente para dicha obra ha sido "La máscara de la muerte roja", he decidido desviarme del consenso general y compararlo con otros dos cuentos, también de Poe: "La caída de la casa de Usher" y "El gato negro". Así pues, el presente trabajo trata de exponer las similitudes entre dos representantes más populares del género de terror: Edgar Allan Poe y Stephen King. Más concretamente, se centra en la influencia de dos breves relatos de Poe ("La caída de la casa Usher" y "El gato negro") en la novela *El resplandor* de Stephen King en cuanto a temática y motivos del gótico en Estados Unidos.

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## Introduction

Both Poe, the American 19<sup>th</sup> century author who reinvented the Gothic genre and Stephen King are popular authors. Poe's approach to literature was scholarly and introduced theories of literature and writing such as the theory of 'the unity of effect' that he introduced in his seminal essay "The Philosophy of Composition" (1846). Despite this, King is more than just a 'horror' writer – in fact, he is similar to Poe in the sense that both practice the same genre, in their own way: Gothic. More than two centuries have passed, and sensibilities have changed, but the aspects that confirm their similarities are still there: in the themes, in the characters, in the underlying anxiety of an American society with existential crises.

Since King himself admits he has been influenced by Poe (Magistrale 11), many essays have been written on this topic. Most of the essays devoted to comparing these two authors agree that the most relevant source of inspiration for *The Shining* is "The Masque of the Red Death" (Indick; Mustazza; Buday). In this short story, Prince Prospero, escaping a mortal plague called the Red Death, retires to his abbey and holds a masquerade ball along seven different rooms, each with a different color. Eventually, a mysterious character dressed up as a Red Death victim kills each of the guests, including Prospero. Indeed, in the book, there are several explicit allusions to the tale, such as the quote in the preface and some subtle ones like the similarities between Prince Prospero and Jack Torrance (Buday 49) and the ghostly masquerade that Jack attends towards the end of the novel.

However, I would like to go a step further, divert from the general consensus and compare it with "The Black Cat" and "The Fall of the House of Usher". With this

paper, I attempt to explore two aspects: on the one hand, the Gothic elements in *The Shining* and on the other, the extent to which King has been influenced by these tales.

In order to address the first issue, we must first define *Gothic*. In the introduction to his homonymous book, Botting summarizes the Gothic as follows: he claims that it “condenses the many perceived threats to these [humanist] values, threats associated with supernatural and natural forces, imaginative excesses and delusions, religious and human evil, social transgression, mental disintegration and spiritual corruption” (1).

Originally one of the many invaders that raided Europe, the Gothic soon began to encompass anything ‘medieval’ due to the association between barbarism and the general obscurantism that surrounded the Middle Ages. However, during the eighteenth century, this use of the word Gothic was by no means aseptic, as it, for some, supported the idea that they were living in an ‘enlightened’ period of knowledge as opposed to a past time of “barbarous customs and practices, of superstition, ignorance, extravagant fancies and natural wildness” (Botting 15). It was during the decade of the 1790s, that the Gothic reached the summit as far as supporters and arguments were concerned and thus was given the basis to grow and develop as a literary form on its own right.

During the Victorian period, Gothic was domesticized, adapting the remote castles and graveyards and monks and villains into the urban landscape and its criminals and scientists. The Romantics had an influence on the development of the Gothic. This can be seen in the concept of the Sublime, introduced by Edmund Burke’s *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* (1757):

Whatever is fitted in any sort to excite the ideas of pain and danger, that is to say, whatever is in any sort terrible, or is conversant about terrible objects, or operates in a manner analogous to terror, is a source of the sublime; that is, it is productive of the strongest emotion which the mind is capable of feeling. (13).

Thus, the sublime represented the heightened emotion of pain experienced at the sight of an extremely beautiful object, whether natural or artistic. The Gothic's excesses, wildness of nature and terrifying supernatural were part of the sublime. Moreover, Ann Radcliffe establishes a connection between terror and the sublime in her essay "On the Supernatural in Poetry" (1826):

Terror and Horror are so far opposite that the first expands the soul, and awakens the faculties to a high degree of life; the other contracts, freezes and nearly annihilates them .... And where lies the difference between horror and terror, but in the uncertainty and obscurity that accompany the first, respecting the dreading evil?

