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## OTHERNESS IN THE WORLD OF GOTHIC FICTION: THE SYMBOLIC POTENTIAL OF EDGAR ALLAN POE'S "THE BLACK CAT"

Frequently seen as rather aloof and eerie, the cat has always been an important literary symbol, especially in Gothic and horror fiction, where it represents a powerful image through which writers can explore the deepest fears and the darkest desires of the human psyche. The aim of this paper is to provide insight into the symbolic potential of one of the most famous literary cats and to explore the perspectives from which it can be analyzed. Since "The Black Cat" is one of Edgar Allan Poe's most notable Gothic stories, in which he demonstrates his ability to use Gothic tradition as a means of exploring the human psyche, it is closely connected to the psychoanalytic theories proposed by Sigmund Freud, Julia Kristeva and Jacques Lacan. As it will be demonstrated, the image of the cat proves to be a very powerful symbol which represents the unconscious drives that human beings strive to suppress. The first part of the paper deals with the psychological aspects of Gothic fiction, focusing on what Freud named "the Uncanny", as well as on Kristeva's term "the abject" and Lacan's notion of "Otherness". The second part is concerned with the incorporation of Gothic tradition in Poe's short stories, and the last part provides an analysis of Poe's tale, in which the cat can be seen as an embodiment of the narrator's destructive drives and his subconscious urge to destroy "the Other".

*Keywords:* the cat, psychology, Gothic tradition, the Uncanny, Otherness, blackness

### Psychological aspects of Gothic fiction

Elements of Gothic tradition in literary works are usually seen as inextricably linked with literary Romanticism. Even though its characteristics can be found in various works from ancient prose to Shakespearean tragedy and comedy, it was only in 1764 that the first work to call itself a Gothic story was published – Horace Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto* (Hogle 2002: 1). After 1790, marked by the beginning of what we call the Romantic period in European literature, Gothic fiction became increasingly popular in the nineteenth century, both in Europe and in the US (2002: 1). What we now call "Gothic" is usually characterized by a number of distinguishing features which are present in various notable literary works, from Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* to late nineteenth century works such as Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, Charlotte Perkins Gilman's "The Yellow Wallpaper" and Henry James's *The Turn of*

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*the Screw*. Regardless of the exact period or tradition it belongs to, a Gothic tale usually takes place in “an antiquated or seemingly antiquated space” – a castle, a palace, an abbey, a vast prison, a graveyard etc. – which hides some secrets from the past that haunt and torment the characters physically and psychologically (2002: 2). The hauntings can take many forms, usually those of ghosts, specters, or monsters that rise from within the antiquated space, which is why Gothic fictions usually oscillate between conventional reality and the supernatural (2002: 2). However, in his article on Gothic tradition in the works of Edgar Allan Poe, Benjamin Fisher claims that what emerged as “a mainstay” in Gothic works is an atmosphere which generally leads to the increasing anxiety both in the protagonist and among other characters (2002: 75). In that manner, as Fisher states:

The literal haunted castle, cathedral, monastery was often transformed into some natural setting conducive to unrest and fears, or, in yet another kind of development, to a haunted mind which required no castle or frowning mansion to stimulate terrors, the corridors of the psyche sufficing to engender such a frisson. (2002: 75)

Therefore, the elements of Gothic tradition, such as haunted castles and supernatural beings gradually became metaphors for the characters' underlying psychological conditions. They became physical manifestations of what is buried deep in the human psyche, and in that manner exerted significant influence on the development of psychology at the end of the nineteenth century. As Jerrold Hogle states, several features of the Gothic, especially those practiced by the so called „frenetic novels“ (*romans frénétiques*) in France and by Edgar Allan Poe in the US in the mid-nineteenth century eventually became a basis for Freud's theory of the unconscious as a repository of repressed, infantile impulses, “the archaic world of the self” (2002: 3). It is exactly due to these characteristics, as he explains further, that Gothic fiction remained so powerful and popular:

The longevity and power of Gothic fiction unquestionably stem from the way it helps us address and disguise some of the most important desires, quandaries, and sources of anxiety, from the most internal and mental to the widely social and cultural, throughout the history of western culture since the eighteenth century. (2002: 4)

Thus, Hogle concludes that the gothic has lasted as it has because „its symbolic mechanisms, particularly its haunting and frightening specters, have permitted us to cast many anomalies in our modern conditions“. In this way, our contradictions can be confronted by „the unreal, the alien, the ancient, and the grotesque“ (2002: 6).

When it comes to its connections with Freudian theories, Gothic elements are usually seen as examples of „the Uncanny“. The term which Freud used in his 1919 essay of the same name refers to our most infantile, internally

familiar fears and desires, as they reappear to us in „seemingly external, repellant, and unfamiliar forms“ (2002: 6). Hence, monsters and similar creatures from Gothic tradition stand for the deepest anxieties which torment the human psyche. Along with Freud’s notion of “the Uncanny”, Gothic elements are also frequently analyzed as manifestations of what Julia Kristeva calls the “abject” or “abjection” in her 1980 study *Powers of Horror*. According to Kristeva, the term “abject” refers to what we strive to “throw off”, everything that is “in-between, ambiguous, composite” in our beings, and abjection is caused by “what disturbs identity, system, and order”, “what does not respect borders, positions, rules” (1982: 4). As Hogle concludes, the term “abject” stands for the “fundamental inconsistencies that prevent us from declaring a coherent and independent identity to ourselves and others” (2002: 7). In that manner, what the characters in Gothic fiction are trying to throw off or suppress is usually embodied in grotesque creatures such as Frankenstein, Dracula or Robert Louis Stevenson’s Mr. Hyde. According to Hogle, apart from being personal, the process of abjection is also social and cultural, since all that is rejected is embodied in figures condemned by people in authority and thus subjected to their gaze (2002: 7). In that manner, Gothic fiction is also concerned with juxtapositions which lie at the core of the middle class. Apart from tackling the connection between the high, aristocratic aspects of society and the low – animalistic, carnivalesque, sexually deviant – the Gothic also challenges the boundaries between genders, as well as other oppositions Western culture is based on (2002: 9). The power of the Gothic thus lies in its ability to demonstrate that the concepts human beings are striving to suppress or eliminate are inseparable from their inner selves. As Hogle concludes:

The Gothic clearly exists, in part, to raise the possibility that all “abnormalities” we would divorce from ourselves are a part of ourselves, deeply and pervasively (hence frighteningly), even while it provides quasi-antiquated methods to help us place such “deviations” at a definite, though haunting, distance from us. (2002: 12)

All the aforementioned social and psychological aspects of the Gothic pervade novels and short stories coming from a vast variety of social milieus, but nowhere are they as pronounced as in American Gothic fiction, especially in the short stories of Edgar Allan Poe. In his essay „The Rise of American Gothic“, Eric Savoy states that the Gothic „stubbornly flourished“ in the US on the turn of the eighteenth to the nineteenth century and that its cultural role has always been entirely paradoxical:

[An] optimistic country founded upon the Enlightenment principles of liberty and “the pursuit of happiness,” a country that supposedly repudiated the burden of history and its irrational claims, has produced a strain of literature that is haunted by an insistent, undead past and fascinated by the strange beauty of sorrow. (2002: 167)

However, the specific circumstances from which it emerged created a very convenient context for exploring the human psyche even more thoroughly than it had been done before. According to Savoy, even though the rise of the Gothic in America was enabled by imitating its earlier achievements, American Gothic literature represents an innovative and experimental phenomenon whose “power comes from its dazzling originality and diversity in a series of departures that situate the perverse” (2002: 168). As Savoy further explains, the originality of American Gothic lies in its historical dimension which is “entirely congruent” with Lacan’s notion of “the Real” (2002: 169). Instead of being a coherent field controlled and determined by the author, history in Gothic texts returns obsessively to the personal, the familial, and the national pasts and instead of clarifying them, complicates them further, creating a “deep morass of American desires and deeds” an individual is incapable of escaping (2002: 169). For that reason, American Gothic fiction is frequently analyzed through the concepts postulated by Jacques Lacan, especially the distinction between the Imaginary, the Symbolic and the Real, as well as the notion of “Otherness”.