By systematizing the relationship between terror and the sublime, Burke gave Gothic fiction a system to rely on.

However, such heightened experiences while reading these pieces were not without criticism. According to 18<sup>th</sup> century ideals, a good piece of writing should follow the Classical canon and provide proper moral guidance. Hence, Gothic novels, as these romances that preceded them, were also criticized for their lack of moral propriety but were incredibly popular. Nevertheless, what the critics agreed upon was that the first Gothic novel was *The Castle of Otranto* (1764). It was in this novel that the main ingredients for the genre were forged: a medieval setting, with castles and manors, an aristocratic lineage, the obscurantism surrounding this period which gave way to superstition, the supernatural that surpasses any logical explanation. Moreover, in the second edition of the book the subtitle changed from 'a story' to a 'Gothic story'. Over time, the framework given by this novel would undergo significant changes in the hands of later writers, influenced by shifts in historical circumstances.

American literature was particularly influenced by the Gothic genre. Leslie Fiedler claims that: "Because American literature "is most deeply influenced by the

gothic... is almost essentially a gothic one” (qtd. in Tennenhouse 94). The corrosive feeling and sensation of guilt that can be found in these narratives, Fiedler says, has to do with “the (paternal) past which he [the Gothic] has been striving to destroy” (*Ibid*). American literary criticism puts forward that Gothic writing is popular in America because through stories on inhumanity, they may drain the throbbing reservoir of guilt groomed and nurtured by the forefathers for their massive crimes committed against entire races and ethnic groups to make America a prosperous nation. However, it is more likely that, as American literature until the 19<sup>th</sup> century was still considered an offshoot of British literature, it took influence from the genres and trends that were popular in contemporary Britain, eventually developing its own truly American style.

Before Americans started cultivating their own standard of Gothic fiction, they had started to widely consume it during the 1790s – serializations and translations from both Britain and Germany of Gothic works. This interest of a growing American readership in the Gothic is paradoxical, as the castles, lineages and aristocratic hierarchies were part of the old continent they left. Realizing this, authors like Brockden Brown, in his prefatory note to *Edgar Huntly* (1799), emphasized the need to develop their own American style: “Where “puerile superstition and exploded manners, gothic castles and chimeras are usually employed” by the British novel, American writers have to strive for the same effect “by means hitherto unemployed by preceding authors.” (qtd. in Tennenbaum 100). Leslie Fiedler heavily criticized Isaac Mitchell’s *The Asylum* (1811) for using a gothic manor house, a European convention, as the setting. Fiedler argued that to have a European “large, old-fashioned, castle-like building” had no point nor historical accuracy in America. The objective from now onwards for American Gothic writers was to devise their own conventions for the Gothic. Hence, the introduction of the gothic in American literature, like many other genres that were

imported, can be traced back to England, and more precisely, to 1764, when Horace Walpole published *The Castle of Otranto*, a tale of incest, claustrophobic medieval Europe castles and ghostly appearances; themes from which Edgar Allan Poe, the American Gothic author par excellence, would draw inspiration for his own stories.

It was Poe who made the Gothic become a major genre in the United States and continues, to this day, haunting the readers with his tales depicting the grotesque and gruesome side of the psyche. On the one hand, he was a major theorist of literature and was one of the first to apply the principle of 'art for art's sake' in writing. This was diametrically opposed to writing with a moral, educating purpose, disregarding form, so common in the Renaissance period. On the other, he is credited for having originated the detective genre. In his treatment of the Gothic, Botting highlights how Poe was able to explore the psychological aspect of terror, the one that deals with the labyrinthine nature of the mind with the mastery of a psychiatrist:

... It is not only the morbid fascination and macabre auras that make them interesting as Gothic works. The various devices, styles and subjects that Poe uses and transforms influence all of subsequent Gothic writing: the doubles, mirrors and the concern with modes of representation; the scientific transgressions of accepted limits; the play of internal and external narrations, of uncertain psychological states and uncanny events; and the location of mysteries in a criminal world to be penetrated by the incisive reason of a new hero, the detective, have become staples of the Gothic. (Botting 1996 78-80)

The evolution of the Gothic making its way into the 20<sup>th</sup> century maintains its motifs from the past century:

Objects of anxiety take their familiar forms from earlier manifestations: cities, houses, archaic and occult pasts, primitive energies, deranged individuals and scientific



experimentation are the places from which awesome and inhuman terrors and horrors are loosed on an unsuspecting world. (Botting 103)

These recipients from the past are still able to convey contemporary American anxieties, such as the disintegration of the family and traditional values of the new century. Poe in “The Fall of the House of Usher” (1839) depicted the disintegration of what is traditional and familiar mimicking society’s decay at large (Botting 104). Authors such as Toni Morrison and Flannery O’Connor shape the Gothic by means of a “pre-dominance of subjective states that grotesquely distort boundaries between fantasy and reality”. It could be argued, then, that Gothic is born and evolves in a climate of social anxiety. The fascination of the United States with the Gothic can be explained under the light that American authors could explore through this genre the anxieties of a strained community on the other side of the Atlantic. Ironical as it might be, US writers adopted a literary mode that was originally European, and they ended up making it the most prolific one in the U.S. It is in the depths of these narratives that a feeling of guilt and sinful actions thrive. These repressed feelings are still present in the subconscious of American society, as can be seen in the success of works such as *Beloved* (1987).

With highly acclaimed authors such as Edgar Allan Poe, Hawthorne, Joyce Carol Oates and Toni Morrison, it can be categorically affirmed that in the United States there is a strong and solid tradition of Gothic writers following their own style and line different from that of their British counterpart. Because of the dark and grotesque innuendos, it continues to be a popular genre. Nevertheless, it does not reach the status of mainstream literature, with some exceptions. Stephen King (1947-), whose book *The Shining* will be discussed below, is one of the best-selling authors in the United States with award-winning books such as *Carrie* (1974) or *It* (1986).

*The Shining* (1977) tells the story of Jack Torrance, a former literature teacher who is made redundant for his drunkenness and aggressive behavior towards one of his students. His friend Al moves the strings and recommends him for a job as a caretaker at the Overlook, a hotel in the Colorado Mountains. There, Jack, his wife Wendy and his son Danny, who possesses psychical powers called 'shining', will have to endure the winter completely isolated from the outside world. However, they are not alone as the spirits of former inhabitants will become attracted to Danny's talent. To the question of whether it is a Gothic work, Botting admits it contains Gothic elements:

As a place of shinings, projections of violent disturbances in the past or future, the hotel acts as a magnifying glass or mirror for psychic energies and psychotic impulses of certain events and individuals, an uncanny movement in which interior tendencies and external environment exacerbate each other. Affected by the hotel, the father becomes more and more psychotic while his son glimpses the spectral returns of past scenes of violence (111)

Apart from these elements, when attempting to do an in-depth analysis of *The Shining*, the presence of the work of Edgar Allan Poe must be acknowledged through the presence of "The Black Cat" and "The Fall of the House of Usher". These two tales have themes in common with the novel: first, the setting ("The Fall of the House of Usher"), secondly, the presence of alcohol as the source of the conflict ("The Black Cat"), and finally, the double ("The Black Cat" and "The Fall of the House of Usher").