A very important observation regarding Gothic tradition in an American context is that of Leslie Fiedler, who claims that it should be grasped as “a pathological system rather than a proper literary movement”. From then on, numerous analyses of American Gothic fiction have been preoccupied with the role of the Gothic as “a negation of the Enlightenment’s national narratives” (Savoy 1998: 5). In that manner, the concept of “the Other” is seen as an embodiment of what the dominant culture cannot incorporate within itself (Gross 1989: 90). In their introduction to the study *American Gothic: New Interventions in a National Narrative*, Eric Savoy and Robert K. Martin rightfully observe that Gothic cultural production in the US “has yielded neither a genre nor a cohesive mode but rather a discursive field in which a metonymic national self is undone by the return of its repressed Otherness” (1998: vii). As it was the case with Freud’s notion of “the Uncanny” and Kristeva’s terms “abject” and “abjection”, Lacan’s concept of “Otherness” denotes the state of being unwanted, unable to conform to the rules imposed by the society, which is embodied in grotesque creatures within Gothic tradition. Furthermore, Gothic elements in a literary work are frequently described as the intrusion of the Real into the order of the Symbolic, the Real representing the concepts beyond representation, “that haunt our subjectivity and demand our attention, that compel us to explanatory language but resist the strategies of that language” (Savoy 2002: 169). The engagement with the Real in American Gothic literature represents, according to Savoy, a confrontation with the traumatic Otherness stemming from America’s past, which shapes identities and everyday reality. However, the Gothic approach to the past also tests the limits of its power, leading to the fear of facing the dark, pathological levels of American history. Thus, as he concludes, Gothic images in America suggest „the attraction and repulsion of a monstrous history, the desire to “know” the traumatic Real of American being and yet the flight from that unbearable and remote knowledge” (Savoy 2002: 169).

## Gothic tradition in Edgar Allan Poe's short stories

As it was shown in the previous part of this paper, American Gothic fiction is characterized by great originality and uniqueness even though its major topics and stylistic elements stem from a long tradition of European Gothic literature. What is certain is that it would have never reached such depths in its explorations of the human psyche had it not been for the writings of Edgar Allan Poe, whose oeuvre brims with Gothic elements used in an extremely sophisticated manner. In his essay on Poe and Gothic tradition, Benjamin Fisher states that Poe's success lies in the fact that he managed to transform the classic Gothic story into the finest psychological fiction:

Poe's greatest literary achievement was his renovation of the terror tale from what had been its principal intent, to entertain by means of "curdling the blood," to use a widely current phrase of the times, into what have been recognized as some of the most sophisticated creations in psychological fiction in the English language. He realized at the outset of his career that Gothicism was eminently compatible with psychological plausibility in literature, and he worked out such designs in combination repeatedly throughout his literary career. (2002: 78)

What he achieved in Gothic fiction, however, was not his initial intention. As Fisher claims, Poe turned from creating poetry to writing Gothic stories because "he wanted to produce what would sell" (2002: 79). As it turned out, even though it was not his primary choice, Gothic story proved to be an excellent fictional mode for Poe's explorations of the human mind and its perverse nature. Furthermore, not only did it provide him with a means to explore various pathological conditions, it also became a mode through which Poe was able to demonstrate his exceptional talent to uncover the underlying beauty in the most horrifying concepts. According to Fisher, in Poe's stories founded on Gothic Tradition, such as "The Fall of the House of Usher", "The Pit and the Pendulum", "The Black Cat" and "The Tell-Tale Heart", it is obvious that "Poe's modifications of the Gothic imbue these fictions with great art" and that he successfully manipulated conventions of Gothicism in order to create fine psychological fiction (2002: 79). As he concludes:

Poe found in Gothic tradition the very kinds of settings and characters that, transformed in his imagination, would contribute wonderful symbolism to psychologically plausible narratives of multiple outreach. (2002: 84)

Poe's utilization of Gothic tradition was thus quite different from that of his contemporaries. Unlike Nathaniel Hawthorne, who is seen as "an exemplary bourgeois citizen of the world", Poe was, according to Eric Savoy, "a denizen of the urban underworld" (2002: 180). For that reason, his utilization of Gothic elements was less restrained, which made it possible for him to explore the depths which had been unapproachable to other nineteenth-century writers. Thus, Savoy concludes that, of all nineteenth-century American authors, Poe

seems “most thoroughly our contemporary in his attempt to give language and a narrative structure to what Freud came to describe as the unconscious” (2002: 181). Furthermore, one of the most important characteristics of Poe’s tales is their “ultimate indeterminacy” which blurs the boundaries between self and other, life and death, real and illusion, dream and reality, conscious and unconscious, natural and supernatural, masculine and feminine (Jung 2005: 58). They are also characterized by the constant deferral of meaning or the Lacanian “incessant sliding of the signified under the signifier”, for Poe’s characters frequently struggle to define and describe concepts that cannot be represented adequately (2005: 58-59). Analyses of Poe’s tales are, for that reason, frequently based not only on the nineteenth-century psychoanalytic theory, but also on theoretical perspectives which belong to the realm of structuralism and post-structuralism, especially Lacan’s notion of Otherness and the intrusion of the Real into the Symbolic.

One of the very important aspects of Poe’s incorporation of Gothic elements into his stories are his experiments with the symbolic potential of blackness. Even though he never tackled the issue of slavery overtly, his most famous works are now considered to be “profound meditations upon the cultural significance of “blackness” in the white American mind“, so profound that Toni Morrison, famous for her remarkable narratives tackling the experience of Black community, once said that no early American writer was more important to the concept African Americanism than Poe (Savoy 2002: 181-182). Poe’s stories are thus an excellent example of how Gothic tradition participates in the exploration of American past, creating a context characterized by two opposing tendencies – to confront the monstrous aspects of history on the one hand, and to repudiate them on the other. In that sense, as Savoy concludes:

A surprising amount of Poe’s work may be said to Gothicize the deep oppression and violence inherent in his culture’s whiteness and thus to transform America’s normative race into the most monstrous of them all. (2002: 182)

Apart from the explorations of blackness as a symbol, one of the major topics Poe’s critics are concerned with is his representation of women. It is well-known that, female characters are usually closely linked to death in Poe’s fiction. Thus, both female characters and black ones are always “oriented toward the tomb” from the very beginning (Savoy 2002: 183). However, they usually return from the state of death to fulfill their mission, which may be seen as the counterpart of his male protagonists’ death drive (2002: 183-184). Since Poe’s female characters have little chance of survival in his fictional world, the traditional notion of his characterization of women is frequently seen as a tendency to silence or suppress feminine experience within the male-dominant culture which promotes the repression of feminine otherness (Jung 2005: 59).