## Setting: From the House of Usher to the Hotel Overlook

In the Gothic, confined spaces are significant because they can contain the supernatural phenomena and isolate the characters from the outer world, hence provoking a feeling of claustrophobia for both the characters and the reader. In fact, Savoy (qtd. in Nadal) singles out the house a “as the most significant trope of American Gothic’s allegorical turn”. From the haunted castle that gives name to the novel of Walpole, to the anachronistic house, whose architecture is reminiscent of Gothic buildings in “The Fall of the House of Usher”, King revamps the Gothic mansion into a hotel in the Colorado mountains. One of the reasons might be to give it realism. Following Fiedler’s argument, there is no logical explanation to have such ancient European structures in the new continent, as a haunted feudal mansion would be anachronistic taking into account that the plot of *The Shining* is set in the United States in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. However, although not in its architecture, the Hotel Overlook has a distinct Gothic taint. Like these castles and mansions from the Gothic tradition, the hotel is haunted. The fact that it is a hotel, with hundreds of rooms, multiplies its haunting possibilities – there are hundreds of spirits, as many as inhabitants the hotel has had. In a house, as in Usher’s, only a family line might have dwelt in it. However, in a hotel many spirits and many people may have had their deaths.

*The Shining* is set in the Hotel Overlook, in Boulder, Colorado. It was based off the factual Stanley Hotel, in Estes Park, Colorado (Beahm). The settings where the action occurs in the Gothic are very important – so important in fact, that the setting is more than just the background in which the events in a Gothic work occur: it is a central symbol. *The Shining* is no exception to this, since it is in the hotel Overlook and its surroundings that supernatural phenomena eventually take place. This is because the

building becomes a sentient being, attracted to the newcomer family, and to Danny specially. With a dark past of excesses, gangster-style revenges and wealthy criminals alike, the hotel brims with vengeful spirits. The hotel's evil wraiths are aware of the presence of Danny, because he is an extraordinary child. He is gifted with the 'shining', a mysterious force that some individuals possess and allows them to read minds, see the future or even sense and see spirits. The hotel has certain rooms that have a stronger supernatural quality, for instance, room 217. Halloran tells Danny not to enter. The room appears several times throughout the novel, along with the word 'redrum' and the color red:

Another time there was a maid, Delores Vickery her name was, and she had a little shine to her, but I don't think she knew it. Mr. Ullman fired her ... do you know what that is, doc?" "Yes, sir," Danny said candidly, "my daddy got fired from his teaching job and that's why we're in Colorado, I guess." "Well, Ullman fired her on account of her saying she'd seen something in one of the rooms where ... well, where a bad thing happened. That was in Room 217, and I want you to promise me you won't go in there, Danny. Not all winter. Steer right clear." (94)

Danny is a curious boy and, in the end, against Halloran's advice, he decides to, see what is inside that room and he finds the moving corpse of a woman in the bathtub:

The woman in the tub had been dead for a long time. She was bloated and purple, her gas-filled belly rising out of the cold, ice-rimmed water like some fleshy island. Her eyes were fixed on Danny's, glassy and huge, like marbles. She was grinning, her purple lips pulled back in a grimace. Her breasts lolled. Her pubic hair floated. Her hands were frozen on the knurled porcelain sides of the tub like crab claws... (239)

However, it is not only visions or haunted single rooms like the 217, but the hotel itself is an entity with a sentience of its own. Jack finds out that it was the hotel, referred to by Grady as ‘the manager’, which hired both Jack and Grady:

"You're the caretaker, sir," Grady said mildly. "You've always been the caretaker. I should know, sir. I've always been here. The same manager hired us both, at the same time. Is it all right, sir?" Jack gulped at his drink. His head was swirling. "Mr. Ullman — " "I know no one by that name, sir." "But he — " "The manager," Grady said. "The hotel, sir. Surely you realize who hired you, sir." (387)

Botting, when commenting on this supernatural quality of the hotel *Overlook*, argues that it “acts as a magnifying glass or mirror for psychic energies and psychotic impulses of certain events and individuals” (105).

As we have seen, the ‘shining’, more than a blessing or special talent, becomes a nightmare. However, it would seem that it is not the fact that Danny ‘shines’ that attracts all the vengeful phantoms, but rather the fact that the Torrances are a dysfunctional family. As Nash (1997) explains:

King’s ... insistent deconstruction of the “magic circle” that is the modern American family. ... the sorry state of relationships within the family that makes the adolescent vulnerable to the enticements of the supernatural ... It is the fragile, illusory nature of the nuclear family that gets Louis Creed in trouble in *Pet Sematary*. But one could easily point out that King’s own “rage” in this instance is misplaced. The American family is not designed to prepare its young for battles with the supernatural. Whether or not such families do a good job of preparing their members for the adult world is another question, but that is not the focus of *Pet Sematary* or his other postmodern Gothic novels. The irony is somewhat incredible. The American family is judged to be inadequate because it does not prepare its members to deal with the imaginary. In King’s works, it is as if troubled, hypocritical families attract the attention of the supernatural. (154)

This way, King is making a critique of contemporary America, where the nuclear and traditional structures of family are being undermined. In this case, the family is destroyed by one of the most polemic phenomenon in America: alcoholism.

## A Descent into Madness: Alcoholism

An aspect of Gothicism in the book is the corruption of Jack Torrance and his descent into a spiral of madness because of alcohol. Both Poe and King struggled with alcohol abuse and they portrayed this tendency through their works. Poe started drinking alcohol at 17 and after the death of his much younger wife Virginia, saw how his alcoholic tendencies, along with opium consumption, aggravated, even attempting to commit suicide by overdose (Patterson 1246-1247). Similarly, Stephen King's alcohol abuse was a way of coping with frustration when writing (*Daily Mail*).

Alcoholism has been, and continues to be, a recurrent and controverted issue in the United States. The country experienced many waves, laws and movements of people, especially women (The Temperance Movement), who denounced and condemned alcohol as the main factor in destroying the family. In Davison's introduction to her essay *The Gothic and Addiction: A Mad Tango* (2012), she claims the relationship between the genre of the Gothic and addiction:

Indeed, given addiction's role as a cultural pathology, its location at the crossroads of desire and anxiety, and the possibilities it opens up for exploring human consciousness in extremis, a linchpin of the Gothic, a genre that registers cultural pathologies, it may be said to be a Gothic subject par excellence. (1)

Davison argues that, since its origins, the Gothic has been associated with heightened passions and excess, as it was supposed to embody everything that was to be rejected in an age of Enlightenment and dominance of reason (2). These excesses could range from an over-the-top lust to megalomania. Yet what Davison dubs "Gothic pharmographies", that is, gothic stories exploring the destruction of the self in exchange for fulfilling a drug or alcoholic addiction, has to be found in Matthew Lewis's *The Monk* (1795) and Charlotte Dacre's *Zofloya, or The Moor: A Romance of the Fifteenth Century* (1806).

The protagonists of these stories are Faustian in the sense that, in order to fulfil their desires, make a fatal exchange. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, pharmographies of this sort proliferated, following a Faustian dynamic that reflect the very etymology of the word addiction — “addicere” —, Latin for surrendering to a master. This master could be interpreted as the devil himself. In J. Gerard Dollar’s words: “[the] fall into the addict self is presented as something of a pact with the devil” (qtd. in Davison, 2).

Jack Torrance’s history with alcohol goes back many years before the incidents of the hotel take place, when Danny was just a baby. While working as an English teacher at Vermont Preparatory School, he would meet his colleague Al, with whom they would go drinking after work. He would also bring his friends home and have parties where alcohol was abundant. However, there was a point of inflexion where drinking could be no longer present in Jack’s life: when he broke Danny’s arm. This would engrave a trauma for both Wendy and Jack, not so much for Danny, and this memory often pops up in their imaginations on several occasions, generally accompanied by the euphemism of Jack “losing his temper”.