However, other approaches to Poe’s representation of women, such as those by Cynthia S. Jordan and Leland S. Person emphasize that Poe’s stories about women actually “dramatize repressiveness of androcentric culture” and

give voice to the silenced women (2005: 59). Even though it is not done overtly, as it was the case with the notion of blackness, through incorporation of Gothic tradition, Poe's writings question and challenge the pillars of Western society based on binary oppositions. Thus, seen through the lens of Lacanian theory, Poe's "uncanny heroines" are connected with the notion of the Real as opposed to the masculine authority founded upon "the rigid, phallic order of the Symbolic" (2005: 61). As they return from the dead in the form of a ghost or a hallucinatory phenomenon, they fiercely disrupt the male subject's Symbolically-structured reality (2005: 62). In that manner, Gothic elements within Poe's fiction provide critics with a vast variety of symbolic representations which can be perceived as outward manifestations both of the complex psychological conditions of his characters and of the dichotomies inherent in Western culture.

### **Analysis of "The Black Cat"**

The tale which incorporates all the dominant features of Poe's Gothic fiction and which is considered to be an evident example of his explorations of the human mind through the symbolic representations inspired by Gothic tradition is certainly "The Black Cat". It is also one of the most famous examples of both psychological and semiotic potential of the cat as a literary symbol. Since it represents a multi-layered text which explores the dark aspects of the human psyche, it has been analyzed from a plethora of perspectives which include its ethical, psychological, as well as sociological aspects. Even though analyses of Poe's "The Black Cat" frequently focus on the protagonist and the narrator of the story, its most important psychological aspects are embodied in the cat itself. For that reason, this analysis is particularly focused of the symbolic potential of the cat, which is usually interpreted as a reflection of the protagonist's unconscious.

When it comes to the image of the cat in literature and other art forms throughout history, it is certain that it has always fascinated and inspired artists due to its enigmatic nature (Nikolajeva 2009: 249). The portrayal of cats depends on the way they were perceived in different historical periods, but it is certain that its nature has always been ambiguous. In her article on the semiotics of literary cats, Maria Nikolajeva states that feline characteristics had a twofold status in folklore, which is why cats can be featured both as evil and as benevolent (2009: 249). As common literary characters from fables to Gothic fiction, they have always been ascribed mystical and magical features and they are frequently seen as the embodiment of evil powers, an image which became prominent in the Middle Ages (2009: 250). In her study *The Cat and the Human Imagination: Feline Images from Bast to Garfield*, Katharine M. Rogers claims that the perception of cats as mysterious and independent comes from their aloofness, as it is in their nature not to conform to any standards. They do not show feelings openly and their minds are less open to us in comparison with other animals. For that reason, the cat's natural qualities can be interpreted as

“evidence of uncanny abilities”, which may be seen either as divine or as demonic (1998: 3-4). As she explains:

Its silent, inconspicuous movements suggest that it can magically appear or disappear. Its dispassionate, wide-eyed gaze, unusually direct for an animal, suggests that it is challenging humans or relentlessly searching into their inner selves. Its ability to see in near darkness, together with its keen hearing, smell, and tactile sense, so enhances its perceptions that it seems to have preternatural knowledge, even the ability to predict the future. (1998: 4)

Enriched with such symbolic potential, the cat became particularly interesting to artists in the eighteenth and in the nineteenth century, both in realistic and in fantastic fiction (1998: 5). One of the most famous examples of the cat as an embodiment of uncanny abilities is certainly Poe's Pluto, which is considered to be one of the most intriguing feline characters, especially in the realm of Gothic literature. The plot of this short story revolves around the murders committed by the protagonist, for no other reason but “the spirit of perverseness”, the urge to do evil for evil's sake, or as the narrator puts it, “the unfathomable longing of the soul to *vex itself* – to offer violence to its own nature – to do wrong for the wrong's sake only” (Poe 2008: 191). The atrocities he commits are closely related to his cat, Pluto, whose obedience and unconditional affection seem to be the trigger of the protagonist's unconscious drives, which first lead to the murder of the cat and then to the murder of his wife.