In the hotel Overlook, there is, in principle, no trace of alcohol. When they are being shown around the kitchen, Halloran, the hotel’s *chef* and Danny’s ‘shining’ friend, assures that the employees had drunk everything at the last working day’s party:

Following his gaze, Hallorann said, “If you’re a drinkin (sic) man, I hope you brought your own supplies. That place is picked clean. Employees’ party last night, you know. Every maid and bellhop in the place is goin’ around with a headache today, me included”. (84)

However, Jack Torrance, without knowing exactly where it comes from (later on it is revealed it was the hotel), eventually can obtain this beverage and eventually get drunk and reach the peak of his madness, trying to kill his family. In “The Black Cat”, it is also alcohol, dubbed as a ‘disease’, that motivates the chain of events that lead to the



killing of Pluto, the black cat: “But my disease grew upon me—for what disease is like Alcohol!—and at length even Pluto, who was now becoming old, and consequently somewhat peevish—even Pluto began to experience the effects of my ill temper.” (1).

In other words, both Poe and King had a problem with alcoholism in their real lives. However, they realized this was a universal problem and, through their books, tried to convey a message of the terrible consequences of an abuse of this substance which often involved violence towards the loved ones. In this sense, both *The Shining* and “The Black Cat” have the qualities of a pharmography. Nevertheless, there are other elements that enable these works to be considered more than that, as, for instance, the double.

## The Uncanny: The Figure of the Double

The figure of the 'double' recurs in the "The Black Cat", "The Fall of the House of Usher" and *The Shining*. Before analyzing this figure in the novel, the double cannot be possibly understood without understanding its relationship with the uncanny. In his seminal work "The Uncanny" (1919), Freud attempts to discuss the homonymous concept: "the uncanny is that class of the frightening which leads back to what is known of old and long familiar..." (Freud 220). He argues that it is both what is known and unknown, and this provokes a feeling of terror. Indeed, if we look at the etymology of the original German word 'unheimlich', we can see that 'un' negates the root which can be read both as 'heimlich' ['homely'] and 'heimisch' ['native'], but the word 'heimlich' itself also has an ambiguous meaning. It implies what is familiar but at the same time, shares the meaning of what is hidden and can not be seen, similar to its antonym. Freud points out that what is uncanny was not necessarily frightening in its origin, but it was repressed at some time and has eventually returned, somehow no longer recognisable as the way it was. Hence, the vision of a double is terrifying since it is no longer recognizable: although we have known it since an early mental stage, it has been 'alienated' in our minds. We are half-aware that it is familiar but can not actually understand why because it is deep buried in our subconscious.

Apart from being discussed in the field of psychology from an analytic point of view, the notion of the double has been recurrent in history and culture, sometimes being referred to as 'doppelgänger':

Doppelgänger, (German: "double goer"), in German folklore, a wraith or apparition of a living person, as distinguished from a ghost. The concept of the existence of a spirit double, an exact but usually invisible replica of every man, bird, or beast, is an ancient and widespread belief. To meet one's double is a sign that one's death is imminent.

Thus, seeing one's own doppelgänger or double would be terrifying not only because of the feeling of uncanniness Freud described in his essay, but also because it implies the coming death of the one visited by this identical spectrum. However, what classifies as a double? Is being physically identical enough? Or could the mirroring of actions determine if a character is the double of another? Freud attempts to shed some light on this issue:

... Thus we have characters who are to be considered identical because they look alike. This relation is accentuated by mental processes leaping from one of these characters to another —by what we should call telepathy—, so that the one possesses knowledge, feelings and experience in common with the other. Or it is marked by the fact that the subject identifies himself with someone else, so that he is in doubt as to which his self is, or substitutes the extraneous self for his own. In other words, there is a doubling, dividing and interchanging of the self. And finally there is the constant recurrence of the same thing —the repetition of the same features or character-traits or vicissitudes, of the same crimes, or even the same names through several consecutive generations. (234)

Therefore, the double is a concept as ambiguous and as what it itself represents, together with the uncanniness. It nevertheless, in its multiplicity of forms, has appeared throughout and has been a popular resource in Gothic fiction. In “The Fall of the House of Usher”, the double or ‘Other’ is Madeline, who, according to some critics such as Bonaparte, can be the replication of both the mansion and the mother (qtd. in Nadal). She also stands as the double for Roderick Usher since they share “sympathies of a scarcely intelligible nature” (18). In turn, critics see parallels between Roderick and the narrator (Felicissimus). Madeline, after having been buried alive by both her brother and the narrator comes from the dead to kill her brother. In replicating its double, the house consequently crumbles down. In “The Black Cat”, after the killing of Pluto, there

appears another cat resembling it but slightly different, which the narrator cannot fully recognize as Pluto, which takes us back to the etymology of uncanny, which is both the familiar and the unfamiliar. After killing his wife, the narrator hides the corpse behind a wall in the cellar, as Madeline in “The Fall of the House of Usher”, but Pluto, as if to take revenge on its master, appears when the police go to his house. As we can see, in both stories there is the presence of the double and failed attempts at burying it, which could be an allegory of repressing it into the subconscious. As a consequence of having encountered it, then follows death or destruction, similarly to the myth of the doppelgänger.

In *The Shining*, the same dynamic can be found with the character of Grady, who serves as the double of Jack. Grady was the former keeper of the hotel who is mentioned at the very beginning of the book. In the job interview, Ullman tells Jack about the story of the hotel, and mentions that the time they hired a winter caretaker together with a family, as in the case of the Torrances, there was “a horrible tragedy” (11). Jack inquires about it and Ullman finally reveals that the incident was no other but Grady massacring his wife and two daughters with a hatchet, as in “The Black Cat”, due to intoxication and cabin fever as a result of being stranded during the winter. Afraid of such a gruesome event happening again in very similar circumstances, Ullman is reticent about hiring Jack. In his defense, Jack insists that the reason why Grady did this is because he was not even a high school graduate. He argues that educated people, such as himself makes him a better candidate because he is going to be focused on writing his book:

"That was your mistake," Jack said. "A stupid man is more prone to cabin fever just as he's more prone to shoot someone over a card game or commit a spur-of-the-moment robbery. He gets bored. When the snow comes, there's nothing to do but watch TV or play solitaire and cheat when he can't get all the aces out. Nothing to do but bitch at his

wife and nag at the kids and drink. It gets hard to sleep because there's nothing to hear. So he drinks himself to sleep and wakes up with a hangover. He gets edgy. And maybe the telephone goes out and the TV aerial blows down and there's nothing to do but think and cheat at solitaire and get edgier and edgier. Finally... boom, boom, boom." (10)

The similarities between both Grady and Jack are obvious, insofar they both had problems with alcohol and hence more prone to experience the symptoms of a cabin fever. However, Jack is hired anyway.

The point of inflexion in the novel is to be found in the 'masque party' (chapters 43-44). In there, he meets Grady, who is working as the drinks cart man of this otherworldly ball. As the narrator in "The Black Cat" who does not recognize Pluto after coming back to life, Jack does not recognize Grady at first, because he is slightly different from what he expected:

"Quite all right," the man in the white mess jacket said. The polite, clipped English coming from that thug's face was surreal. "A drink?"

... Jack suddenly reached out and touched the man's shoulder. "Yes, sir?" "Pardon me, but... what's your name?" The other showed no surprise. "Grady, sir. Delbert Grady."

"But you ... I mean that..."

... "You were the caretaker. You — " Oh say it! "You killed them." (386-387)

To Jack's surprise, Grady speaks just like an educated man, and not like a man who dropped out of high school. Also, Grady is a very persuasive man and convinces Jack to "correct" Wendy and Danny:

"I believe you must take it up further with your son, Mr. Torrance, sir. ... "He needs to be corrected, if you don't mind me saying so. He needs a good talking-to, and perhaps a bit more. My own girls, sir, didn't care for the Overlook at first. ... I corrected them most harshly. And when my wife tried to stop me from doing my duty, I corrected her."