At the beginning of the story, the narrator refers to his pet as an inseparable friend he is very fond of:

Pluto – this was the pet's name – was my favorite pet and playmate. I alone fed him, and he attended me whenever I went about the house. It was even with difficulty that I could prevent him from following me through the streets. (Poe 2008: 190)

However, he started to get moody and irritable in time for no particular reason, which resulted in his maltreatment of the animal, so brutal that he first cut one of its eyes from the socket and eventually hanged it. Having killed the first cat, the protagonist is faced with another one, which looks exactly the same as Pluto. Since the story is told by an unreliable narrator who is also an alcoholic and obviously suffers from a mental illness, the second cat can be seen as a projection of his conscience which tortures him and leads him to another murder. In his attempt to kill the second cat, he actually kills his wife with an axe and hides the corpse inside a wall in the cellar, the secret he reveals to the police at the end of the story, motivated, once again, by the mere spirit of perverseness. In his essay on moral grotesquery in “The Black Cat”, Richard Frushell states that the reason why the narrator reveals his deeds lies in the fact that his pride has taken him so far from the reality that “he believes he has transcended the restrictions of ordinary human limits and consequences” (1972: 43):



My heart beat calmly as that of one who slumbers in innocence. I walked the cellar from end to end. I folded my arms upon my bosom, and roamed easily to and fro. The police were thoroughly satisfied and prepared to depart. The glee at my heart was too strong to be restrained. I burned to say if but one word, by way of triumph, and to render doubly their assurance of my guiltlessness. (Poe 2008: 196)

As the police were about to leave, he rapped the wall with a cane and the corpse of his wife was revealed, together with the black cat he thought he had got rid of:

The corpse, already greatly decayed and clotted with gore, stood erect before the eyes of the spectators. Upon its head, with red extended mouth and solitary eye of fire, sat the hideous beast whose craft had seduced me into murder, and whose informing voice had consigned me to the hangman. I had walled the monster up within the tomb. (Poe 2008: 196)

In the light of the psychological aspects Gothic fiction is usually characterized by, the cat can be seen as the embodiment of the internally familiar fears and desires described as “the Uncanny” in Freud’s psychoanalytic theory. It is also a reflection of the protagonist’s inner self which he is trying to eliminate described as the process of “abjection” by Julia Kristeva, as well as his confrontation with “the Other”. According to Benjamin Fisher, the cat represents the man’s non-rational nature and the narrator’s burial of his wife’s corpse may imply that he has also walled up, or repressed, “the feminine, nurturing elements of his psyche” (2002: 86). As it has already been emphasized, black and female characters are usually condemned to death from the very beginning in Poe’s fiction, which demonstrates the white supremacy and the urge to destroy the Other. In his analysis of “The Black Cat”, Eric Savoy claims that it can be read as an “abolitionist allegory” in which the cat aligns with the psychoanalytic Real, as “the Gothic figure of the undead” which comes back “to settle scores with the historical real of the sheer perverseness of American slavery” (2002: 183). In a similar manner, in her article “Slavery and the Gothic Horror of Poe’s ‘The Black Cat’”, Lesley Ginsberg states that the cat’s return from the grave represents the irrepressible voice of the dead, and as such, it can be seen as an explicit metaphor for the silences and repressions upon which the peculiar institution was built. Through the symbolic potential of blackness, the story thus explores the painful, shameful part of American history which has always been repressed. In that sense, the cat is seen as a symbolic representation of Black people returning to seek revenge for the years of oppression in which they were tortured in the cruelest possible ways. As Savoy explains:

[The] symbolic import of “blackness” conflates the evil perpetrated by the white upon the body of the black, the long and painful memory of the black, and the return of the black as revenant to exact revenge. In this story blackness allegorizes not merely a personal (or even cultural) melancholia, as it does in “The Raven,” but the abject underside of a national “normality.” (2002: 182)

Furthermore, the figure of the animal also brings to mind the dehumanization of Black people caused by the dissolution of the boundary between human and animal (2002: 183). In that sense, the story challenges the basic idea of slavery by reversing the roles of the oppressor and the oppressed. As Fisher explains, in "The Black Cat", the animal and human characteristics are reversed as the narrator gradually reveals how maniacal, sadistic or "animalistic" he is, while the cat seems to become quite human (2002: 86). Therefore, it is clear that the cat, even though it is usually considered to be an embodiment of evil, especially in Gothic stories, has a rather different symbolic meaning in this story. The cats, both Pluto and the one which appears after Pluto's death, only demonstrate the perverseness of their oppressor, whose drive towards destruction is reflected in them.