... "They didn't love the Overlook as I did," Grady said, ... "Just as your son and wife don't love it. Not at present, anyway. But they will come to love it. You must show them

the error of their ways, Mr. Torrance. ... He was not ordinarily a harsh man. But he did believe in punishment. And if his son and his wife had willfully set themselves against his wishes, against the things he knew were best for them, then didn't he have a certain duty — ? (387-388)

Near the end of the novel, Jack, influenced by Grady's words that he was entitled to impose some discipline on his family, attempts to kill both Wendy and Danny with a hatchet. Danny had already foreseen this just before setting out to the Overlook, because his 'imaginary' friend Tony showed him a cryptic vision:

...And now he was crouched in a dark hallway, crouched on a blue rug with a riot of twisting black shapes woven into its pile, listening to the booming noises approach, and now a Shape turned the corner and began to come toward him, lurching, smelling of blood and doom. It had a mallet in one hand and it was swinging it (REDRUM) from side to side in vicious arcs, slamming it into the walls, cutting the silk wallpaper and knocking out ghostly bursts of plasterdust: Come on and take your medicine! Take it like a man! The Shape advancing on him, reeking of that sweet-sour odor, gigantic, the mallet head cutting across the air with a wicked hissing whisper... (36)

Danny's visions are very accurate, as it would be precisely a mallet that his father would use as a weapon. However, if we compare this with Grady's crime, there is a slight difference, as Grady, in Ullman's words, used a hatchet:

"He killed them, Mr. Torrance, and then committed suicide. He murdered the little girls with a hatchet, his wife with a shotgun, and himself the same way. His leg was broken. Undoubtedly so drunk he fell downstairs." (9)

All in all, Grady might be considered Jack's doppelgänger and in keeping with the popular tradition, each of these characters, after facing their doubles, die or face their end, sooner or later. Roderick Usher is finally taken to his death and the narrator of "The Black Cat" is seized by the police and taken to prison from where

he tells the story in retrospect before being hanged. Jack, possessed by ‘the manager’, finally meets his end being engulfed by the explosion of the boiler.

## Conclusion

In this paper we posed two different but related questions: whether *The Shining* is a Gothic novel and if it was inspired by Poe. To the first one, we might argue that, although far from being a ‘typical’ Gothic novel, in the fashion of Poe’s, it certainly contains some gothic elements, such as the haunted hotel and the double. To the second one, it is obvious that King was influenced by Poe in general, and that especially “The Masque of the Red Death” played a referential role in the novel. But it is also true that *The Shining* shares some of those elements we have mentioned in both “The Black Cat” and “The Fall of the House of Usher”. Thus, although it is not a direct influence, it certainly provides the three works with a unity in their expression of the same anxieties and themes. *The Shining* is very carefully constructed as every detail seems to be precisely crafted to lead to the ending: the characters’ background and the traumas with their families; the alcoholic tendencies Jack inherited from his abusive father; the visions that Tony gave Danny and enabled Danny him to catch a glimpse of future events that would take place in the hotel; the finding of the papers that would inspire Jack to write his book on the Overlook to be afterwards frustrated and hence more easily manipulated and possessed by the mastermind behind the haunted hotel: ‘the manager’. In this respect, it is very similar to Poe’s stories, where he devoted attention to every detail so it would result in a piece of work organized with the accuracy of a mathematician, as he said in “The Philosophy of Composition” about the writing of “The Raven”.

Although this paper is focused on the analysis of the novel, *The Shining* is perhaps best known for its film adaptation in 1980 by the famous film director Stanley Kubrick. However, there are details ‘lost in translation’ when Kubrick made his adaptation. For instance, Jack’s infamous weapon, the hatchet in the film, is, originally, a mallet. The ending is also different: in the movie, Jack freezes to death. These, among other details, would make King admit that, rather than an adaptation, it was Kubrick’s own rendering of the story. Overall, what can be drawn from this analysis is that the tradition of the Gothic in the United States is still alive. The fact that they are still widely read implies that both Poe and King can be considered classics of the Horror/Gothic genre because they managed to portray US society’s biggest fears and guilts in their books. Presenting a story where vices recur in the family line (Jack’s alcoholic and abusive father), King poses a dangerous question: Will there be a way to redemption for US society, or will the same mistakes be repeated all over again?



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