### **Conclusion**

From folklore tradition to contemporary literature, the cat has had a twofold symbolic potential, both as an embodiment of the divine and of the demonic. It has always been ascribed mystical and supernatural powers, particularly in Gothic literature which represents a suitable mode for exploring a vast variety of symbolic meanings it can generate. In this short analysis of Poe's story, it is obvious that the cat in Gothic literature is not only a representation of evil spirits, as it is usually thought to be, but rather a reflection of psychological processes, i.e. "the spirit of perverseness" the narrator is possessed by.

Bearing in mind the psychological aspects of Gothic literature which are usually interpreted through the psychoanalytic theories of Freud, Kristeva and Lacan, the cat in Poe's tale is seen as a physical manifestation of the "uncanny" characteristics of the human psyche which we strive to throw off, or eliminate from our lives. In that sense, the cat is not a creature which produces evil, it is merely a reflection of the protagonist's inner self, of the parts of his being he is trying to suppress.

Finally, the image of the cat in Poe's story is closely connected with Lacan's notion of "Otherness" and the intrusion of "the Real" into "the Symbolic", especially if the tale is interpreted as an abolitionist allegory, in which the cat's blackness represents the cause of its suffering. As the cat does no harm to the narrator, torturing the animal is seen as a perverse drive of the human spirit to oppress those who are weak, those who are marked as "the Other" and thus do not belong to the dominant group. In that sense, the image of the cat proves to be an extremely powerful symbol which can be used both as an embodiment of complex psychological conditions and as a subversive representation of the human tendency to confront and destroy "the Other".

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**DRUGOST U GOTSKOJ KNJIŽEVNOSTI: SIMBOLIČKI POTENCIJAL  
“CRNOG MAČKA” EDGARA ALANA POA**

**Rezime**

Zbog svoje prirode koja se često opisuje kao neobična i pomalo zastrašujuća, mačka je oduvek bila moćan simbol, naročito u gotskoj književnosti i horor žanru, gde predstavlja koncept koji piscima pruža mogućnost da istraže najdublje strahove i najmračnije porive ljudske psihe. Cilj ovog rada jeste da pruži uvid u simbolički potencijal crnog mačka iz čuvene pripovetke Edgara Alana Poa, te da istraži perspektive iz kojih se taj potencijal može sagledati. Kako je ovo jedna od pripovedaka u kojoj Po pokazuje svoju sposobnost da gotsku fikciju koristi kao sredstvo za istraživanje ljudske psihe, čvrsto je povezana za psihoanalitičkim teorijama Sigmunda Frojda, Julije Kristeve i Žaka Lakana. Kao što će biti prikazano, predstava mačke se nesumnjivo može posmatrati kao snažan simbol u kome se ogledaju nesvesni nagoni koje ljudsko biće nastoji da

suzbije. Stoga prvi deo ovog rada pruža uvid u psihološke aspekte gotske književnosti, usredsređujući se na osnovne termine kojima su Frojd, Kristeva i Lakan opisivali koncepte koji izlaze iz okvira racionalnog i dominantnog diskursa. Drugi deo rada bavi se načinom na koji Po unosi elemente gotske tradicije u svoje pripovetke, dok je u poslednjem delu data analiza priče „Crni mačak“, u kojoj se on posmatra kao otelovljenje pripovedačevih destruktivnih nagona i njegove podsvesne potrebe da uništi „Drugo“.

*Milica Stanković*